

Assistant Federal Public Defender

Toledo Branch Office – Trial Lawyer Wanted

Office: Federal Public Defender, Northern District of Ohio

Location: Toledo, Ohio

Salary Range: \$76,748 – \$197,100, depending on experience

Status: Full-time; first review on October 26, 2026; open until filled

The Job

If the thought of standing next to a client in federal court as part of a team excites you, this job is for you. We are looking for a trial lawyer – someone who wants to be in a federal courtroom, on the record, working side-by-side with a team of professionals, fighting for a client facing their worst day.

The Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Ohio is hiring an Assistant Federal Public Defender for our Toledo branch. Toledo is a place where a hungry, well-prepared advocate can build a federal defense practice grounded in teamwork, investigation, and trial preparation. Cases move and the judges expect you to be ready. Most importantly, your clients will require excellent preparation, independent judgment, and effective advocacy – every time.

About the Office

Established in 1973, our Office serves the Northern District of Ohio from branches in Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, and Toledo. We are approximately 51 lawyers, investigators, mitigation specialists, paralegals, and support professionals working across a Trial Unit and a Capital Habeas Unit.

We exist to preserve, protect, and defend the promises “We, the People” made in our Constitution, to ensure those promises reach the underserved in our communities, and to fight for equal justice under the law. We do this through zealous, independent advocacy and representation. We are direct with each other, we hold each other accountable, and we take the work – but not ourselves – seriously. We back each other up, care about each other, and take care of each other.

Our clients come from every walk of life, and so do we. We believe our advocacy is stronger when our office reflects the full range of experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives of the communities we serve. We are committed to building and sustaining a diverse and inclusive workplace – one in which every member of our team is respected, supported, and expected to contribute their best work.

The Toledo Branch – What Makes This Job Different

Toledo is a tight-knit community where reputations are built quickly. You will appear before the same Magistrate and District Court Judges again and again. You will see the same Assistant U.S. Attorneys, the same Pretrial and Probation officers, the same Courtroom Deputies, Clerks, and Deputy U.S. Marshals every week.

This means two things. First, your word is your currency — with the court, with opposing counsel, and most of all with your clients. Second, an attorney with real interpersonal skills and old-fashioned professionalism can be enormously effective.

The Practice

As an Assistant Federal Public Defender in Toledo, you will:

- Carry your own caseload from initial appearance through sentencing and, when necessary, through trial and appeal.
- Prepare thoroughly for contested hearings and jury trials, advise clients candidly about their options, and try cases when clients choose trial. Every plea decision belongs to the client.
- Investigate your cases early and thoroughly, working shoulder-to-shoulder with investigators, research and writing specialists, and paralegals.
- Manage discovery-heavy cases. Modern federal prosecutions routinely arrive with terabytes of body-worn camera footage, cell phone extractions, and digital forensics, along with expert and lab reports. You will need the discipline and the technical fluency to organize, review, and put that material to work for your client — and to spot what the government missed.
- Draft clear, persuasive motions and sentencing memoranda, and litigate suppression, Franks, discovery, Rule 29, and sentencing issues.
- Negotiate hard when negotiation serves the client.
- Represent people at the worst moments of their lives — people struggling with addiction, mental illness, poverty, and trauma — with respect and without judgment.
- Handle sentencing as its own trial: mitigation, expert work, and § 3553(a) advocacy that treats every client as a person, not a guidelines calculation.
- Work as a member of the Northern District of Ohio Federal Public Defender team — sharing motions, ideas, and war stories with colleagues in Cleveland, Akron, and Youngstown.
- Be a good office citizen — serving as a resource for CJA panel attorneys practicing in the Toledo Federal courthouse and mentoring law students, interns, and newer lawyers as your experience grows.

Who We Want

The right person for this job is tenacious, prepared, and unafraid, but also decent, humble, and easy to work with. Both halves matter. We want:

- Advocacy. Demonstrated effectiveness before judges and juries.
- Persistence. Sustained effort and follow-through when cases become difficult.
- Judgment. Knowing which fights to pick, when to push, and when to sit down.
- Interpersonal skills. The ability to build trust with clients and work professionally with colleagues, opposing counsel, and court personnel.
- Commitment. A commitment to indigent defense as a calling, not a resume line.
- Coachability. Creativity, curiosity, and a willingness to be coached.
- Time management. The organization, communication skills, and composure to manage competing deadlines.

- Cultural fluency. The life experience, cultural fluency, and humility to connect with clients whose backgrounds may differ from your own.

Prior federal criminal defense experience is a strong plus, but it is not the only path in. We will seriously consider county and state public defenders, trial-tested prosecutors, seasoned litigators from other practices, and judicial clerks who have also tried cases — in short, any attorney whose record demonstrates the tenacity, trial skill, and judgment this job and our clients deserve and demand. We especially encourage applications from attorneys whose backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are underrepresented in the federal defense bar.

Qualifications

Applicants must:

- Be a graduate of an accredited law school and a member in good standing of the bar of any state.
- Have at least three years of post-bar experience, including significant trial-level litigation experience. That experience may be in federal, state, or county practice — as a public defender, prosecutor, or other litigator — and a judicial clerkship may count toward the three years where the applicant has also tried cases in another setting.
- Be prepared to handle federal criminal cases at every stage — initial appearances, detention, motions, pleas, trials, sentencings, and post-trial litigation.
- Demonstrate strong oral advocacy and the ability to be persuasive before judges and juries and in dealing with opposing counsel and witnesses.
- Demonstrate strong legal research, analytical, and writing skills.
- Communicate well within an office — including keeping a level, professional demeanor when the tempo picks up.
- Be ready to pick up a substantial caseload.
- Work effectively with clients, colleagues, court personnel, and the community.
- Travel as required for court, clients, investigations, and training.

Ohio bar admission, or a willingness to seek admission to the Ohio Bar, is an advantage. Applicants must also be admitted to, or willing to seek admission to, the United States District Courts for the Northern and Southern Districts of Ohio, the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, and the Supreme Court of the United States.

Why Toledo

Toledo — the Glass City — sits at the mouth of the Maumee River and carries a proud industrial and civic history. With miles of green space, restaurants, community events along the water, sports and arts, it offers big-city living without big-city commutes or big-city housing prices. Most importantly, Toledo is a place where a lawyer can become a real part of the community they serve. You will be known by name in the courthouse as well as in the neighborhood.

Compensation, Benefits, and Quality of Life

Salary is \$76,748 to \$197,100, depending on education and years of relevant experience, consistent with federal guidelines. Benefits include health, dental, vision, and life insurance; the Federal

Employees Retirement System (FERS); Social Security; the Thrift Savings Plan; transit subsidy; free parking; 11 federal holidays; annual and sick leave; and eligibility for Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

How to Apply

Submit a single PDF by email that includes:

- A letter of interest, including a brief description of your trial and evidentiary-hearing roles (without client-identifying or privileged details).
- A resume.
- A completed AO 78, Application for Judicial Employment.
- A writing sample of no more than 20 pages – preferably something you wrote and argued.
- Three references.

Send to ohn_employment@fd.org using the subject line: **2026-09 Toledo – Assistant Federal Public Defender**. Applications will be accepted electronically only.

First review will occur on October 26, 2026. The position will remain open until filled, but applicants who submit their materials by the first review date will receive preference.

Notice

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Ohio is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We consider all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Employees are at-will and are not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act. Employment is subject to the availability of funds, successful completion of a background check, and United States citizenship or eligibility to work in the United States.