

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

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STAFF ATTORNEY ANNOUNCEMENT

Position: Staff Attorney	Location: Pittsburgh, PA
Application Deadline: February 13, 2026 (or until filled)	Posted: January 30, 2026
Office Website: https://paw.fd.org/	Salary Range: \$63,815 - \$197,100

The Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania is accepting applications for the position of **Staff Attorney** in its Pittsburgh Office.

The Staff Attorney provides advanced research and writing support to defense teams for clients charged with serious criminal offenses in federal court. Primary duties include researching and drafting motions, briefs or legal memoranda, discovery review, and consulting with team members to develop legal strategies and provide advice to clients. Caseloads may involve drug offenses, fraud, robbery, firearms offenses, immigration offenses, and internet-related crimes.

This position is in the Pittsburgh office, and the Staff Attorney will primarily support the Trial Unit in our Pittsburgh office. Some assignments may involve the Appeals/Non-Capital Habeas Unit and/or cases out of our branch offices in Erie and Johnstown.

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 Assistant Federal Public Defenders who handle in-court representation of clients and serve as team leads. In addition to our attorneys, we have a group of talented administrative staff, paralegals, investigators, social workers, and information technology specialists. The Federal Public Defender main office is in Pittsburgh, with branch offices in Erie and Johnstown.

About Pittsburgh:

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.

Beyond the city, 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.

Attributes of the Ideal Candidate:

- 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 a graduate from an accredited law school and a member in good standing of a state bar. Applicants should have a commitment to providing quality representation to indigent defendants and have a reputation for personal integrity. Excellent legal research, writing, and communication skills are essential for this position, as is the ability to analyze legal issues from lengthy, complex records, and to write clearly and concisely. A successful applicant will be able to prioritize projects and work both independently and cooperatively. Federal Public Defender attorneys may not engage in the private practice of law.

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: 2026-06

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.