



# **Building Bridges to Success: Strengthening Prosecutor Recruitment and Retention**



**Building Bridges to Success:  
Strengthening Prosecutor Recruitment and Retention  
was originally presented at the  
2023 Washington Association of County Officials Annual  
Conference in Everett, WA.**

**Since then, VidaNyx has rebranded to Guardify. No educational  
content has been changed.**





**Please note that because the presentation was recorded at a live event, some portions of the audio may be harder to hear.**





**Continuing Legal Education is available  
in the following states:**

**TX 1.25 Credit Hours Course # 174216370**

**WA 1.25 Other Hours Course # 2000551**

**WV 1.50 Legal Ethics Course #86700**

**Please submit your evaluation form within 30 days of  
completing the training.**





# Prosecutor Priorities, Challenges, and Solutions

*Daniel S. Lawrence, Camille Gourdet, Duren Banks, Michael G. Planty, Dulani Woods, Brian A. Jackson*

## SUMMARY

State and local prosecutors face an ever-increasing array of challenges and responsibilities, including recruiting and retaining talented and diverse prosecutors and handling, storing, and using growing bodies of evidence generated through modern technology. Some of these issues have emerged recently, while others represent ongoing challenges to prosecutors that have been complicated by recent technology or emerging trends. Although crime levels are at their lowest in more than 25 years, prosecutors face significant challenges from, for example, persistent violent crime in urban areas, difficulties in obtaining the technical capabilities necessary to identify and prevent cybercrime, and the opioid epidemic that has devastated communities across the United States. Prosecutors are expected to deliver fair and legitimate justice in their decisionmaking while balancing aspects of budgets and resources, working with increasingly larger volumes of digital and electronic evidence that have developed from technological advancements (such as social media platforms), partnering with communities and other entities, and being held accountable for their actions and differing litigation strategies.

State and local prosecutors around the country continue to contend with very high caseloads and comparatively lower salaries than practicing attorneys in other settings. These realities can make both the retention and the ongoing professional development of prosecuting attorneys a challenge.

With the advent of such technology as social media and body-worn cameras, prosecutors must contend with large volumes of digital information and must determine the admissibility of evidence based on not just its probative value but also whether a proper chain of custody was established and followed. Similarly, although the rise of predictive analytics and other data science tools can provide new insights to increase fairness and promote justice, these kinds of risk assessment measures are not foolproof. Moreover, advances in forensic science have brought new capabilities that can be critical to a case, but the time required to properly conduct

## Key Findings

The panelists

- recognized that research to better understand ways to improve staff recruitment, training, and retention would best support many of the challenges that prosecutors face.
- advised that prosecutors are challenged by the inadequate or inconsistent collection of data and other information that is shared among agencies, their partners, and the community, as well as by emerging digital and forensic technologies. Prosecutors need guidance on maximizing case investigation and trial resources.
- recommended identifying promising practices to prevent and respond to witness intimidation and tampering, which are pervasive in the criminal justice system and directly affect outcomes.
- recommended conducting research into the most-promising practices for collecting and disclosing officer misconduct and discipline issues, as well as reporting disclosure obligations related to the *Brady* and *Giglio* standards.
- recommended more research on engaging the community and determining whether different combinations of problem-solving and litigation strategies can reduce crime.





# Roadmap







**Recruitment**



**Retention**





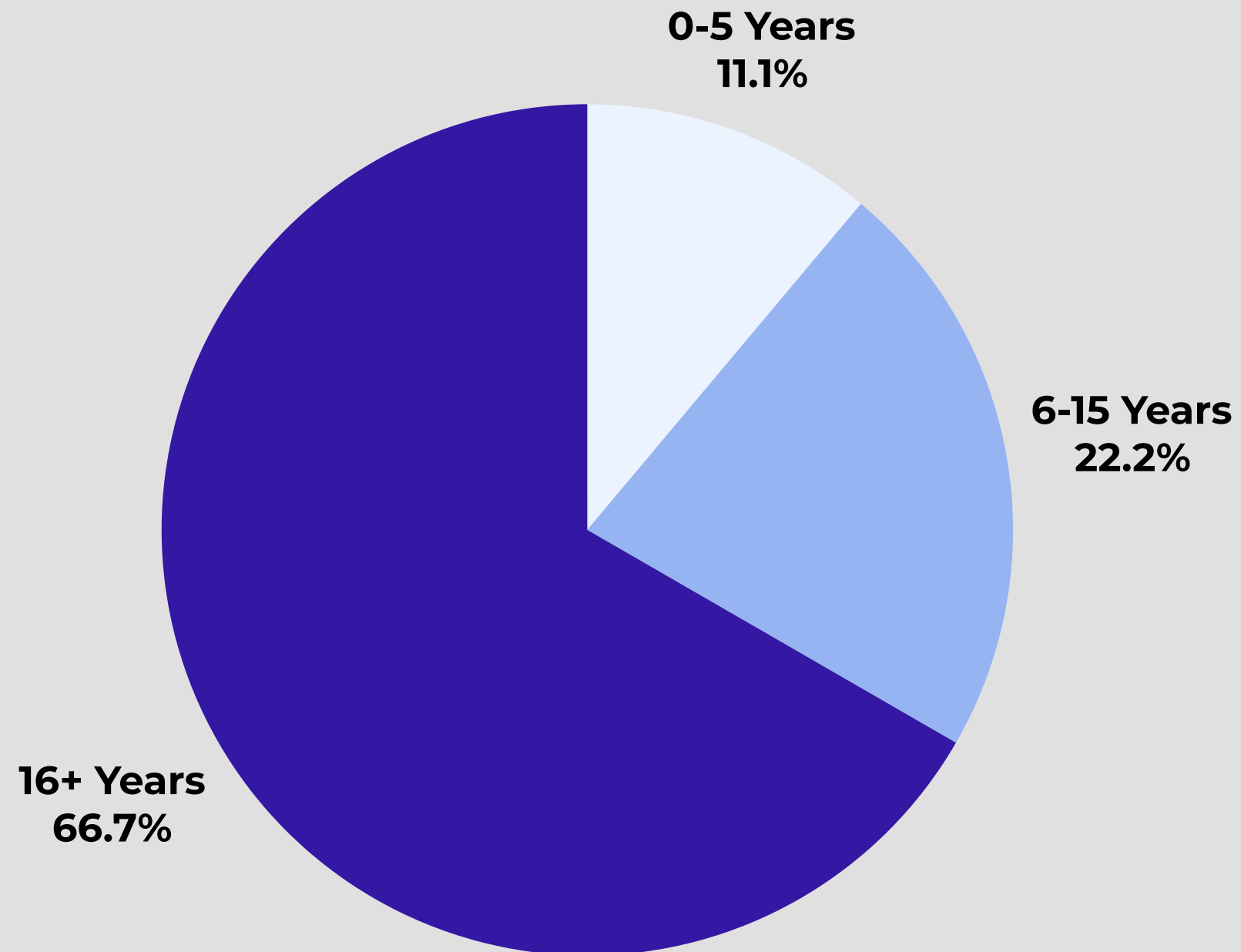
**Recruitment**

**Retention**

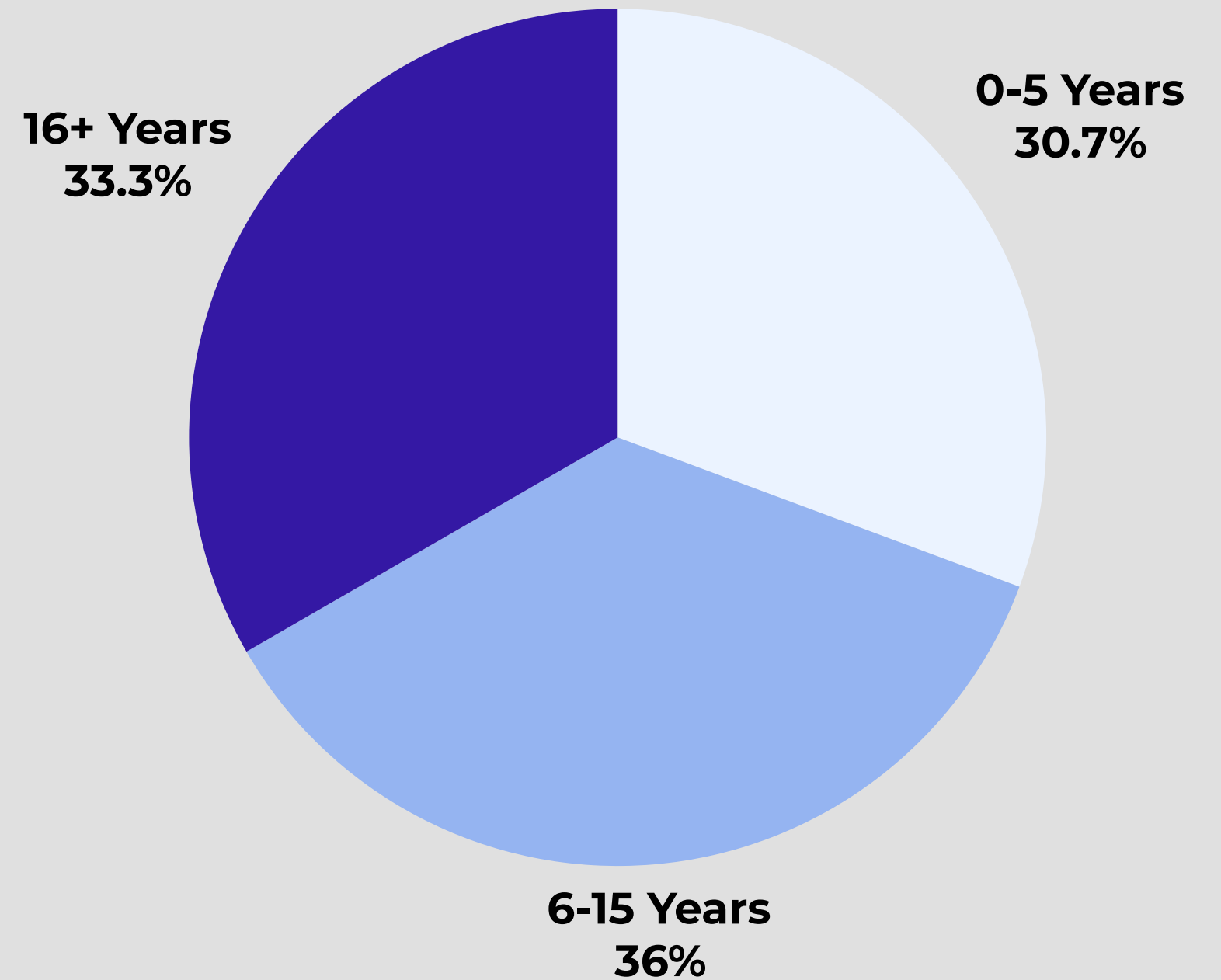


# Years of Experience

## Washington State



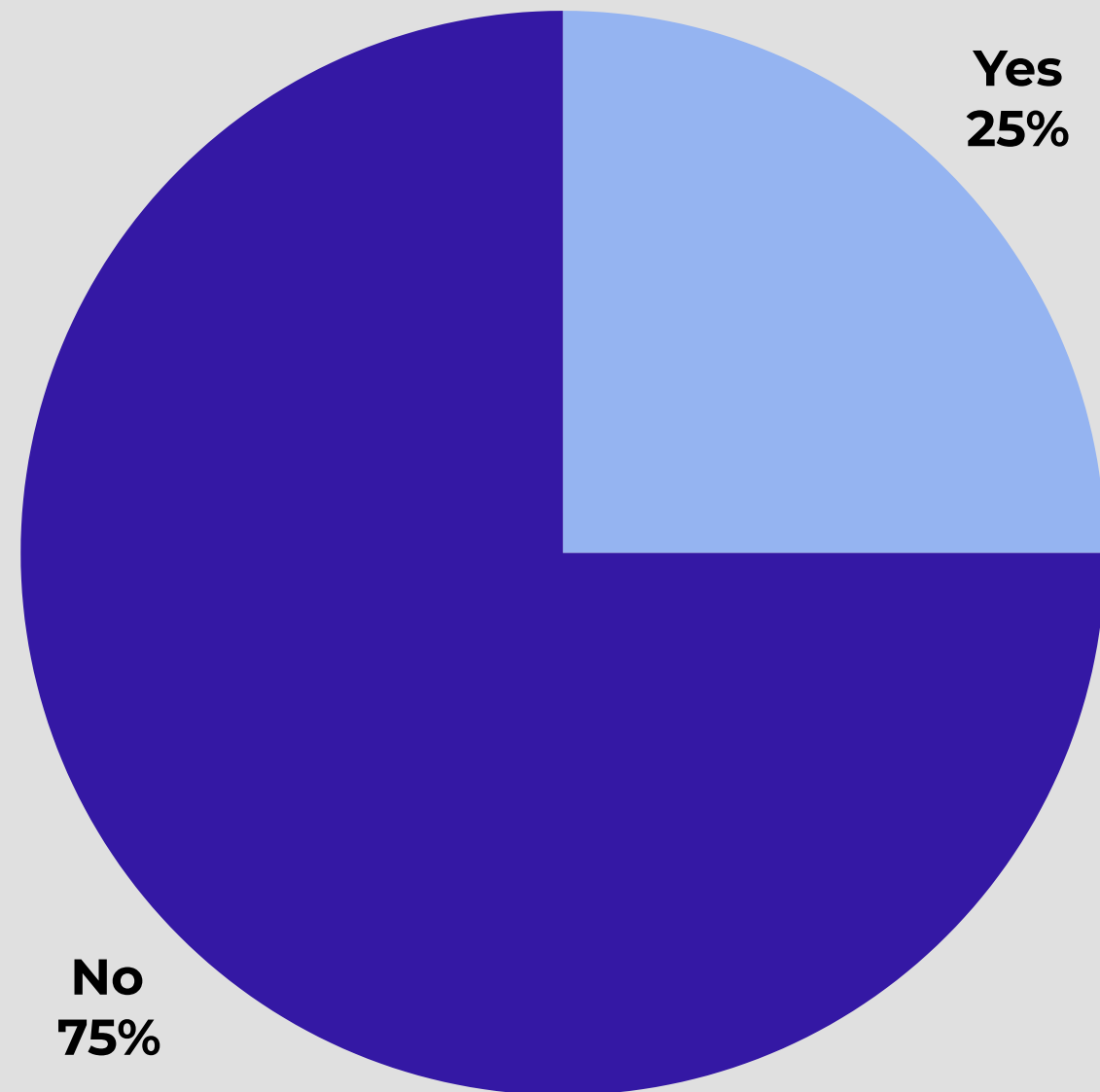
## Nationwide



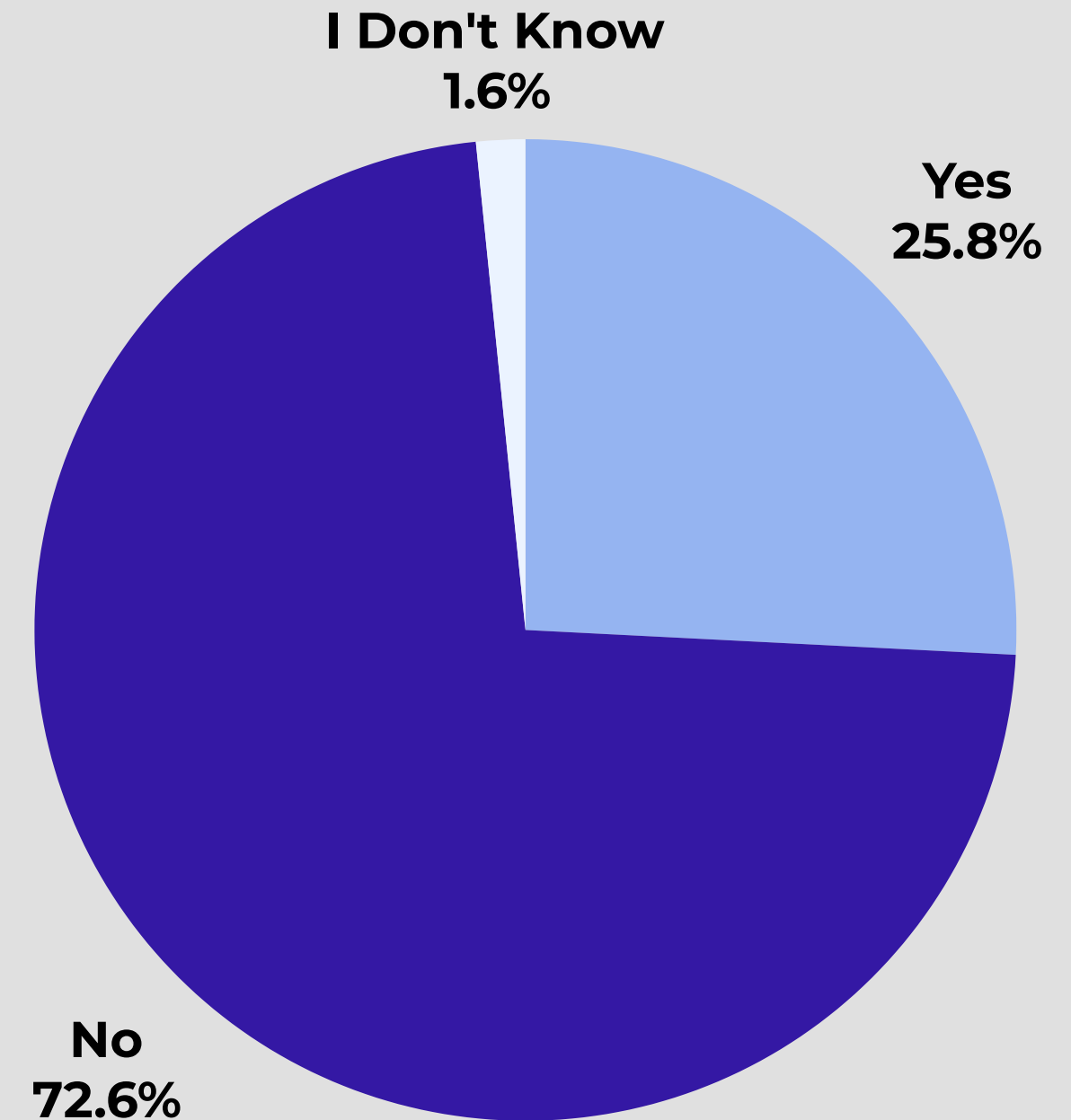


# Is your office fully staffed?

## Washington State



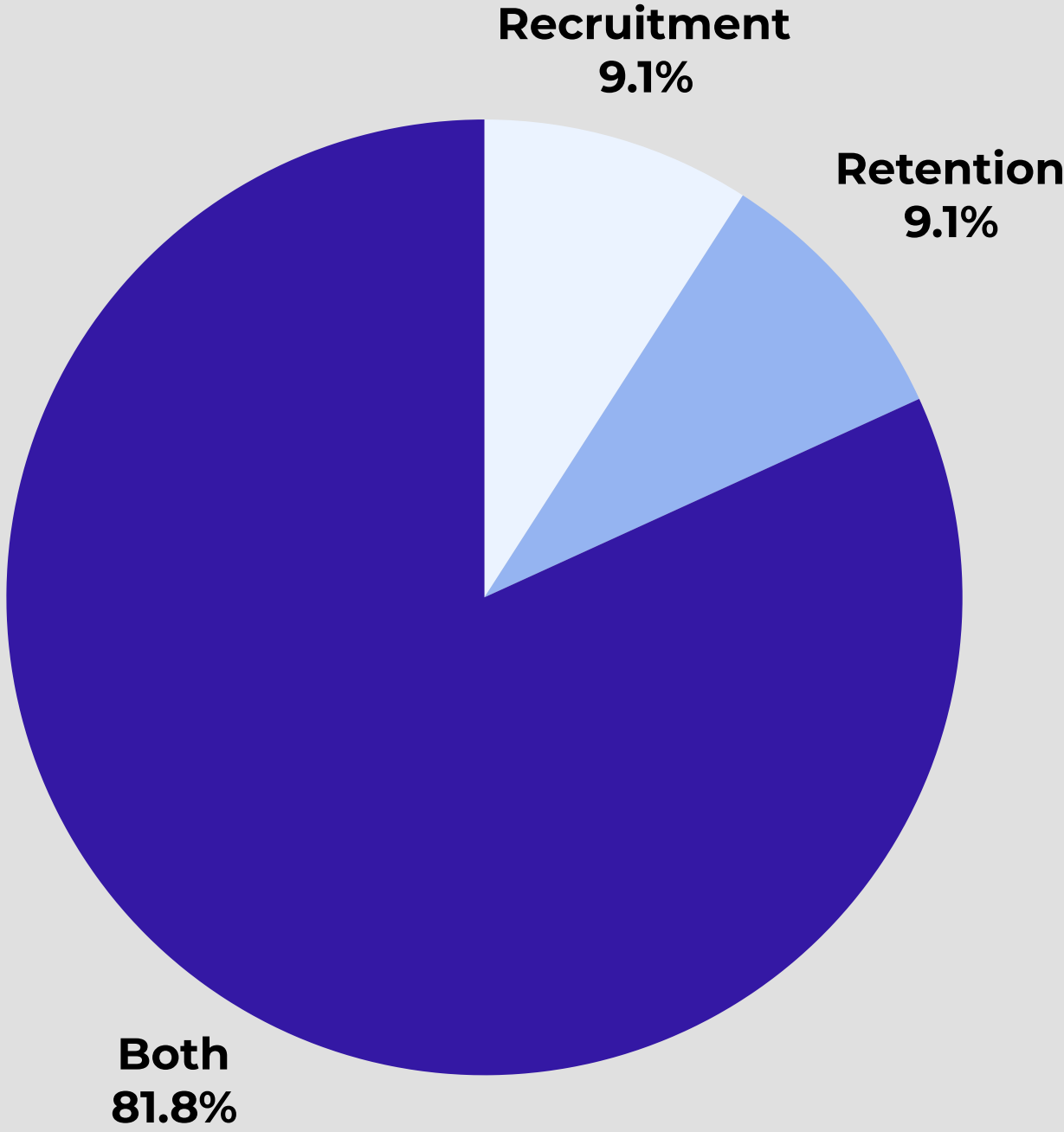
## Nationwide



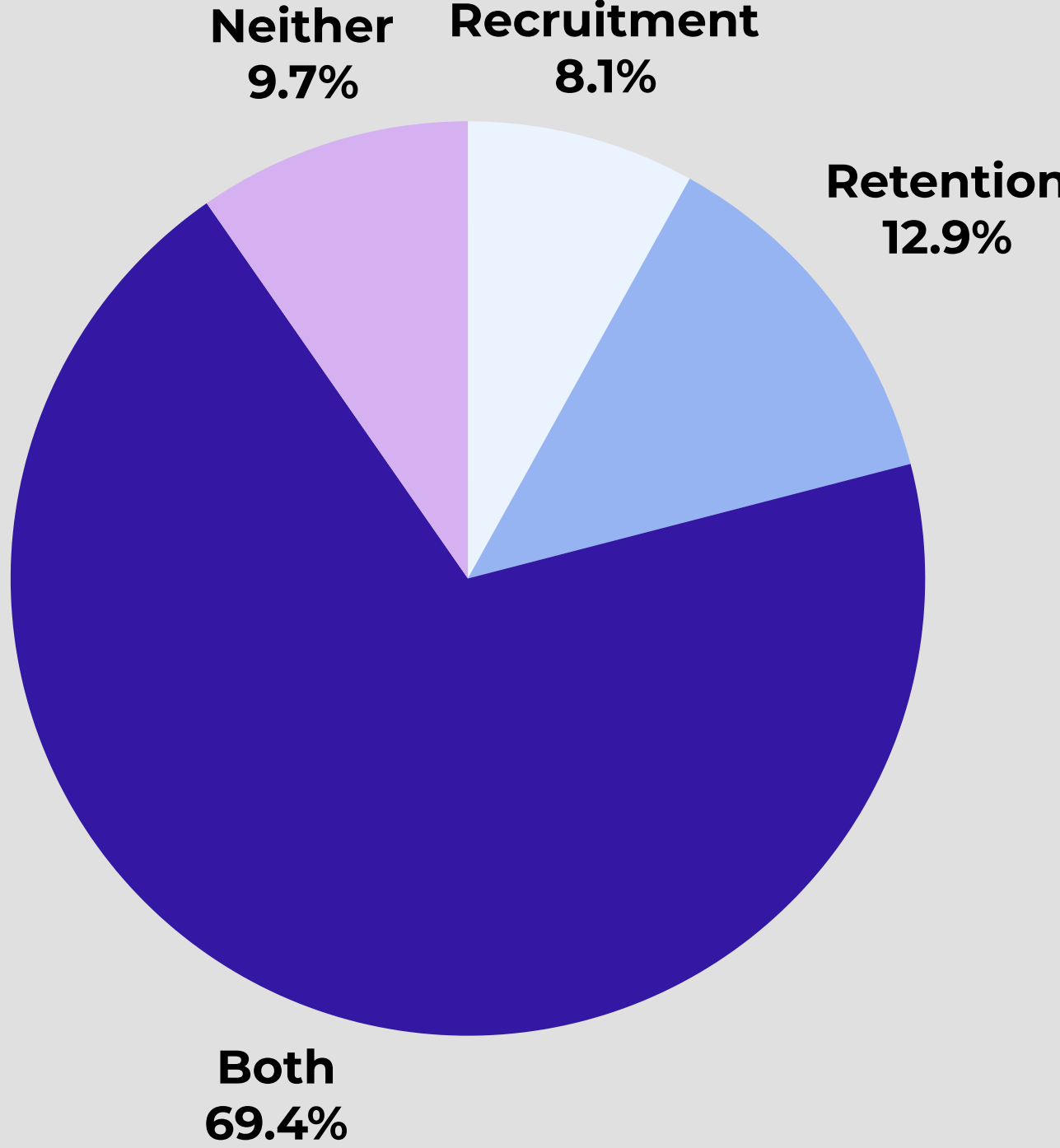


# Recruitment, Retention, Both?

## Washington State



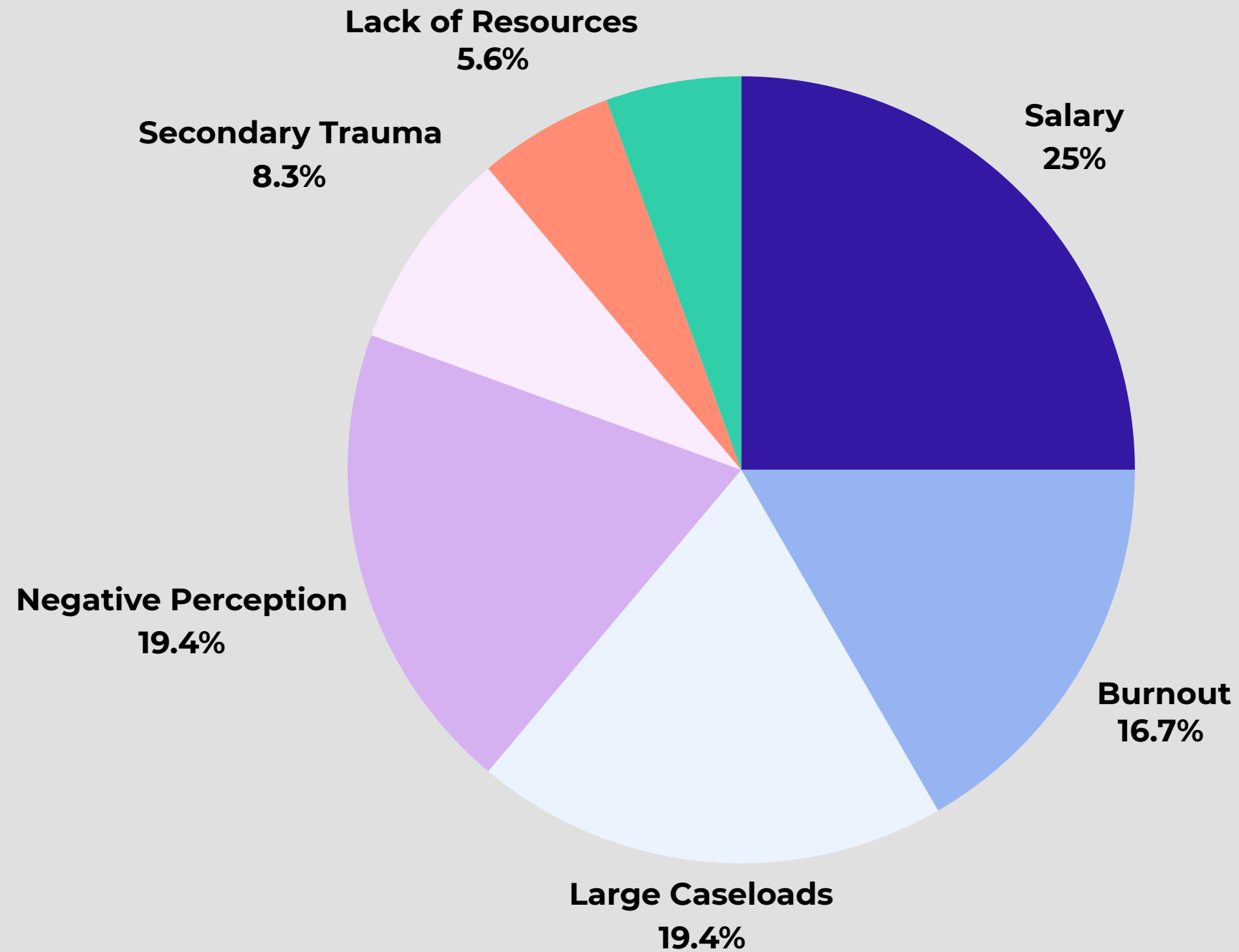
## Nationwide



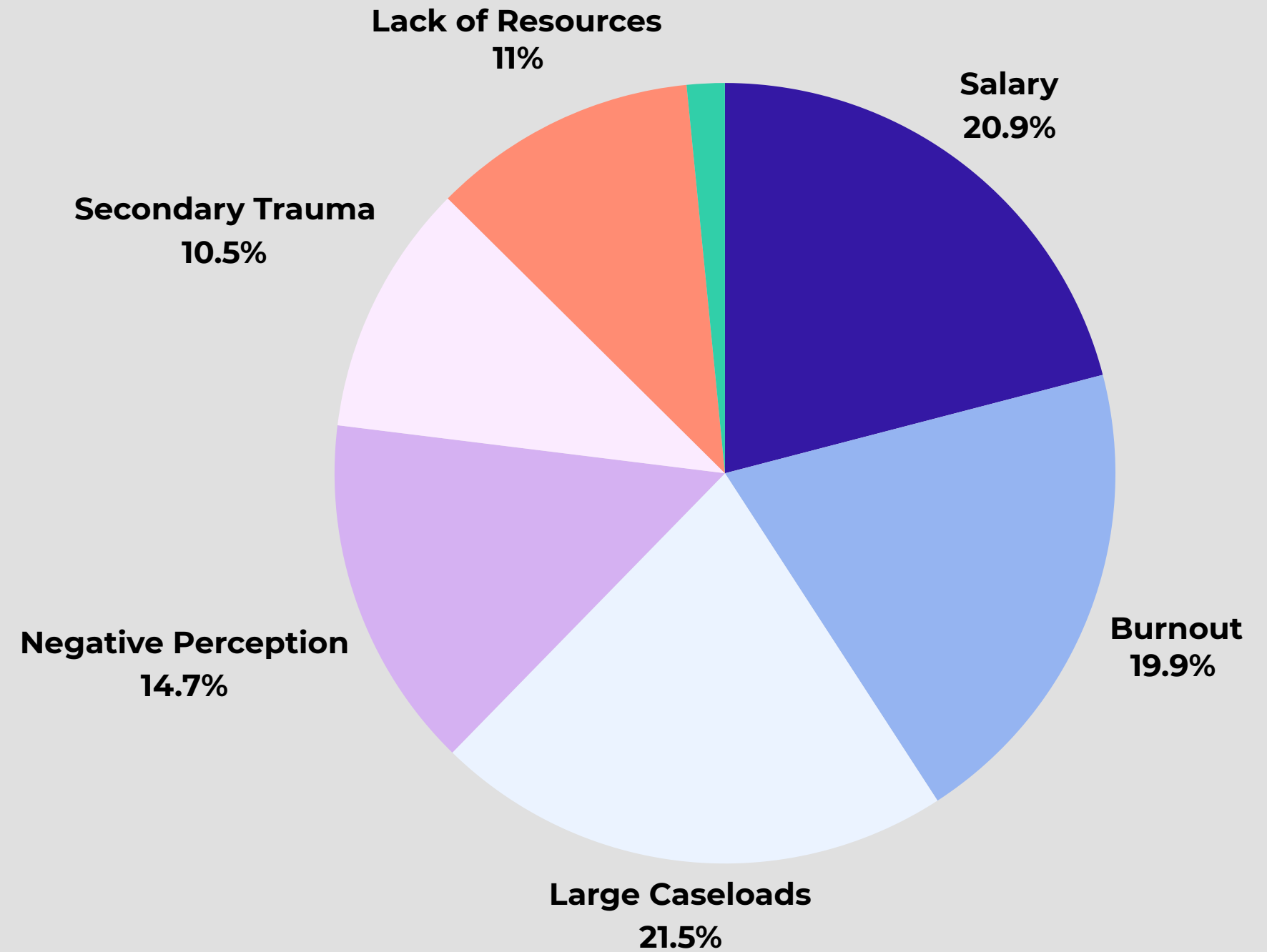


# Reasons Why

## Washington State

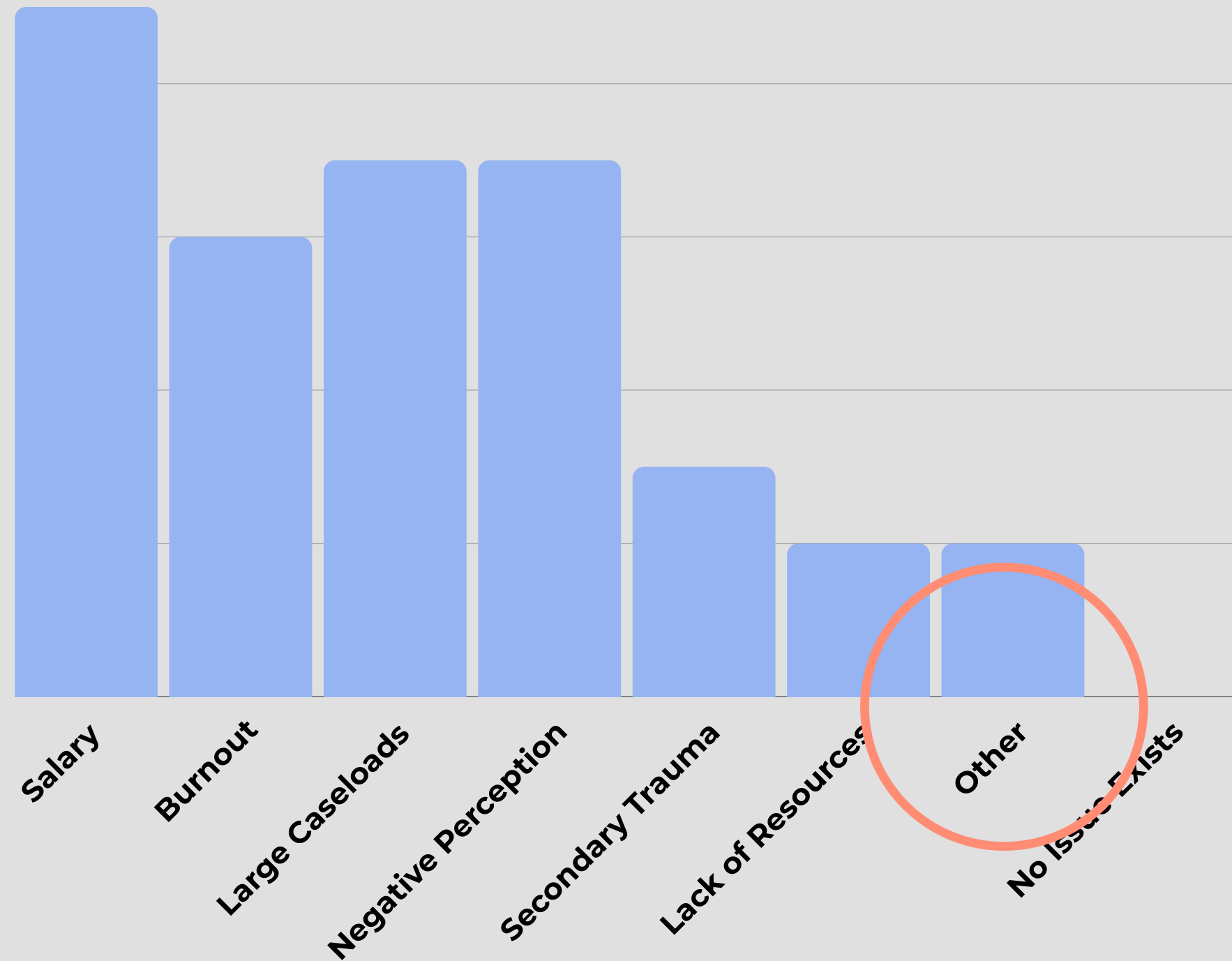


## Nationwide

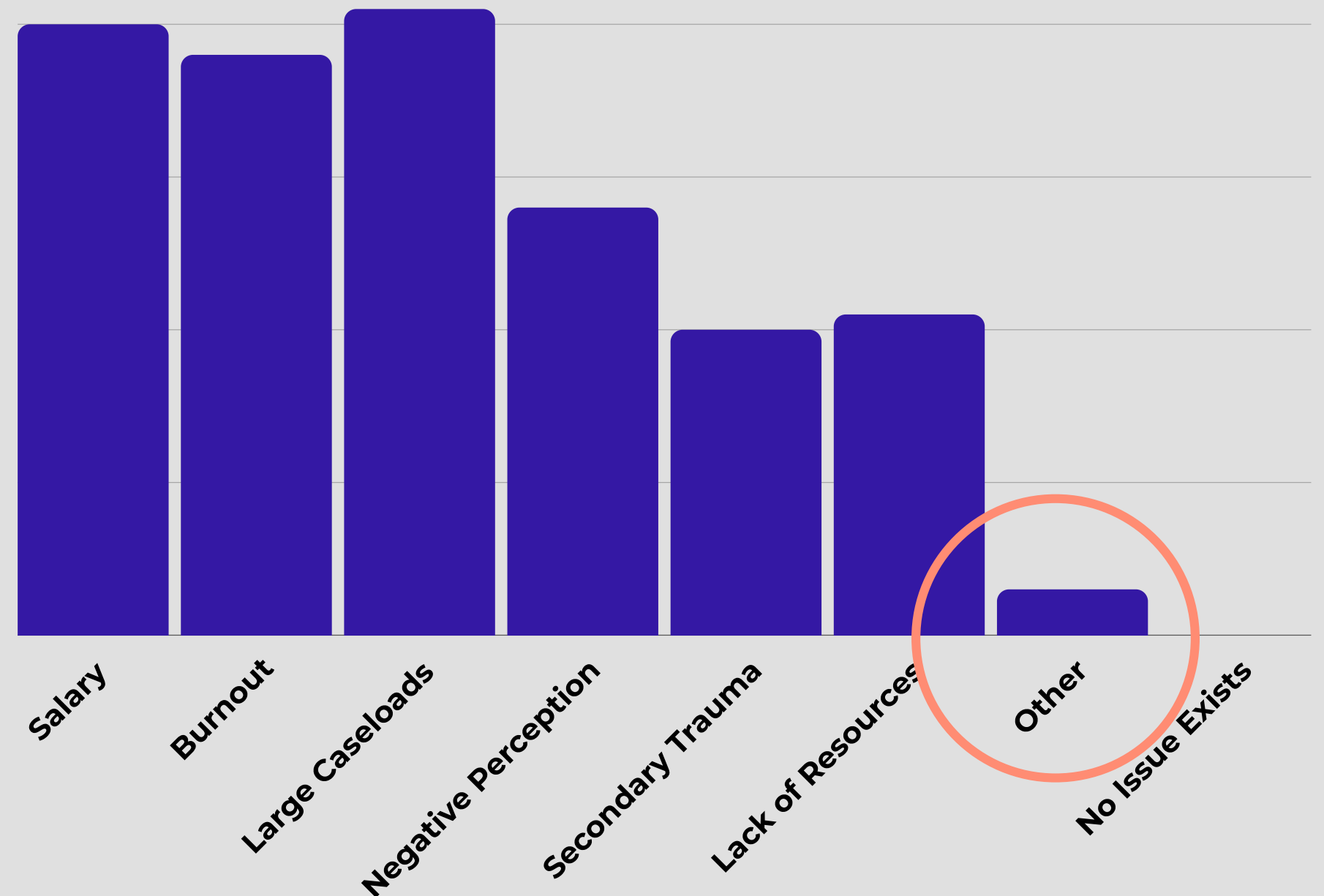


# "Other" Reasons Why

## Washington State



## Nationwide





# **“Other” Reasons Why**

**“Lack of attorneys willing to practice in the field.”**

**“Lack of active recruitment at a level that competes with other practice areas.”**

**“Law schools are not providing ample prosecution opportunity/discussion.”**

# Top Reasons

## Washington State

- 1 Salary**
- 2 Large Caseloads**
- 3 Negative Perception**
- 4 Burn Out**

## Nationwide

- 1 Large Caseloads**
- 2 Salary**
- 3 Burn Out**
- 4 Negative Perception**





**Interview with County Attorney Chris Taylor  
Tom Green County Attorney's Office, Texas**

# Takeaways



- **Culture of Respect**
- **Autonomy**
- **Manage Caseload Volume & Burnout by Making Good Charging Decisions**
- **Feedback, Yearly Reviews, Professional Development**
- **Recruitment through Relationship Building**



# Here's How To Make Performance Evaluations Super Productive And Painless (For All)



Expert Panel: *Human Resources Executives*  
Forbes Human Resources Council  
ORACLE, IBM, SAP, AND OTHER TOP EXECUTIVES

11

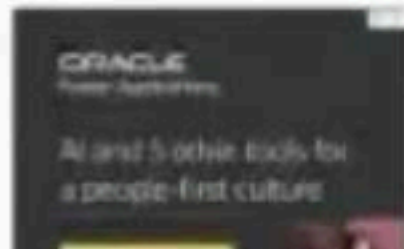
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- 11 All managers who are willing to foster a culture of open communication on a regular basis may be able to eliminate any surprise or uncomfortable conversations prior to performance evaluation submission dates.

To do this, schedule monthly 1:1 meetings or team collaboration sessions to make sure you're having some early and meaningful dialogues based on what employees truly need to help them improve on a current performance level that may be lacking or continue to exceed their individual and department goals.

Below are 14 tips from Forbes Human Resources Council members to help executive leaders make the most of performance review sessions that end more time for department leads and their direct reports.

Forbes



# Performance Reviews

From Forbes Human Resources Council\*



- **Be clear on what the purpose of the reviews are, and let employees know when they will take place.**
- **Focus on genuine relationship building and employee development throughout the year by scheduling regular check ins.**
- **Have an open door policy. Employees crave feedback in the moment.**

*\*Forbes Human Resources Council, Here's How Managers Are Making Performance Reviews Simple, Painless And Effective (2021)*



# Performance Reviews

From Forbes Human Resources Council\*



- **Be consistent and fair.**
- **Articulate what expected competencies for the position are and give specific examples of how they were and were not met.**
- **Offer a positive piece of feedback first and offer advice from the place of wanting employees to succeed.**
- **Avoid discussing compensation during reviews.**

*\*Forbes Human Resources Council, Here's How Managers Are Making Performance Reviews Simple, Painless And Effective (2021)*

# Attendance Code

**Virtual Attendees**

**7 3 2 1**



# Budgeting Tips

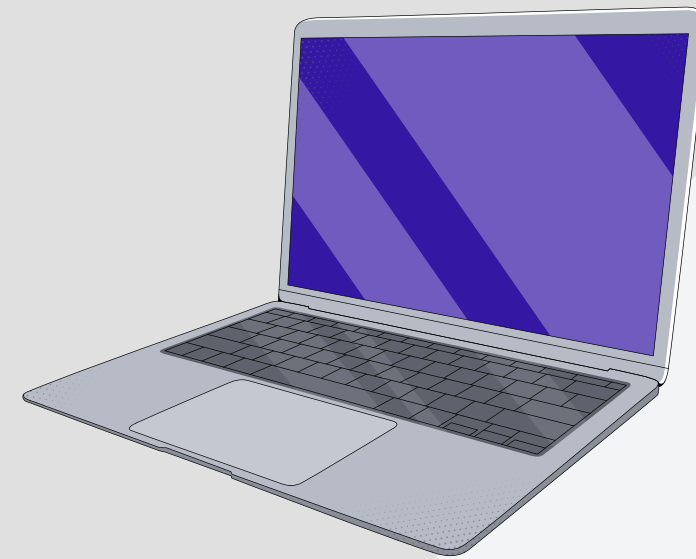


**Dr. Ben Short**  
Trussville City Council  
Planning & Zoning, Design, Review, Finance Committee

# Budgets



**Salaries  
Benefits**



**Equipment  
Technology**



**Presenting  
Requests**

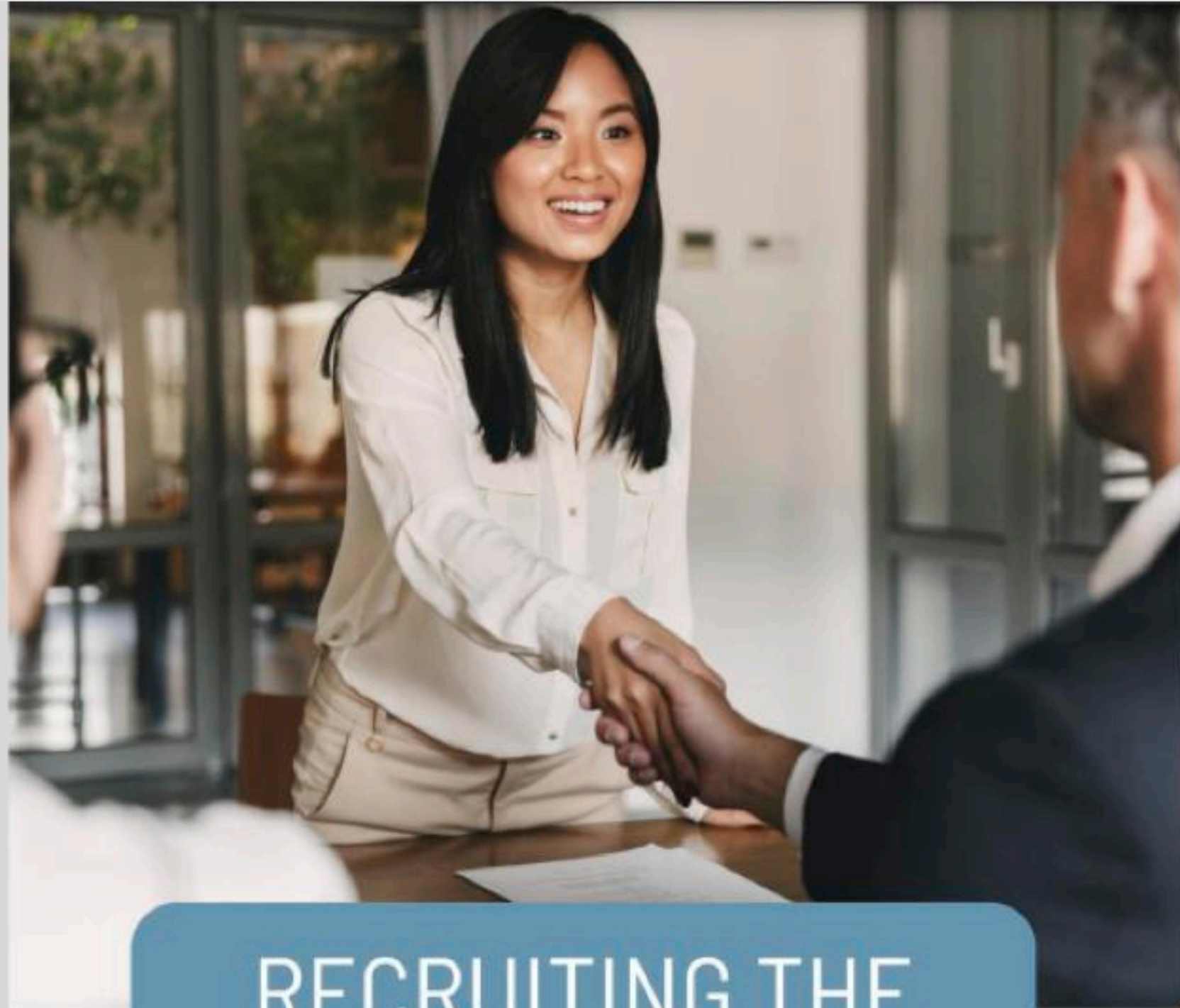


# Budgets



**Salaries**  
**Benefits**

- **Ask for a study to be conducted into positions and compensation compared to other offices nationwide, usually done by a third party who can then make a recommendation to whoever sets salaries & benefits in your jurisdiction.**

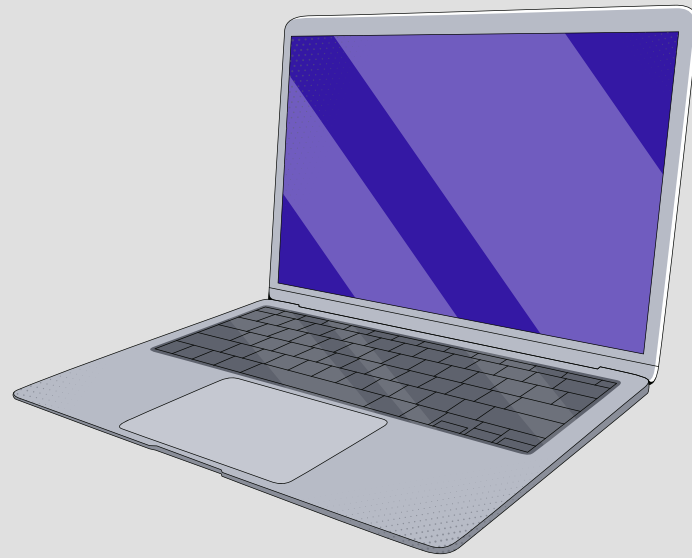


# RECRUITING THE GEN Z PROSECUTOR

NOVEMBER 2022



# Budgets



## Equipment Technology

- **When asking for funding for new equipment, software, or technology, consider how the purchase would save your office time and money.**
- **Could staff workloads become more manageable, reducing burnout?**
- **How would the purchase help you save on other expenses & personnel costs?**



# Budgets



## Presenting Requests

- **Highlight How Purchase Helps Employees with Job Difficulties**
- **Demonstrate Savings and Past Fiscal Responsibility**
- **Provide Information in a Simple, Straightforward Format (One Pager)**

# Budgets

## Other Sessions at WACO 2023 Annual Conference



- **Funding for Staff**
- **Working with Commissioners**



**Interview with Jessica Herzer  
Gonzaga School of Law, Class of 2024**



# Takeaways



- **Get Involved with Law Schools/Student Organizations & Participate in Local Public Service Job Fairs**
- **Communicate Office's Mission**
- **Be Mindful of Application Timelines**
- **Interns, Clerks, & Employees Want to Grow & Develop**

# **Gonzaga University School of Law**

## **Center for Professional Development & Externships**

**Laurie Powers, J.D.**  
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**Abraham Ritter, J.D.**  
***Associate Director***  
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**Nicole Wheir, J.D.**  
***Assistant Director***  
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**On-Campus Interviews**  
**Online Job Board (ZagLAW)**  
**Externships**  
**Networking / Blogspot**  
**Volunteer**

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## **25 Student Organizations**

**Including Moot Court, Criminal Law Society, Public Interest Law Project**

# Seattle University School of Law

## Center for Professional Development

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**On Campus Interviews**  
**Resume Collection Services**  
**Online Job Board (Simplicity)**  
**State Work Study**  
**Networking / Blogspot**  
**Mock Trial Competitions**

**43 Student Organizations**

**Including Future Prosecutors for Social Justice, Public Interest Law Foundation**



# University of Washington School of Law

## Center for Career Development

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**Networking & Alumni Events**

**Moot Court Competition Judge**

**Participate in Clinics**

**Huskies@Work Job Shadowing**

## 37 Student Organizations

**Including Public Interest Law Association, Moot Court Honor Court, First Generation  
Law Student Association**

# Graduates Staying in WA State

American Bar Association, 2022 Employment Statistics

**Gonzaga\***

**Largest Employment State**

**WA**

***(67 of 130 Students)***

**Seattle\***

**Largest Employment State**

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***(157 of 211 Students)***

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\*American Bar Association, Gonzaga University School of Law Employment Summary for 2022 Graduates

\*American Bar Association, Seattle University School of Law Employment Summary for 2022 Graduates

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# WA Graduates Employment Track

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The District Attorney (DA), also known as a prosecutor, plays a critical role in our criminal justice system. They represent the government in criminal cases and are responsible for ensuring that justice is served by prosecuting individuals accused of committing crimes.

Throughout the criminal justice process, the prosecutor works with law enforcement agencies to investigate crimes, determine whether charges should be filed, and prosecute cases in court. They also prioritize working with victims and witnesses to ensure their rights are protected and they are supported throughout the process.

You may hear the prosecutor referred to by different titles depending on the jurisdiction they serve. Regardless of their title, the role of the prosecutor remains the same. They represent the people of their jurisdiction and have a duty to seek justice in every case, carefully evaluating the evidence presented and protecting the rights of the accused.

The role of the prosecutor is crucial to maintaining public safety and deterring future criminal behavior. By prosecuting criminals, they help ensure that justice is served, which in turn promotes a sense of security within the community.



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# **Northwest Public Service Career Fair**

**Hosted and Coordinated by**

**Lewis & Clark Law School  
Seattle University School of Law**

**Jana Matthews (Seattle Fair)  
jmatthews1@seattleu.edu**



**February 3-4, 2024**

**Employer registration opens each October.**

# Student Loans

**“95% of students take on loans to attend law school, and the average law student owes about \$165,000 in educational debt upon graduating.” \***



- **State Initiatives**
- **Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness**

# Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness

## Eligibility\*

### Qualifications for PSLF

- **be employed by a U.S. federal, state, local, or tribal government or qualifying not-for-profit organization (federal service includes U.S. military service);**
- **work full-time for that agency or organization;**
- **have Direct Loans (or consolidate other federal student loans into a Direct Loan);**
- **repay your loans under an income-driven repayment plan or a 10-year Standard Repayment Plan; and make a total of 120 qualifying monthly payments that need not be consecutive.**

\*Federal Student Aid, Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Website

### How to Apply

- **Check to see if your employer is already in our employer database.**
- **Request that your employer's eligibility be reviewed if it is not already in our database or has not yet had its eligibility determined.**
- **Prepare and sign your PSLF form, and request certification and signature from your employer—all electronically.**
- **Generate your PSLF form for manual signature and submission to the PSLF servicer (if electronic submission isn't possible).**



# Additional Resources

## Prosecutors' Center for Excellence, *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor* (December 2022)\*

- **Average Salary \$ 57,341 (based on Survey of 530 Offices)**
- **Other Incentives: Paid Bar Dues, Student Loan Assistance and Forgiveness, First Time Homebuyers, Free CLES, Tuition Reimbursement, Wellness Programs**
- **Interns = Future Employees**
- **More Collaborative Rather than Competitive Environments**

\*Hamann, K., Prosecutors' Center for Excellence, *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor* (December 2022)

# Additional Resources

## Upcoming Events & On Demand Webinars

- **10/10/23 12:30–2:00P (Zoom) Washington Student Achievement Council Webinar – Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF): New Regulations and Limited-Time Opportunities**
- **On Demand Maintaining Emotional Well-Being Verdict after Verdict: Trauma Resilience for Prosecutors presented by Dr. Elena M. Doskey**

# Maintaining Emotional Well-Being Verdict After Verdict

Trauma resilience for prosecutors using the CE-CERT model.



**Elena M. Doskey de Lobón, Ph.D.**  
Dallas Children's Advocacy Center





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# Additional Resources

## Moving Justice Forward: A Blueprint for the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice\*

- **“Higher workloads cause backlogs and decreased efficiency” and “such outcomes can also lead to additional harm for victims and further compound disparate outcomes for people of color.”**
- **“The amount of time and energy dedicated to operating out-of-date technology leads to an increased workload and takes prosecutors and staff away from other pertinent tasks such as ensuring sufficient and effective time is spent on each case.”**
- **Recommended Actions: evaluate statewide staffing needs, set hiring targets, engage with legislature to increase funding, assess technology gaps, create budget for technology**

# Additional Resources

## Prosecutor Priorities, Challenges, and Solutions\*

- **“Some of the most-pressing challenges that prosecutors face are related to difficulties recruiting, training, managing, and retaining staff.”**
- **High Priority Need: “Research to better understand ways to improve staff recruitment, training, and retention would best support many of the challenges that prosecutors face.”**



# To Do List

## What can you do today?

- **Draft mission-type statement for your office that gives insight into culture.**
- **Reach out to law school career services and/or directly to student organizations.**
- **Sign up for the Northwest Public Service Job Fair.**
- **Create an open door feedback policy and start calendaring yearly reviews.**



# To Do List

**What can you do today?**



- **Make sure current employees are aware that your office qualifies for federal public service loan forgiveness & start sharing with potential new hires.**
- **Carve out time on your next board meeting agenda to discuss recruitment and retention of prosecutors in WA. Compare notes to determine what is working and not working.**

# Contact Information

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Guardify.com

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**[https://gonzaga.azureedge.net/-/media/Website/Documents/Academics/School-of-Law/About/Consumer-Information/ABA-Employment-Summary-Report-2022.ashx?](https://gonzaga.azureedge.net/-/media/Website/Documents/Academics/School-of-Law/About/Consumer-Information/ABA-Employment-Summary-Report-2022.ashx?rev=5942157d34ab4cfa896fd61d139f0085&hash=DF66D7DDD84347D8D7810EFC3F7565C6)**

**[rev=5942157d34ab4cfa896fd61d139f0085&hash=DF66D7DDD84347D8D7810EFC3F7565C6](https://gonzaga.azureedge.net/-/media/Website/Documents/Academics/School-of-Law/About/Consumer-Information/ABA-Employment-Summary-Report-2022.ashx?rev=5942157d34ab4cfa896fd61d139f0085&hash=DF66D7DDD84347D8D7810EFC3F7565C6)**

**American Bar Association, Seattle University School of Law Employment Summary for 2022 Graduates,**

**<https://law.seattleu.edu/media/school-of-law/documents/about/aba-required-disclosures/employment-summaries/aba-employment-summary-for-2022-graduates.pdf>**

**American Bar Association, University of Washington School of Law Employment Summary for 2022 Graduates,**

**<https://www.law.uw.edu/media/142995/updated-class-of-2022-employment-summary-report-002.pdf>**

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**City of Trussville, Alabama, <https://trussville.org/>**



# Citations, Links

**DeClerc, T., Garcia, A., Geiger, S., Hauslick, D., Jackson, L., Lucas, D., Martinez, A., Van Develde, K., Center for Justice Innovation, *Moving Justice Forward: A Blueprint for the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice*, <https://www.innovatingjustice.org/publications/moving-justice-forward#:~:text=In%20a%20joint%20effort%20to,within%20the%20State's%20Attorneys'%20Offices>**

**Doskey, Dr. Elena M., *Maintaining Emotional Well-Being Verdict after Verdict: Trauma Resilience for Prosecutors Webinar*, <https://info.guardify.com/verdict>**

**Federal Student Aid, *Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness*, <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service>**

**Forbes Human Resources Council, *Here's How Managers Are Making Performance Reviews Simple, Painless And Effective* (2021), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2021/09/09/heres-how-managers-are-making-performance-reviews-simple-painless-and-effective/?sh=8abbfd350086>**

**Ford, B., *Why I Left My Prosecution Career to Give Future Prosecutors Meaningful Tech*, <https://guardify.com/why-i-left-my-prosecution-career-to-give-future-prosecutors-meaningful-tech/>**

**Guardify, *Get Out of Dodge: How Ford County, Kansas Gave the Boot to Manual Evidence Management Practices Webinar*, <https://info.guardify.com/fordcounty>**

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<https://www.gonzaga.edu/school-of-law/careers>**

**Gonzaga University School of Law, Student Organizations, <https://www.gonzaga.edu/school-of-law/academics/academic-success-program/student-resources/student-organizations>**

**Hamann, K., Prosecutors' Center for Excellence, *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor* (December 2022),  
<https://pceinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/20230324-Recruiting-the-Gen-Z-Prosecutor-PCE-.pdf>**

**Leavenworth, J., CT Insider, *Short-staffed CT prosecutors deal with heavy workloads and outdated technology, report shows*  
<https://www.ctinsider.com/connecticut/article/state-s-attorney-workload-hiring-report-18294707.php>**

**Northwest Public Service Career Fair, <https://law.lclark.edu/nwconsortium/nw-public-service-career-fair/>**

**Seattle University School of Law, Center for Professional Development, <https://law.seattleu.edu/careers/our-services/>**

**Seattle University School of Law, Student Organizations <https://law.seattleu.edu/student-life/community/student-activities/student-organizations/>**

# Citations, Links

**National District Attorneys Association Learning Center, Streamlining Evidence Intake: Uniting Prosecutors & Law Enforcement through Cutting-Edge Technology for Efficient Evidence Management & Discovery Excellence Webinar, [https://learn.ndaa.org/products/streamlining-evidence-intake-uniting-prosecutors-law-enforcement-through-cutting-edge-technology-for-efficient-evidence-management-discovery-excellence-2#tab-product\\_tab\\_overview](https://learn.ndaa.org/products/streamlining-evidence-intake-uniting-prosecutors-law-enforcement-through-cutting-edge-technology-for-efficient-evidence-management-discovery-excellence-2#tab-product_tab_overview)**

**Tom Green County Attorney's Office, Texas, <https://www.tomgreencountytx.gov/page/ca.CountyAttorneyHome>**

**United States Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, Vicarious Trauma Toolkit  
<https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/introduction>**

**University of Washington School of Law, Center for Career Development, <https://www.law.uw.edu/careers>**

**University of Washington, Student Organizations and Law Journals,  
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**Upchurch, M., Mobile Bar Association Monthly Bulletin, *President's Comments*, Volume XLII, Issue 5 (May 2013)**

**Washington Student Achievement Council, <https://wsac.wa.gov/about-us>**

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# **Building Bridges to Success: Strengthening Prosecutor Recruitment and Retention**