

Elisa A. Long
Federal Public Defender

Sarah Levin
Managing Attorney, Trial Unit

Samantha L. Stern
*Managing Attorney,
Appeals/Non-Capital Habeas
Unit*

Kelly Culshaw
*Managing Attorney,
Capital Habeas Unit*

Federal Public Defender

WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

1001 Liberty Avenue, Suite 1500
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222
(412) 644-6565 (phone)
(412) 644-4594 (fax)
paw.fd.org



PARALEGAL

Position: Paralegal	Location: Pittsburgh or Erie, PA
Application Deadline: February 13, 2026 (or until filled)	Posted: January 30, 2026
Office Website: https://paw.fd.org/	Salary Range: \$74,678 - \$163,514

The Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania is accepting applications for the position of **Paralegal**. This position is open to candidates interested in working in either our Pittsburgh or Erie offices.

The **Paralegal** performs legal and administrative duties, including researching legal issues, drafting motions and orders, and maintaining electronic case files and databases. This position also assists attorneys and investigators at hearings and trials, with client contact, and with expert and witness interviews.

The role provides critical support by collecting, reviewing, and organizing social history and related records for use in litigation. This position works closely with attorneys, other paralegals, and investigators to ensure that all records are accurate, complete, and readily accessible.

About Us:

The Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania provides legal representation to persons financially unable to retain counsel in federal criminal and related proceedings. We handle federal trials, direct appeals to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, petitions for writ of certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court, habeas corpus petitions, and related proceedings on behalf of our clients. Representation includes counsel and investigative, expert and other services, as necessary to meet the demands of the case and the needs of the client.

Our office includes the Federal Public Defender and attorneys known as Assistant Federal Public Defenders. In addition to our attorneys, we have a group of talented administrative staff, paralegals, investigators, social workers, and information technology experts. The Federal Public Defender main office is in Pittsburgh, with branch offices in Erie and Johnstown.

About Western Pennsylvania:

Pittsburgh is a vibrant, livable city known for its rich history, thriving arts and cultural scene, and strong sense of community. Once an industrial powerhouse, the city has successfully transformed into a national hub for healthcare, education, technology, and innovation, anchored by world-class institutions and a growing startup ecosystem. Pittsburgh is home to top-ranked universities, nationally recognized hospitals, and a diverse workforce that values collaboration and creativity.

Erie offers a relaxed pace of life with easy access to natural amenities, anchored by its location along Lake Erie. The city features a close-knit community and growing investment in healthcare, education, and advanced manufacturing. With Presque Isle State Park, a walkable downtown, and proximity to major metro areas, Erie provides a practical and appealing place to live and work.

Beyond the cities, Western Pennsylvania features a wide range of communities—from walkable urban neighborhoods to small towns and suburban areas—providing flexible living options for professionals and families alike. The region is known for its affordable housing, short commutes, and lower cost of living compared to many major metropolitan areas. With access to rivers, state parks, trails, and outdoor recreation, residents can enjoy four distinct seasons and an active lifestyle. Combined with a welcoming culture, strong local pride, and close proximity to other major East Coast and Midwest cities, Western Pennsylvania is an ideal place to build a rewarding career and a fulfilling life.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Paralegal:

- Collect, review, and organize social history records and other relevant documentation
- Assist attorneys and investigators in reviewing and organizing records
- Assist attorneys at hearings and trials, with client contact, and with expert and witness interviews
- Draft motions and orders, and maintain electronic case files and databases

Attributes of the Ideal Candidate:

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

- Is comfortable working both independently and collaboratively in a law office environment.
- Thinks strategically and proactively, especially when resources are limited.
- Brings cultural humility, strong interpersonal skills, and sound professional judgment.
- Believes deeply in the work of public defense.

Qualifications:

Applicants must be high school graduates or equivalent; with at least three years of general work experience and three years of specialized experience. Education above the high school level may be substituted for experience requirements. Additional education or certification as a Paralegal is preferred but not required.

Qualified candidates should possess:

- A strong legal, administrative, or paralegal background
- Excellent organization, communication, and administrative skills
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe Acrobat, and legal research tools such as Westlaw and Lexis, and a willingness to learn other programs, as needed

This position requires considerable initiative, resourcefulness, creativity and drive; excellent writing skills, computer proficiency, the ability to communicate and work well with others; and a commitment to obtaining justice for indigent persons.

Benefits:

This position is full-time with a comprehensive benefits package that includes:

- Generous Health/Vision/Dental/Life Insurance Coverage
- Dependent and Long-term Care Insurance Programs
- Flexible Spending Accounts
- Commuter Benefit Program, including Mass Transit and Parking Reimbursement Accounts
- Earned paid time off, including paid sick leave
- 11 Paid Federal Holidays
- Up to 12 weeks of Paid Parental Leave
- Mandatory participation in the Federal Employees Retirement System
- Optional participation in the Thrift Savings Plan retirement account with up to 5% agency matching contributions
- Eligibility for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)
- Employee Assistance Program (confidential counseling and assistance)
- Credit for prior federal service

Accessibility:

We are committed to an inclusive and accessible application process. If you need an accommodation due to a disability during any stage of the application or interview process, please contact Joe Pisciotta at Joseph_Pisciotta@FD.org. If hired, we are dedicated to providing reasonable accommodations to support your success and ensure equal access to opportunities in the workplace.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion:

Our office values diversity, is committed to equity and inclusion, and aspires to create a culture of mutual respect, collaboration, openness, and humility that honors the people we represent. We believe representation is better when members of the defense team have diverse backgrounds and experiences. We seek an individual who shares this belief and commitment. We embrace the unique contributions our employees can bring to the Federal Public Defender because of their backgrounds, social identities, and lived experiences. We are interested in applicants' talent, intelligence, dedication, persistence, and desire to see that all people are treated fairly and respectfully. The Federal Public Defender seeks applications from a diverse group of qualified individuals in terms of race, ethnicity, nation of origin, culture, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual identity, education, opinions, age, languages spoken, veteran status, disability, religion, and socioeconomic circumstance. We especially encourage applications from members of the BIPOC community, people affected by the criminal legal system, and people from other underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.

Application Process:

Interested applicants are invited to apply by submitting a single pdf document that includes a cover letter, resume, and writing sample via email to the attention of: Elisa A. Long, Federal Public Defender, paw_employment@fd.org, Subject: 2026-03

One or more positions may be filled from this posting. Hiring for this position is dependent on the availability of funds. This office is an equal opportunity employer.