

## Preface

The legal community in Oregon is dedicated to the preservation and the enforcement of the rule of law. That dedication is based on the recognition that it is the rule of law that is the very foundation of our way of life -- ensuring our liberty, our safety, our health, our education, our commerce, and even our spirituality.

Protecting the fundamental constitutional rights of all individuals is an essential element of our shared commitment to the rule of law. The importance of post conviction proceedings -- the last opportunity in this state's justice system to ensure fundamental fairness, accuracy, and transparency in all criminal proceedings that impact individual liberty -- cannot be overstated.

The Principles and Performance Standards that follow are an acknowledgement of the complex and specialized nature of post conviction proceedings, their finality, and counsel's critical role in those proceedings. Lawyers protecting individual constitutional rights must be committed to excellence at each stage of the criminal justice process, including post conviction proceedings. Effective representation in post conviction proceedings requires that counsel possess a unique combination of experience and skills in criminal law, civil pleading and practice, civil discovery, and the law of federal habeas corpus. The Principles and Standards represent a first step in establishing the expectation and the commitment to excellence in this specialized area of law. I commend the Task Force and Oregon's dedicated criminal defense bar for their fidelity to the high standards they have set for themselves.

*Chief Justice Paul J. De Muniz*  
*Oregon Supreme Court*