

Elisa A. Long
Federal Public Defender

Sarah Levin
Managing Attorney, Trial Unit

Samantha L. Stern
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Federal Public Defender

WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

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INVESTIGATOR ANNOUNCEMENT

Position: Investigator	Location: Pittsburgh, PA
Application Deadline: March 13, 2026 (or until filled)	Posted: March 4, 2026
Office Website: https://paw.fd.org/	Salary Range: \$77,211 - \$169,060

The Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania is accepting applications for the position of **Investigator**.

The Investigator is a key member of the defense team who reviews evidence, develops theories of defense and mitigation, locates and interviews witnesses for fact and mitigation investigation, identifies experts, visits crime scenes, assists in preparation for trial and other court hearings, and testifies in court when required. The Investigator also gathers, reviews, and analyzes records; serves subpoenas; and works with attorneys to interview clients, document clients' social history, and prepare mitigation summaries for plea negotiation and sentencing. This position will primarily support the Trial Unit and the Appeals/Non-Capital Habeas Unit in our Pittsburgh office.

The Investigator must be able to establish and maintain good working relationships with individuals and agencies (including prisons), provide oral and written reports, and use technology including software, cameras, and other equipment.

The Investigator is an essential part of providing equal justice to individuals unable to afford counsel in federal cases. The ideal candidate brings strong initiative, sound judgment, discretion, and a deep commitment to client-centered advocacy.

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.

Pittsburgh is a vibrant and livable city known for its rich history, thriving arts scene, and strong sense of community. Once an industrial powerhouse, it has transformed into a hub for healthcare, education, technology, and innovation. With top-ranked universities, a low cost of living, and easy access to parks, rivers, and diverse neighborhoods, Pittsburgh offers a high quality of life for professionals and families alike.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Investigator:

- Reviews and analyzes discovery and other case documentation. Assists in determining scope, timing, and direction of the investigation. Initiates new areas of investigation.
- Locates and interviews witnesses, including prosecution, defense and expert witnesses. Evaluates witnesses and discusses relevant value with the attorney.
- Provides information to experts, coordinates evaluations, and clarifies the focus of the issues to be addressed by the expert.
- Maintains a filing and reference system for mitigation and mental health literature, including biographies and areas of expertise of available experts.
- Reports findings of interviews and of the investigation to the responsible attorney. Locates, views, and retrieves tangible evidence, personal property and other relevant material and/or objects.
- Photographs, measures, and/or documents investigation as needed.
- Gathers, reviews, analyzes, and organizes all records relevant to a case. Verifies information obtained to establish accuracy and authenticity of facts and evidence.
- Assists the attorney at hearings and trials by evaluating testimony, and coordinating witnesses and documents. Serves subpoenas and notifies defense witnesses of court appearances.
- Utilizes computer software for word processing, databases, records review, case management, and graphics. Assists the attorney in developing demonstrative evidence for court hearings and use at trial.
- Investigates the client's social history and assists the attorney in developing mitigation information for use in plea negotiation and/or sentencing.

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:

An applicant must be a high school graduate or equivalent; additional education is preferred but not required. A variety of experience, including in non-legal fields and/or social work, paralegal or legal assistant training, would be helpful, as would experience developing and analyzing mitigation evidence for court proceedings. The ability to read, write, and speak fluently in the Spanish language is preferred but not required.

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. The successful applicant can analyze and evaluate facts, evidence, and related information. This position requires regular travel in the Western District of Pennsylvania, including to our Johnstown office, as well as some overnight and out-of-state stays. Applicants must have a valid driver's license, reliable car, and motor vehicle insurance.

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: 2026-09

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. No phone calls, please.