

**FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO**

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Position: Research and Writing Attorney

Opening Date: February 23, 2026

Target Start Date: May 2026

Location: Las Cruces, NM

Closing Date: Open until filled

Salary Range: JSP scale 9 - 15

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

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of New Mexico is accepting applications for the position of Research and Writing 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, close access to the El Paso airport, and a thriving food, arts, and music scene, all within a welcoming community.

Duties and Responsibilities:

The Research and Writing Attorney is a position that provides advanced research and writing services to staff attorneys on trial cases, performs computer assisted legal research, aids in the development of legal strategies. The Research and Writing Attorney writes motions, briefs, and legal memoranda for review by the Defender and staff attorneys. General duties include examining, analyzing, and researching records and issues, performing legal research and preparing legal documents, assisting Assistant Federal Defender staff with all aspects of case preparation, maintaining the library, training, continuing legal education and supervision of legal interns as appropriate. The Research and Writing Attorney will have opportunity to collaborate with Trial Attorneys, Appellate Attorneys, and the Juvenile Defense Unit. The Research and Writing Attorney does not ordinarily make court appearances.

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).
- Excellent legal analysis and written advocacy skills.
- Strong organizational abilities and computer literacy.
- Demonstrated commitment to the defense of underserved and marginalized communities.
- Valid driver's license and ability to travel as needed for casework and training.

Preferred Qualifications:

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

- Minimum of three years of criminal defense legal writing 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 JSP grade 9 to 15, currently ranging from \$61,722 to \$192,331 and is 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 workload, and employees benefit from access to wellness resources and programming.

How to Apply:

Interested applicants are invited to apply by submitting a single pdf document that includes a cover letter, resume, three (3) writing samples, and three (3) references via email to the attention of:

Margaret Katze, Federal Public Defender

FDNM-HR@fd.org

Subject: 2026-05 Research & Writing Attorney

Application Deadline: Open Until Filled

Applications reviewed on a rolling basis with priority given to those who apply by April 1, 2026. The position will remain open until filled and is subject to funding availability. 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.