

Update on Online Billing Submission (Continued from Page 1)

invoices absent exceptional circumstances such as a large hourly billing that cannot be submitted online because of limitations on file size.

JAC is working on Phase II of Due Process Vendor Online Billing Submission, which will allow due process vendors to preview, generate, and electronically sign due process vouchers online instead of scanning those vouchers. To submit a new invoice in the upcoming phase, the vendor will select the JAC voucher type and the relevant service types. Based on this information, the vendor will be directed to the appropriate online voucher form containing the fields that must be filled in to generate an electronic voucher cover. The "Preview Draft Voucher Cover" button option will give the vendor an opportunity to review the information in the voucher cover before final submission of the invoice packet.

Prior to beginning online invoice submission, supporting documentation will need to be scanned as electronic files (PDF or TIFF format only). After generating and electronically signing the electronic voucher cover online, the vendor will upload the billing packet including the supporting documentation. Upon submission, the voucher cover will be assigned a tracking number, which will be emailed to the attorney and the vendor along with the voucher cover and supporting documentation. Next, the attorney will login to *My Access* and use the tracking number to open the billing submitted by the vendor and electronically sign the voucher cover thereby certifying and completing the billing. Once the attorney independently certifies the billing, the complete invoice packet will be reviewed and processed by JAC staff.

Juvenile Life Sentencing

In recent years, an issue has arisen regarding life sentences for defendants who were juveniles at the time of the offense. In response, the Legislature enacted s. 921.1401, F.S., which requires a court to consider numerous factors prior to imposing a life sentence. In relation to those cases, JAC began receiving motions for mitigation specialists. The problem is that, under Florida law, the higher rate for mitigation specialist services only applies to capital death cases. Nonetheless, the provisions of s. 921.1401, F.S., require a detailed forensic social evaluation of the defendant. Mitigation specialists involved in capital death cases often have the education and expertise to prepare the forensic social evaluation required by s. 921.1401, F.S.

Although the trial court may not appoint a "mitigation specialist" in these cases, the court may appoint a forensic social worker or similar expert for purposes of conducting a forensic social evaluation pursuant to s. 921.1401, F.S. The Court will determine whether a particular provider has the necessary expertise to conduct the evaluation. The rate for this service cannot exceed \$75 per hour. Under these circumstances, an investigator will also need to be appointed (at the rate of \$40 per hour) for purposes of conducting the investigatory portion of the evaluation, such as gathering records and obtaining pertinent information. The scope of the expert's services will be limited to performing the forensic social evaluation of the defendant.