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Federal Public Defender, District of Alaska

Vacancy Announcement 2026-02

Application Deadline: Open Until Filled, Rolling Review

Optimal Start Date: March 23, 2026, or earlier if available

Location: Anchorage, Alaska

Position: Personnel Administrator

Position Type: Full-time/Permanent

Salary Range: Judiciary Salary Plan (JSP) Grade 9/Step 1 – Grade 12/Step 10 (\$69,789 - \$131,571)

Starting classification level and salary are dependent upon education, experience, and qualifications.

Promotion potential up to Grade 12 without further competition.

WHO WE ARE

The Federal Public Defender for the District of Alaska is a small but mighty office of approximately 24 people, located in midtown Anchorage. We represent indigent individuals charged with federal crimes across one of the largest and most geographically challenging districts in the country.

Our practice is rooted in a holistic, client-centered defense model. We believe people are more than their worst moments, more than their charges, and more than the paperwork that follows them. Our work is about story, dignity, context, and humanity, and we take seriously our responsibility to tell our clients' stories fully and truthfully.

Alaska's legal community is small, collaborative, and deeply interconnected. That reality strengthens our practice. We know our counterparts. We know the courts. We know the systems our clients are moving through, and we are creative, persistent, and relentless advocates within them.

We are a collaborative and mission-driven office that values teamwork, mutual respect, and pitching in wherever help is needed. Our strong office culture is one of the reasons staff turnover is low and opportunities to join our team are rare.

WHY ALASKA

Alaska offers a rare combination of meaningful work and an exceptional quality of life. Anchorage provides the amenities of a midsize city while offering immediate access to mountains, wildlife, and world-class outdoor recreation. Hiking, skiing, and fishing are woven into daily life—not reserved for weekends or vacations.

For those willing to embrace the adventure, Alaska offers a strong sense of community, space to breathe, and a pace of life that makes it possible to stay grounded while doing demanding work. Many of our staff come for the work—and stay for the life.

THE ROLE

The Personnel Administrator is the office's primary human resources professional and a key member of the administrative leadership team. This position provides the full range of human resources services to office staff and serves as a trusted advisor to the Defender and Administrative Officer on personnel matters.

While the position is primarily HR-focused, the Personnel Administrator also serves as a backup to the Administrative Officer and Procurement Administrator for select budgetary, financial, and operational functions. The role requires strong HR expertise, sound judgment, and the ability to navigate sensitive situations with professionalism, discretion, and empathy.

This role is well suited for an HR professional who values professional autonomy and meaningful, mission-driven work, and who is comfortable balancing strategic responsibilities with hands-on support. The ideal candidate enjoys building and maintaining effective systems and policies while also working closely with employees in a collaborative, close-knit office environment.

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Human Resources & Personnel Management

- Serve as the primary HR professional for the office, providing guidance and support on the full employee lifecycle, including recruitment, hiring, onboarding, performance management, discipline, and separations.
- Advise the Defender and Administrative Officer on personnel policies, staffing, classification, compensation, promotions, and employee relations matters.
- Ensure compliance with the Guide to Judiciary Policy, AOUSC and DSO requirements, applicable federal and state laws, and internal policies.
- Research, draft, and recommend personnel policies, procedures, and internal controls.
- Process and maintain personnel actions and records, including appointments, promotions, within-grade increases, and separations.

Recruitment, Training & Development

- Coordinate recruitment and selection processes for non-attorney staff, including vacancy announcements, applicant screening, interviews, and hiring documentation.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive onboarding and orientation program for new employees.
- Serve as the office's primary trainer for benefits, HR policies, and personnel-related topics; deliver regular trainings and refresher sessions to staff.
- Monitor and coordinate training plans and requests to ensure appropriateness and compliance with judiciary requirements.

Employee Relations, EDR & Mediation

- Serve as the office's Employee Dispute Resolution (EDR) Coordinator and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) point of contact.
- Provide informal mediation and conflict resolution support between employees and management.
- Advise leadership on grievance procedures, disciplinary actions, performance improvement plans, and workplace conduct issues.
- Maintain strict confidentiality and exercise sound judgment in sensitive and complex personnel matters.

Benefits Administration

- Administer employee benefits programs, including health, life, disability insurance, leave programs, retirement, and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Provide counseling and guidance to employees regarding benefits, retirement planning, and life events.
- Coordinate with the AOUSC, DSO, Federal Judicial Center, and other judiciary partners on benefits-related matters.

Budget, Financial & Administrative Support

- Serve as a backup to the Administrative Officer and Procurement Administrator for select budgetary, financial, and procurement-related functions.
- Review personnel-related actions for budget impact and assist with workforce planning and budget preparation.
- Support internal controls, audits, and reporting related to personnel and administrative operations.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

We are seeking a self-directed, mission-driven professional who is:

- An experienced HR professional with strong knowledge of personnel administration and employee relations.
- Comfortable serving as a trainer, advisor, and mediator.
- Organized, detail-oriented, and able to manage multiple priorities in a small-office environment.
- Professional, discreet, and trusted to handle confidential matters.
- Collaborative, adaptable, and willing to step in as backup support when needed.
- Committed to public service and supporting a mission-driven organization.

QUALIFICATIONS

- High School Diploma or equivalent required.
- College coursework in human resources, business or public administration, accounting, personnel management, legal management, or a related field is beneficial but not required.
- Substantial experience in human resources, personnel administration, employee relations, or a closely related field.
- Experience delivering trainings, facilitating discussions, or serving in an advisory or mediation role is strongly preferred.
- Knowledge of federal or judiciary personnel systems, policies, or benefits programs is a plus, but not required.
- Ability to communicate clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing.

SALARY & BENEFITS

This is an Excepted Appointment, full-time position with federal benefits and salary commensurate with experience and qualifications within the following ranges from JSP Grade 9 to JSP Grade 12. The position offers federal government employment benefits, including participation in health and life insurance, retirement, the Thrift Savings Plan, 11 paid federal holidays, 13 paid sick days annually, and 13 paid vacation days annually (to start). Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit).

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Applicants must be U.S. citizens or eligible to work in and for the United States. Appointment to this position is contingent upon successful completion of an FBI name and fingerprint check. Employees of the Federal Public Defender are members of the judicial branch of government. They are considered at-will employees and are not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, and interviews may be scheduled as applications are received. The position will remain open until filled.

To apply, send a single .pdf document via email to Loisi_Vailea@fd.org with the subject line, "Personnel Administrator Application." The single .pdf document should be named, "Your last name, first name," (e.g., Smith, Mary) that contains the following:

- A plain face sheet containing only your last name, first name and current employer or employment status. This should be centered on the page and in size 40 font;
- A brief cover letter;
- Your resume; and
- Three references (references will not be contacted until applicant is advised).

Accurate compliance with these application instructions is a factor expressly considered in the evaluation of the applicant. Due to the volume of responses expected, only those invited to interview will be contacted. No inquiries, telephone or otherwise, please.

The Federal Public Defender is an equal-opportunity employer. All applicants regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or age, are encouraged to apply.