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Federal Public Defender, District of Alaska

Vacancy Announcement 2026-05

Application Deadline: Open Until Filled, Rolling Review

Location: Anchorage, Alaska

Position: CJA Resource Counsel

Position Type: Full-time/Permanent

Salary Range: Judiciary Salary Plan (JSP) Grade 12/Step 1 – Grade 15/Step 10 (\$101,206 - \$197,200)

Starting classification level and salary are dependent upon experience and qualifications.

Promotion potential up to JSP-15 without further competition.

WHO WE ARE

The Federal Public Defender for the District of Alaska is a dedicated team united by a shared commitment to protecting the constitutional rights of individuals charged with federal crimes. Based in midtown Anchorage, we serve one of the largest and most geographically complex districts in the country.

Our practice is rooted in a client-centered defense model. We believe people are more than their charges, more than their histories, and more than the government's version of events. Our clients come to us at some of the most difficult moments of their lives, and we take seriously both sides of our role: the obligation to push back and test the evidence, and the responsibility to tell our clients' stories fully, honestly, and with dignity, even when the system makes that difficult.

Alaska's legal community is small, collaborative, and deeply interconnected. That reality strengthens our practice. We know our counterparts. We know the courts. We know the systems our clients are moving through, and we are creative, persistent, and relentless advocates within them.

We are a collaborative and mission-driven office that values teamwork, mutual respect, and pitching in wherever help is needed. Our strong office culture is one of the reasons staff turnover is low and opportunities to join our team are rare. We see public defense as both legal advocacy and social justice work. We fight for our clients not only because the law requires it, but because fairness, dignity, and accountability in the criminal legal system depend on it.

WHY ALASKA

Alaska offers a rare opportunity to influence the delivery of federal public defense across one of the largest and most geographically complex judicial districts in the country. The size of the district, the close working relationships among the bench, bar, and defender community, and the unique challenges of providing representation across a vast state make this a rewarding place to strengthen CJA programs and support the attorneys who serve our clients. Anchorage provides the amenities of a midsize city with unparalleled access to mountains, wildlife, and world-class outdoor recreation. Many people come to Alaska for the opportunity, but stay because of the quality of life, the close-knit legal community, and the chance to make a lasting impact on the administration of justice.

THE ROLE

The CJA Resource Counsel serves as the Federal Public Defender's attorney expert on Criminal Justice Act (CJA) panel administration and works in partnership with the CJA Panel Administrator to support the effective operation of the District's CJA Panel. The Resource Counsel focuses on attorney recruitment, training, mentoring, policy development, and program improvement while collaborating closely with the federal courts, Defender Services Office, and CJA Panel attorneys to strengthen the quality and consistency of representation provided under the Criminal Justice Act.

This role requires exceptional judgment, collaboration, and a commitment to public defense. The CJA Resource Counsel serves as a trusted resource to judges, panel attorneys, and office leadership on CJA policies, funding, and panel practices while identifying opportunities to improve programs and implement national and local initiatives. Although this is not a litigation position and does not permit courtroom appearances or the private practice of law, it offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of federal indigent defense in Alaska by supporting the attorneys who provide that representation.

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Create and maintain a Recruitment Plan consisting of various recruitment strategies and techniques used in the recruitment and retention panel members
- Recruit new panel members and service providers
- Assist with coordinating continuing education for the CJA Panel attorneys
- Coordinate and conduct performance reviews of panel attorneys
- Oversee mentoring program and provide program recommendations to the Defender
- Assist in the prompt appointment of counsel for indigent defendants in federal court
- Act as a resource expert for CJA Panel members
- Compile and maintain lists of various court experts, such as interpreters, psychiatrists, investigators, and other experts
- Assist CJA Panel attorneys and the Court with the efficient processing of vouchers for reimbursement
- Review vouchers submitted by attorneys, experts, and other service providers for reasonableness, accuracy, and compliance with District guidelines
- Consult with judges about significant issues or proposed voucher reduction
- Review funding requests and make recommendations to judge as to whether requested rates are consistent with CJA guidelines and as to reasonableness of request
- Assist judges with expenditures in cases, coordinate with defense counsel to eliminate duplication of motions and to require cooperation in discovery, coordination of investigation and pretrial needs consistent with District guidelines for such cases
- Collect and analyze costs and other data and prepare reports regarding CJA voucher payments and procedures and CJA panel management
- Remain current with developments within the circuit and the district court, as well as evolving legislation pertaining to the CJA. Update panel attorneys and judges, as appropriate
- Participate in the District Court's CJA Committee and assist with other CJA related committees as required
- Advise the Federal Defender on national and local policy changes to draft, update and implement local district directives
- Implement and communicate new policy changes to panel attorneys, including ensuring the CJA portion of the district court website is accurate and up to date

QUALIFICATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

- Juris Doctor (J.D.) from an accredited law school.
- Admission and good standing with the highest court of a state, federal territory, or the District of Columbia.
- Demonstrated commitment to criminal defense and indigent representation.
- Applicants must have a minimum of five years of experience in trial work or other related work.

- Ability to develop full knowledge of and interpret CJA Guidelines and federal travel regulations, the Guide to Judiciary Policy, circuit and district CJA policies and procedures, and local court rules.
- A positive work ethic, a reputation for personal and professional integrity, ability to maintain confidentiality, and an ability to work well with the CJA Panel, the Federal Public Defender, CJA Administrator, and the Courts
- Fluency in word processing, spreadsheet, and basic database programs, including Word, Excel, and Adobe.
- Demonstrated ability to multi-task, maintain orderly flows of information, and prioritize tasks.

SALARY & BENEFITS

This is an Excepted Appointment, full-time position with federal benefits and salary set under the Judiciary Salary Plan, which is commensurate with experience, qualifications, and demonstrated skills. The position includes a comprehensive benefit package, including participation in health and life insurance programs, retirement benefits, the Thrift Savings Plan, 11 paid federal holidays, 13 paid sick days annually, and 13 paid vacation days annually (to start). Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit).

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Applicants must be U.S. citizens or eligible to work in and for the United States. Appointment to this position is contingent upon successful completion of an FBI name and fingerprint check. Employees of the Federal Public Defender are members of the judicial branch of government. They are considered at-will employees and are not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act. If hired, the private practice of law and notarial practice is prohibited.

HOW TO APPLY

All qualified candidates are strongly encouraged to apply. The position will remain open until it is filled. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, and interviews may be scheduled as applications are received.

To apply, send a single .pdf document via email to akx_hr@fd.org with the subject line, "Trial AFD Application." The single .pdf document should be named, "Your last name, first name," (e.g., Smith, Mary) that contains the following:

- A plain face sheet containing only your last name, first name and current employer or employment status. This should be centered on the page and in size 40 font
- Letter of interest
- Chronological resume
- Three professional references familiar with the applicant's legal skills
- Writing sample

Accurate compliance with these application instructions is a factor expressly considered in the evaluation of the applicant. Due to the volume of responses expected, only those invited to interview will be contacted. No inquiries, telephone or otherwise, please.

The Federal Public Defender is an equal-opportunity employer. All applicants regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or age, are encouraged to apply.