



Washington State Office of Public Defense

Job Notice: INT-2025-01
Rural Public Defense Fellowship

About the Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD):

We are an independent judicial branch agency mandated to implement the constitutional and statutory guarantees of counsel and to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of indigent defense services funded by the state.

Background:

The Rural Public Defense Fellowship (RPDF) was enacted by the legislature to address the public defender crisis, specifically in rural and underserved parts of the Washington State. OPD was tasked with coordinating with law schools to place eligible Rule 9's into underserved and rural areas of the state. OPD will work to place fellows into local public defense offices that are run, managed or contracted by county governments. OPD will provide statewide training and guidance for the fellows and placement offices, but ultimately fellows will be employed by local jurisdictions. OPD is working in collaboration with local offices to recruit and support the fellows.

Fellows will gain real world experience under the mentorship of an experienced public defense attorney, including actively representing clients and litigating cases with the purpose of encouraging the fellows to consider employment opportunities in public defense. Fellows will be exposed to the unique needs of clients in rural areas and the benefits of practicing in a small community. Fellows and the supervising attorneys will work in collaboration to ensure that the promises of the Constitution are upheld for their clients.

About the Position:

The Rural Public Defense Fellowship is a 10-week summer program for anyone who would qualify as a Rule 9 who is interested in gaining experience in public defense. OPD will provide training, support and resources to the entire fellow cohort placed in various counties. Fellows will receive mentorship, intensive skill training and financial support through the RPDF. Fellows will be placed with experienced attorneys in rural or underserved counties in Washington State.

Fellows will gain insight as to what it is really like to be a public defender in some of the communities that looking to recruit new law school graduates. They will have an opportunity to represent clients from a diverse cross section of society who face charges for all types of criminal offenses. Depending on placement, fellows may be assigned to practice in District Court, Municipal Court, Superior Court or Juvenile Court. Fellows interested in other areas of indigent representation should contact the OPD Recruitment and Retention Managers regarding potential placements. Fellows will serve the unique call of providing vital defense services to some of the most underserved populations in the state.

Justice ♦ Service ♦ Equity ♦ Excellence

Benefits of the RPDF:

- Financial compensation of up to \$28 an hour
- Housing stipend up to \$900 per month for three months
- Mentorship with an experienced and dedicated public defender over a 10-week period (summer break)
- On-the-ground exposure to real life issues, extensive understanding of criminal law and procedure, and developed expertise beyond the level offered in law school courses
- Placement in rural or underserved county with unique challenges and opportunities
- Real world training including courtroom experience and working directly with clients
- Invaluable experience to prepare for a career in public defense
- Trainings and support from OPD
- Direct exposure to perhaps the greatest civil rights issues of our time—the impact of the criminal legal system on marginalized communities

Expected Job Duties:¹

- Assist supervising attorneys and appear in court on the record at hearings as assigned (possibly including arraignment, pretrial, motions, sentencings, and probation review hearings.)
- Assist supervising attorneys by researching, analyzing, and writing motions, briefs and/or legal memos.
- Assist supervising attorneys in trial preparations, and potentially provide on-the-record participation in a jury trial.
- Communicate directly with clients, social workers, service providers, and others public defense professionals.
- Read and analyze police reports and review other evidence.
- Other duties as assigned by supervisor/office

Required Experience, Qualifications, Knowledge, Skills:

- Qualify as a Rule 9 pursuant to APR 9 by meeting one of the following criteria:
 - J.D. student enrolled and in good academic standing in an approved law school who has completed 2/3 of the law school's 3-year program;
 - Enrolled Law Clerk (Rule 6) who has completed 5/8 of the 4-year program;
 - Recent J.D. graduate (9 months or less) from an approved law school who has not been admitted to practice in any state or territory; or
 - Rule 6 who has completed the program (9 months or less) who has not been admitted to practice law in any state or territory.
- Possess good moral character and fitness to practice law as outlined in the Washington State Rules of Professional Conduct
- An interest and ability in working with indigent individuals of diverse racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, and inspire their confidence in the legal proceedings
- Effective writing and communications skills
- Ability to follow oral and written instructions

¹ OPD will not be directly supervising interns and cannot fully guarantee what placement office work will look like. However, OPD anticipates the job duties as described and will work actively with the office placement to ensure intern's work is meaningful and important workplace/court-based learning opportunities are provided to each fellow.

- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Ability to multi-task in fast-paced environment
- Ability to work independently or with a team
- Willingness to relocate to job placement site for 10-weeks as necessary
- Demonstrated commitment to public service

Desired Qualifications:

- Multilingual skills (proficient Spanish communication is a plus)
- Basic knowledge of criminal procedure and the rules of evidence
- Commitment to equitable and client centered representation
- Experience working with people living in poverty and or from other marginalized communities

Work Schedule:

It is anticipated that the fellows will work a 40-hour work week, Monday-Friday.

Placement:

Fellows will be placed in one of thirty rural or underserved counties: **Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Clallam, Columbia, Cowlitz, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Island, Garfield, Grant, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lewis, Lincoln, Mason, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Stevens, Wahkiakum, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima.** Placement into a county will depend on availability of placement sites. It is not guaranteed that Fellows will get placed into one of their top three choices but efforts will be made to accommodate applicant's requests where placements are available.

To Apply:

The following documents should be emailed, with the subject line of **RPDF Application**, to Jonathan.Patnode@opd.wa.gov.

- RPDF application cover sheet
- Cover letter addressing:
 - Why you are interested in public defense?
 - Why you are interested in practicing in a rural or underserved county?
 - Why you have selected your preferred counties?
 - Is there any county you would not want to be placed into? If yes, why?
- Current resume

Selection Process:

Applications will be reviewed upon receipt until all positions are filled. Interviews will be granted to qualified applicants on a rolling basis. OPD reserves the right to close job posting at any time.

Message to potential applicants:

We understand that some potential applicants are less likely to apply for jobs unless they believe they meet every one of the functions or skills listed in a job description. We are most interested in finding the best candidate for the job. If you are interested in this position, and meet the minimum qualifications, we encourage you to go ahead and apply! Feel free to think about how you will bring your own set of skills to the role and tell us about the potential that you hold.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We vigorously pursue diversity in the work force. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, persons over 40 years of age, LGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, formerly incarcerated, prior child welfare involvement, and military veterans are encouraged to apply. Pursuing diversity, equity and inclusion means that as an agency, and as individuals, we are committed to ensuring that all fellows enjoy a respectful, safe, and supportive working environment.