

# Tulare County Counsel

## Deanne H. Peterson

TULARE COUNTY COUNSEL



# County Counsel

- By statute, the County Counsel is the attorney for the County, its officers and employees in their official capacity and certain other public entities such as memorial districts and cemetery districts.
- Risk Management is charged with protecting the County's employees, physical and fiscal assets. Risk's programs and services are an integral component of the office.



# County Counsel's Role



# County Counsel Vision And Mission





# County Counsel Office Teams



**Administrative**

**Fiscal**

**Labor and Employment**

**Litigation**

**Protective Services**

**Resources**

**Risk Management**

# A Bit of History

The Office of Tulare County Counsel was created in 1946. Since that time, eight attorneys have served as County Counsel, including

NameYears Served		NameYears Served	
Deanne H. Peterson	2017 – Present	Calvin E. Baldwin	1959 – 1980
Kathleen Bales-Lange	1997 – 2017	Ralph B. Jordan	1953 – 1959
Lita O’Neill Blatner	1985 – 1996	Ralph Nickerson	1950 – 1953
Thomas D. Bowman	1980 – 1985	Leroy McCormick	1946 – 1950

# Administrative

- Clerical support, from general tasks to complex and confidential tasks.
- Daily essential tools needed to service department clients
- Customer service to internal clients and County Departments.



# Fiscal Unit

- Managing Departmental Budget
- Insurance funds Budgets – Workers Compensation, General Liability, Property and Medical Malpractice
- Payroll processing, billings, accounts payable and receivable.



# Labor and Employment

- Provides advice relating to all aspects of the County's labor and employment matters
- Provides general legal services to the Risk Management Team, Human Resources, and all County Health and Justice departments
- Serves as General Counsel for the San Joaquin Valley Insurance Authority, the 457 Deferred Compensation Plan, the Task Force on Homelessness.

# Labor and Employment

- Countywide and department pandemic response policies
- Developed and provided necessary online training to meet requirements while still complying with ever-changing pandemic restrictions/requirements
- Work closely with Risk Management and Legal Teams in addressing and defending various questions and claims related to the ongoing pandemic
- Overseen employment investigations to ensure thorough, fair, and unbiased investigations utilizing various forms of socially distanced investigation techniques

# Litigation

- Defend the County and its employees State and Federal Civil Litigation
- Monitors all County litigation assigned to outside legal counsel
- Represent individual departments in hearings before the Board and TCERA in disability retirement matters.

# Litigation

- Established robust litigation hold procedures, providing related training to County departments.
- Adopted new case handling strategies for litigating during a pandemic.
- Worked closely with Risk and other legal teams to identify potential liabilities and reduce the risk of litigation.

# Protective Services

- Represents and advises the County in all matters relating to juvenile dependency and conservatorships.
- Lanterman-Petris-Short Act
- Child Welfare Services matters
- Public Guardian Proceedings
- Related Appellate cases





# Protective Services

For Fiscal Year 2019/2020:

- Filed 551 Child Welfare Services petitions;
- Responded to 27 appeals and appellate writs;
- Appeared daily in the County's Juvenile Court
- Submitted 62 warrants to remove 132 children from dangerous home environments;
- Appeared weekly in Probate Court and frequently in Criminal Court
- Initiated 23 new conservatorships
- Provided daily advice and frequent training to staff from Child Welfare Services, Public Guardian and Mental Health.

A group of four business professionals (three men and one woman) are gathered around a table in a modern office. They are all smiling and looking at documents on the table. The man on the right is wearing a dark suit and tie, and is pointing at a document. The woman on the left is wearing glasses and a light-colored top. The man in the center is wearing a dark suit and tie. The woman on the right is wearing a light-colored top. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office space with large windows.

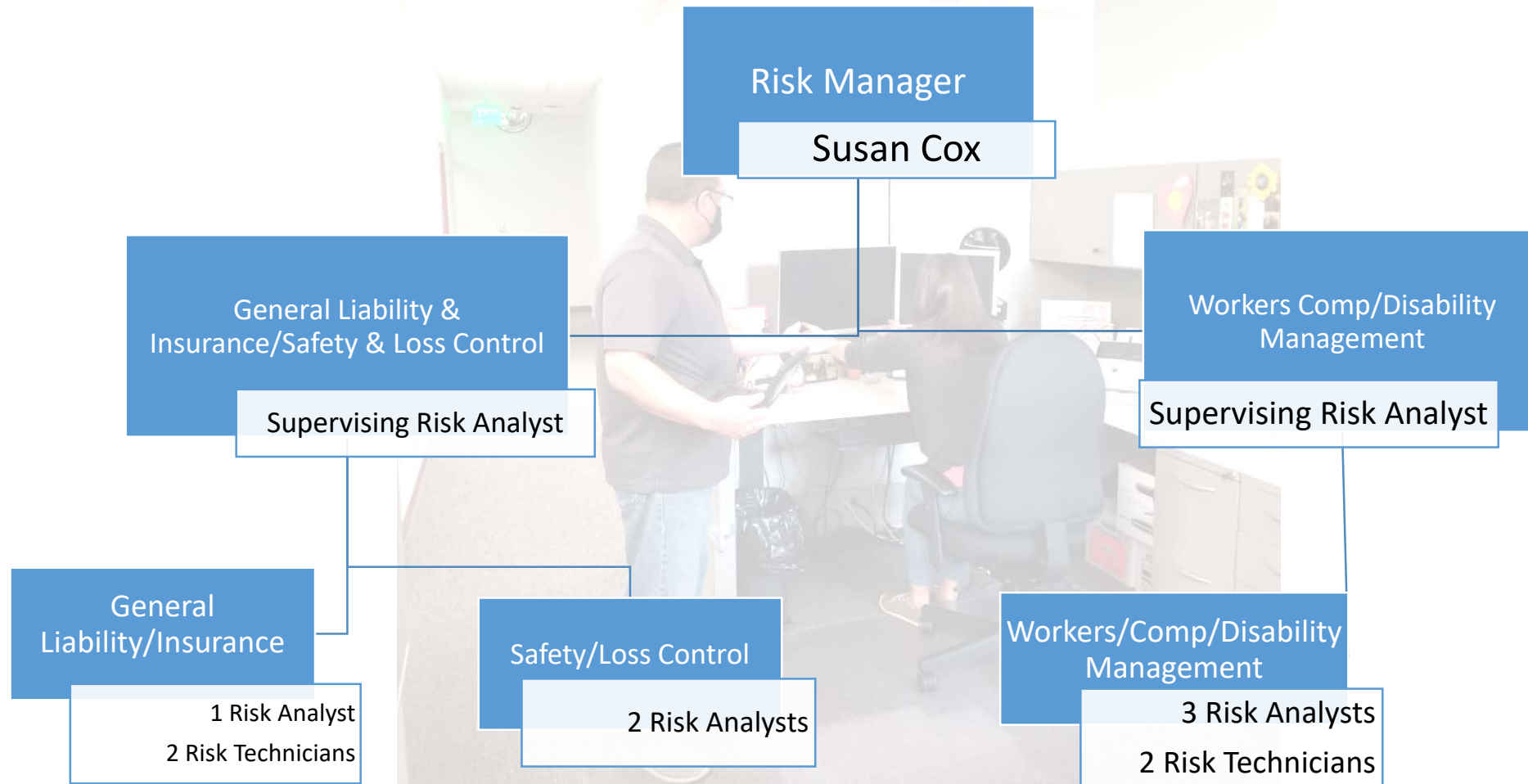
# Resource

- Provides general legal services to the Board of Supervisors, various County committees and commissions
- Contracts with other local agencies to provide general legal services
- Upon request, provides general legal services to Veteran's Memorial Districts, Public Cemetery Districts, the Lemon Cove Sanitary District, and the Tulare County Resource Conservation District.
- Assists the Litigation Team in defending challenges to County decisions on land use, environmental law, and public works issues

# Resource

- Together with Labor & Employment Team, Resource Team prepared/edited/reviewed/approved 900 Board Resolutions, 460 Board Agreements, 17 ordinances, and 1,020 Board Agenda Items
- Resolved DairyCares litigation with the Sierra Club and Center for Biological Diversity
- Resolved complex construction claims on the South County Detention Facility project

# Risk Management



# Risk Management

The protection of the County's assets are accomplished through five Risk Management program areas:

- Risk Transfers and Insurance programs,
- County's self-insured General Liability and Claims administration programs,
- Safety Program and Loss Control efforts,
- County's self-insured Workers Compensation program,
- Administration of the County's Disability Management program.



# General Liability & Insurance

## Risk Transfer and Insurance Programs

- Oversees the County's participation in PRISM
- Reviews departments' insurance provisions within contracts and agreements
- Processes certificates of insurance

## General Liability Claims

- Self-administers liability claims filed against the County under the Tort Claim Act.
- Conducts early investigation and evaluation of claims
- Refers matters to County Counsel for its defense

# Safety & Loss Control

## Safety Program & Loss Control

- Oversees County's Illness Prevention Program and Countywide Safety Committee.
- Conducts quarterly safety meetings, training, and education to prevent losses and to reduce the impact of losses to departments and the County.
- Consults with Departments regarding safety issues, assessment of hazard concerns, emergency response drills, and implementation of appropriate mitigation measures to reduce risk.
- Prepares safety plans in compliance with Federal and State health and safety regulations.

# Workers Compensation & Disability Management

## Workers Compensation

- Oversees the CorVel's 3rd party claims administrator
- Works closely with Departments to reduce injury impact

## Disability Management Program

- Administers the County's Disability Management Program and Return to Work accommodations.
- Acts as liaisons to County departments regarding extended disability absences, complex accommodation, and disability retirement.
- Conducts interactive process meetings with Departments and employees

# TULARE COUNTY COUNSEL



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