



Federal Public Defender District of Puerto Rico

Position Announcement # 2026-01

ASSISTANT FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER – APPEALS

WORK THAT MATTERS. DEFENSE THAT CAN'T BE BOUGHT.

The Federal Public Defender for the District of Puerto Rico seeks an exceptional attorney to join our Appellate Unit. If you want to do the most important legal work of your career while living in one of the most beautiful places on earth, keep reading.

WHY THIS OFFICE IS DIFFERENT

We're not a bureaucracy pretending to care about indigent defense. We're 50+ people who've chosen this work because we believe everyone deserves a fierce advocate, regardless of their bank account. Our 25+ attorneys range from brilliant lawyers fresh from clerkships to seasoned litigators, and we invest heavily in making everyone better through mentorship, training, and collaboration.

We don't cut corners. We use experts. We leverage technology. We employ three mitigation specialists and eight investigators because we know that excellent storytelling requires deep investigation. Our trials look different because we prepare differently. We don't practice in isolation—we brainstorm theories together, workshop suppression hearings as a team, and run mock trials. We test our themes, challenge each other's assumptions, and refine our narratives. We present context alongside facts, humanity alongside allegations, and complete narratives instead of piecemeal arguments.



THE PLACE

San Juan, the vibrant capital city of Puerto Rico, is a hub for music, food, and culture. It's dotted by parks, beaches, concert venues, and museums, and close to rainforests, bioluminescent bays, and secluded islands -- a combination of rich history, astonishing scenery, and warm people that make it an easy place to call home. Whether you're exploring the cobblestone streets of Old San Juan, catching live music at outdoor venues, or taking weekend trips to El Yunque's waterfalls and the pristine beaches of Culebra, the island offers an enviable quality of life that makes the distinction between work and home feel less like balance and more like integration.

WHAT YOU'LL ACTUALLY DO

- Brief and argue cases in the First Circuit, District Court, and sometimes SCOTUS.
- Support trial teams with sophisticated research, motion practice, and courtroom argument.
- Litigate habeas corpus petitions and other post-conviction matters.
- Become the go-to expert on emerging areas of law and train your coworkers and fellow members of the defense bar.

REQUIREMENTS & QUALIFICATIONS

Applicants must have graduated from an accredited law school, be in good standing and admitted to practice before the highest court of a state, territory, or possession of the United States, and must be eligible to be admitted to practice before the First Circuit Court of Appeals and on motion (under local rule) to the U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico. This position requires travel within Puerto Rico and within and outside of the United States.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The successful applicants will have solid legal-research, writing, and oral advocacy skills and be committed to a team-based, client-focused approach to litigation. Applicants should have experience handling complex matters and be able to undertake representation of clients at every stage of appellate and habeas proceedings. They must be able to communicate effectively with clients, colleagues, staff, government, and court personnel. Applicants should also have a demonstrated interest in appellate work and an exceptional academic background. Federal judicial clerkship experience, especially at the appellate level, is desirable. Spanish-language proficiency is highly preferred.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Appointment to this position is contingent upon the successful completion of an FBI name and fingerprint check. Federal Public Defender employees are members of the judicial branch of the government and are considered “at will”. This position is in the excepted service and does not carry the tenure rights of the competitive Civil Service. You must be a U.S. citizen or person authorized to work in the United States. Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit).

SALARY AND BENEFITS

Salary is commensurate with experience and qualifications within the guidelines set by the Judiciary Salary Scale for Assistant Federal Public Defenders. If hired, the private practice of law and notarial practice is prohibited. This position is full-time with a comprehensive benefits package that includes health and life insurance, vision and dental benefits, flexible spending accounts, paid time off, sick leave and paid leave for all federal holidays, and participation in the Federal Retirement System and Thrift Savings Plan (TSP with up to 5% government matching contributions).

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

In **one** PDF document, please submit a letter of interest, résumé, three representative writing samples, and three references to:

Federal Public Defender, District of Puerto Rico, Selection Committee

At: candy_d_carbaugh@fd.org.

Email subject line should read: **2026- AFD Appellate**

Applications received prior to March 15, 2026, will be given preference. This position will remain open until filled and is subject to the availability of funding. Multiple positions may be filled from this vacancy announcement.

The Federal Public Defender for the District of Puerto Rico is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We seek to hire individuals who will promote the diversity of the office and federal practice.