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# Federal Public Defender

## WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

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### PARALEGAL (Capital Habeas Unit)

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**Position:** Paralegal

**Application Deadline:** March 24, 2026 (or until filled)

**Office Website:** <https://paw.fd.org/>

**Location:** Pittsburgh, PA

**Posted:** March 10, 2026

**Salary Range:** \$77,211 - \$169,060

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The Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania is accepting applications for the position of **Paralegal** in its Capital Habeas Unit in Pittsburgh.

The **Paralegal** provides assistance to attorneys and investigators in the representation of state death-sentenced inmates in federal habeas corpus proceedings. The paralegal is an integral member of the capital litigation team and will collaborate and communicate with attorneys, investigators, outside institutions, consultants, and clients.

#### **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 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 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:**

Duties include extensive document gathering from a vast array of sources; reviewing, analyzing, and indexing documents; maintaining document management database and traditional paper files; preparing and filing legal pleadings; assisting teams in preparations and execution of field investigation, evidence viewing, jury interviews as well as oral arguments and hearings. This position requires extensive use of software such as Adobe Professional, CaseMap, and the Microsoft Office Suite.

## **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 two years of work experience. Experience in the legal field, and education or certification as a paralegal are preferred but not required.

Qualified candidates should possess:

- 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](mailto: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](mailto:paw_employment@fd.org). Please include your last name and 2026-10 in the subject line.

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.