

**FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO**

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**POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT
2026-18**

Position: Assistant Federal Public Defender – Trial Attorney

Location: Las Cruces, NM

Opening Date: July 23, 2026

Closing Date: Until filled

Target Start Date: September 2026

Office Website: <https://nm.fd.org/>

Salary Range: \$76,748 - \$197,100

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of New Mexico is accepting applications for the position of Assistant Federal Public Defender (Trial Attorney) in our Las Cruces office. The mission of our office is to provide high quality, client-centered representation to people charged with federal crimes in New Mexico. We fight for the Sixth Amendment Right to Counsel by providing zealous and effective representation to every client.

We are a team of attorneys, investigators, social workers, paralegals, interpreters, and administrative professionals committed to client-centered advocacy. We value diversity, equity, and inclusion in our workforce and strive to maintain a respectful, collaborative, and supportive office culture.

Why Las Cruces?

With over 300 days of sunshine, stunning mountain views, and a rich cultural mix, it's a great place to live and work. The city offers a low cost of living, easy access to outdoor adventures, and a thriving food, arts, and music scene, all within a welcoming community.

Duties and Responsibilities:

As a Trial Attorney, you will represent clients in all stages of federal criminal proceedings, including trial, and sentencing. The role involves managing a diverse caseload with complex legal and factual issues, developing litigation strategies, and preparing motions, pleadings, and briefs. You will appear in court to advocate on behalf of clients, conduct legal research and investigations, and maintain regular communication with clients, experts, family members, and witnesses. Collaboration is key, and you will work closely with colleagues in a supportive, team-oriented environment.

Required Qualifications:

- J.D. from an accredited law school.
- Admission and good standing before the highest court of a state.
- License to practice in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Mexico (or ability to obtain it promptly upon hire).
- Become a member of the New Mexico State Bar within one year of start date.
- Excellent oral and written advocacy skills.
- Strong interpersonal and organizational abilities.
- Demonstrated commitment to the defense of underserved and marginalized communities.
- Valid driver's license and ability to travel as needed for casework, training, and investigations.

Preferred Qualifications:

These qualifications are not required to be considered for this role but are highly valued.

- Three years of criminal defense trial experience.
- Experience working with people from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

Salary and Benefits:

This is a full-time, at-will position within the federal judiciary. The salary range is \$76,748 to \$197,100, based on experience and qualifications. The position includes a comprehensive benefits package, featuring health, dental, vision, and life insurance; 13 to 26 days of annual leave depending on years of service; 13 days of sick leave per year; and 12 weeks of paid parental leave after one year of service. Employees also receive 11 paid federal holidays, participate in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), and may contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) with up to 5 percent government matching. The position is eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) and includes access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), credit for prior federal service, and regular continuing legal education opportunities. A one day per week telework option may be available depending on caseload, and employees benefit from access to wellness resources and programming.

How to Apply:

Interested applicants should submit a single pdf document that includes a cover letter, resume, and three references via email to the attention of:

Margaret Katze, Federal Public Defender

FDNM-HR@fd.org

Subject: 2026-18 Assistant Federal Public Defender – Trial Attorney

Application Deadline: Applications reviewed on a rolling basis with priority given to those who apply by August 30, 2026. The position will remain open until filled and is subject to funding availability. More than one position may be filled from this posting. Please, no phone inquiries. Only candidates selected for an interview will be contacted.

Conditions of Employment:

Employment is subject to a background check, including fingerprinting. This position is part of the excepted service and does not carry Civil Service tenure. U.S. citizenship or authorization to work in the U.S. and receive compensation as a federal employee is required. Salary is paid via direct deposit.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion:

Our office values diversity and is committed to equity and inclusion. We aspire to embody values of mutual respect, collaboration, openness, and humility that honor the people we represent. Our representation is better when members of the defense team and staff members have diverse backgrounds and experiences. In our hiring, we seek individuals who share these values. We embrace the unique backgrounds, social identities, and lived experiences our employees bring to our office. We are interested in applicants' talent, diligence, and desire to see that all people are treated fairly and respectfully – no matter the allegation or circumstance.