

**FEDERAL COMMUNITY DEFENDER OFFICE
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

DEFENDER ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA
FEDERAL COURT DIVISION
CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT

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JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

ASSISTANT FEDERAL DEFENDER
CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT

Posting Date: January 2, 2026

Closing Date: When Filled

The Federal Community Defender Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania is hiring one Assistant Federal Defender (AFD) in the Capital Habeas Unit. The Capital Habeas Unit (CHU) represents indigent, death-sentenced prisoners in federal habeas corpus proceedings throughout the United States in all stages of litigation.

CHU attorneys examine the records of their clients' cases and do careful research and writing to support a wide variety of legal claims. They work with clients; undertake factual investigation; engage with experts; conduct evidentiary hearings; litigate appeals; and present oral argument in the federal courts. CHU attorneys are responsible for remaining current with developments in criminal and habeas corpus law and providing updates to legal staff; analyzing discovery materials; and assisting with the planning and implementation of investigation relating to both the guilt and sentencing phases of capital cases. CHU attorneys work collaboratively with each other and with paralegals, investigators, and administrative staff on their cases. CHU attorneys also work with members of the Office's other practice groups (including the Non-Capital Habeas, Trial, Appeals, and Capital Trial Units) to provide the highest level of legal representation to the office's clients.

Candidates must have excellent analytic, research, and writing skills to fill the position of Assistant Federal Defender in the Capital Habeas Unit. Candidates should have prior experience in trial, appellate, or post-conviction criminal defense litigation, and prior habeas experience is preferred. Candidates ideally will have at least five years of criminal litigation experience. Candidates must possess a solid understanding of criminal law, criminal procedures, and evidence; have outstanding legal research and writing skills; and be able to analyze complex legal issues. Candidates also must be able to communicate effectively with clients, colleagues, staff, government, and court personnel and must have a commitment to the representation of indigent defendants. Fluency in Spanish is highly desirable. The position requires the attorney to work in the office and will require travel throughout the United States.

Candidates for this position must possess a law degree, be a member of a state bar, and be in good standing with all federal and state bars of which they are a member. All CHU attorneys must be admitted in good standing before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Newly hired attorneys are afforded a grace period in which to seek and gain admission to these bars.

Philadelphia, our country's birthplace, is rich in culture, entertainment, and history. Our office is in Philadelphia's Center City district, in the historic Curtis building, close to the federal courthouse and across from Independence Mall, the Liberty Bell, and Washington Square Park.

Salary will be based upon experience consistent with federal guidelines and regulations. Kindly note that the filling of this position will be subject to the funding restrictions and approval of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter, resume, writing sample, and three references to [Federal Community Defender Careers](#). Candidates will be interviewed on an ongoing basis until the position is filled. Applications received by January 23, 2026, will be given priority. The Federal Community Defender Office is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We are dedicated to promoting a professional work environment that supports and respects all employees and applicants without regard to race, color, gender identity, national origin, religion, or disability. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply.