

# JOIN US IN THE LAST FRONTIER



## Federal Public Defender, District of Alaska

### Vacancy Announcement 2026-01

**Application Deadline:** Open Until Filled, Rolling Review

**Location:** Anchorage, Alaska

### Position: Mitigation Specialist

**Position Type:** Full-time/Permanent

**Salary Range:** Judiciary Salary Plan (JSP) Grade 11/Step 1 – Grade 14/Step 10 (\$84,439 - \$184,886)

*Starting classification level and salary are dependent upon education, experience, and qualifications.*

*Promotion potential up to Grade 14 without further competition.*

#### WHO WE ARE

The Federal Public Defender for the District of Alaska is a small but deeply committed team of professionals located in midtown Anchorage. We represent individuals charged with federal crimes across one of the largest and most geographically complex districts in the country.

Our practice is rooted in a holistic, client-centered defense model. We believe effective advocacy requires more than legal argument—it requires understanding the full human story. Our team includes attorneys, investigators, and mitigation professionals who work collaboratively to ensure our clients are seen in context, not just through charges or criminal history.

We understand that many of our clients' lives have been shaped by trauma, poverty, addiction, mental illness, systemic inequities, and limited access to services, particularly in rural and remote Alaska communities. Telling that story accurately and respectfully is central to our work.

We are mission-driven and collaborative. In a small office, every role matters. We value initiative, professional judgment, mutual respect, and the ability to think creatively when resources are limited.

Staff turnover is low because the work is meaningful, the team is supportive, and the culture is grounded in both compassion and accountability.

#### WHY ALASKA

Alaska is unlike anywhere else—and so is social work here.

Anchorage offers urban amenities surrounded by mountains, wildlife, and access to extraordinary outdoor spaces. But beyond the landscape, Alaska presents complex social realities that demand thoughtful, creative, and culturally responsive professionals.

Our clients often face layered challenges: trauma, substance use disorders, housing instability, limited access to treatment in rural communities, and systemic inequities that are magnified by geography and isolation. Resources can be scarce. Travel can be complex. Solutions are not always readily available.

For a social worker, this means the opportunity to practice at the top of your skill set.

You will not simply refer clients to existing systems—you will help build pathways where few exist. You will develop release plans that require persistence and ingenuity. You will collaborate with providers across Anchorage and rural Alaska to secure treatment beds, housing placements, and meaningful support structures.

Many of our staff come for the work and stay because the professional impact is real. In Alaska, your effort can directly change whether someone returns home to their family or remains incarcerated.

This is meaningful, hands-on advocacy in a place where your skills truly matter.

## **THE ROLE**

This is a social-work-centered Mitigation Specialist position focused on client stabilization, reentry planning, and development of compelling mitigation narratives in federal criminal cases.

The Mitigation Specialist functions as the office's primary social work professional. This role centers on trauma-informed assessment, life history development, release planning, and connecting clients to meaningful treatment, housing, and community-based supports.

A critical goal of this position is helping clients obtain pretrial release and reduced sentences by proactively developing structured, realistic alternatives to incarceration, including treatment beds, transitional housing placements, reentry programming, and community supervision plans.

The Mitigation Specialist plays a strategic role in shaping case outcomes by developing structured alternatives to incarceration and presenting the court with viable, evidence-based release and sentencing plans.

## **PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Client Assessment & Stabilization**

- Conduct trauma-informed, culturally responsive psychosocial assessments.
- Develop comprehensive life histories identifying trauma, mental health concerns, substance use disorders, neurodevelopmental issues, systemic inequities, and protective factors.
- Assess client stability needs including housing, treatment, medical care, and community supports.
- Collaborate with attorneys to develop individualized release and sentencing strategies grounded in clinical and social context.

### **Release Planning & Resource Development**

- Proactively identify and secure:
  - Inpatient and outpatient treatment placements
  - Detox and residential substance use beds
  - Transitional and supportive housing options
  - Vocational and educational programming
  - Culturally specific and rural community resources
- Develop structured pretrial release plans to present to the court.
- Coordinate with service providers, treatment facilities, probation, Bureau of Prisons, and Alaska Department of Corrections staff.
- Build and maintain a network of providers across Anchorage and rural/remote Alaska.
- Anticipate reentry barriers and address them before release whenever possible.
- Develop written reentry and stabilization plans suitable for court submission.

### **Mitigation Development & Sentencing Advocacy**

- Gather and synthesize records including medical, mental health, educational, employment, military, and institutional records.
- Conduct collateral interviews with family members and support systems.
- Translate complex psychosocial histories into persuasive sentencing narratives.
- Assist in preparing sentencing memoranda and mitigation presentations.
- Support expert engagement when mental health or substance use evaluations are warranted.

- Assist attorneys in court as requested, including presenting mitigation evidence.

### **Collaboration & Case Strategy Support**

- Work closely with attorneys to identify mitigation themes and strategic opportunities for narrative development.
- Assist in determining when expert consultation (e.g., mental health, substance use, neuropsychological evaluation) may be appropriate.
- Maintain organized, comprehensive mitigation files that support continuity of representation.
- Contribute to holistic defense strategy discussions as part of a collaborative team.

### **ATTRIBUTES OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE**

We are seeking a self-directed, mission-driven professional who:

- Is grounded in social work values of dignity, self-determination, and systems awareness.
- Understands the intersection of trauma, poverty, addiction, and criminalization.
- Has demonstrated experience performing social work or social-service-oriented tasks, particularly with justice-involved populations.
- Brings cultural humility, strong interpersonal skills, and sound professional judgment.
- Can balance empathy with structure and accountability.
- Is comfortable working independently and collaboratively in a small office environment.
- Thinks strategically and proactively, especially when resources are limited.
- Is organized, detail-oriented, and able to manage multiple cases and deadlines.
- Believes deeply in public defense and is committed to justice-centered advocacy grounded in compassion and accountability.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

- Bachelor's degree required; Master of Social Work (MSW) or related graduate degree strongly preferred.
- Degrees in social work, psychology, anthropology, sociology, or related behavioral sciences are highly valued.
- Licensure (LMSW/LCSW or eligibility) is a plus but not required. *This position does not provide clinical therapy but focuses on mitigation development, psychosocial assessment for legal purposes, and client resource coordination.*
- Demonstrated experience developing social histories, mitigation evidence, or working directly with justice-involved populations.
- Experience with trauma-informed practice, case management, or clinical documentation strongly preferred.
- Excellent analytical writing skills; ability to synthesize large volumes of records into persuasive narrative.
- Ability to work independently while collaborating in a fast-paced, team-oriented defense office.
- Valid driver's license and ability to travel as required.

### **SALARY & BENEFITS**

This is an Excepted Appointment, full-time position with federal benefits and salary commensurate with experience and qualifications within the following ranges from JSP Grade 11 to JSP Grade 14. The position offers federal government employment benefits, including participation in health and life insurance, retirement, 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.

## HOW TO APPLY

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

To apply, send a single .pdf document via email to [Loisi\\_Vailea@fd.org](mailto:Loisi_Vailea@fd.org) with the subject line, "Mitigation Specialist 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;
- A brief cover letter;
- Your resume; and
- Three references (references will not be contacted until applicant is advised).
- A writing sample is optional, but strongly encouraged.

*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.*