

Assistant Public Defender

Employee is responsible for duties as directed by the Chief Public Defender and represents defendants at all stages of proceedings that threaten loss of liberty.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Client Representation:

- Provide legal representation to individuals accused of crimes who are unable to afford private attorneys.
- Represent clients at various stages of the criminal justice process, including pre-trial, trial, post-conviction, and appeals.
- Ensure clients' rights are upheld, and advocate for their best interests throughout the legal process.

2. Legal Research and Case Preparation:

- Investigate case facts, gather evidence, interview witnesses, and consult experts as needed.
- Research relevant laws, precedents, and legal strategies to build a strong defense.
- Prepare and file legal documents, such as motions, briefs, and petitions.

3. Court Appearances:

- Represent clients in court during hearings, motions, trials, and sentencing proceedings.
- Present arguments, cross-examine witnesses, and make objections as needed.

1. Client Counseling:

- Advise clients on their legal rights, the strengths and weaknesses of their case, and potential outcomes.
- Discuss potential defenses, plea options, and sentencing possibilities.
- Maintain regular communication with clients to ensure they are informed about case developments.

2. Collaboration and Supervision:

- Work under the supervision of a senior public defender or chief defender and may collaborate with other attorneys or legal teams in complex cases.
- Participate in training programs to stay up to date on legal changes and improve advocacy skills.

3. Case Management:

- Manage a caseload of multiple clients, ensuring all cases are handled in a timely and effective manner.
- Maintain detailed records of case progress, client communications, and legal filings.

4. Appeals and Post-Conviction Work:

- Handle appeals for clients convicted of crimes, challenging legal errors or constitutional violations during the trial process.
- Assist with post-conviction motions, parole hearings, or other post-sentencing matters.

Required Qualifications:

- **Education:** Juris Doctor (JD) degree from an accredited law school.
- **Licensure:** Must be licensed to practice law in the state or jurisdiction in which they work (must pass the bar exam).
- **Experience:**
 - Typically, a few years of criminal law experience or completion of a legal internship or clerkship within the public defender's office is preferred, though some positions may be open to recent law school graduates.
 - Negotiate plea deals and settlements with opposing counsel when appropriate.
- **Skills:**
 - Strong understanding of criminal law, procedures, and legal principles.
 - Excellent oral and written communication skills for advocacy, legal writing, and client communication.
 - Ability to handle a high caseload and work under pressure.
 - Strong negotiation and interpersonal skills for working with clients, opposing counsel, and the courts.

Work Environment:

- Assistant public defenders typically work in a public defender's office, a government agency, or a nonprofit organization dedicated to criminal defense.
- The job often involves long hours, a high caseload, and a demanding work environment due to the nature of public defense work.

Key Personal Traits:

- Passion for criminal justice and ensuring fair trials.
- Empathy for clients, particularly those who may be marginalized or facing serious charges.
- Strong ethical standards and a commitment to justice and fairness.

DISCLAIMER:

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by a person assigned to this position. They are not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and skills required to perform the job.

The County of Columbia is an equal opportunity employer. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, the Employer will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities and encourages employees to discuss potential accommodations with the Employer.