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Federal Public Defender, District of Alaska

Vacancy Announcement 2026-04

Application Deadline: Open Until Filled, Rolling Review

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

Location: Anchorage, Alaska

Position: Investigator

Position Type: Full-time/Permanent

Salary Range: Judiciary Salary Plan (JSP) Grade 11/Step 1 – Grade 14/Step 10 (\$84,439 - \$184,886)

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

Promotion potential up to Grade 14 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 individuals charged with federal crimes across one of the largest and most geographically challenging districts in the country.

Our practice is grounded in a client-centered, holistic defense model. We believe people are more than their charges and more than the records that follow them. Our work requires careful fact-gathering, context, and judgment, and we take seriously our responsibility to understand our clients' lives and the systems that shape their cases.

Alaska's legal community is small, collaborative, and deeply interconnected. That reality strengthens our work. We know the courts, the agencies, and the communities our clients come from, and we approach investigations thoughtfully—testing evidence, developing facts, and building cases with care and persistence.

We are a collaborative, mission-driven office that values teamwork, professionalism, and mutual respect. Investigators are essential members of our defense teams, and our strong office culture, marked by trust, shared responsibility, and low turnover, means opportunities to join our team are rare.

WHY ALASKA

Federal criminal defense in Alaska is unlike anywhere else. The size and geography of the district create investigative work that is demanding, independent, and deeply grounded in place. Anchorage offers 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. Investigators practicing here develop lasting familiarity with the courts, agencies, and communities that shape each case, and many of our staff come for the work—and stay for the life.

THE ROLE

The Investigator works closely with defense attorneys and other members of the defense team to develop facts, test evidence, and support effective advocacy at every stage of representation. This position plays a critical role in shaping cases from the earliest investigation through trial, sentencing, and post-conviction proceedings.

In addition to pursuing assigned leads, Investigators are expected to identify gaps, test assumptions, and independently develop lines of inquiry that strengthen the defense.

Investigators in our office are trusted professionals who exercise sound judgment, discretion, and initiative. The work requires independence, persistence, and the ability to follow leads wherever they go—often across agencies, communities, and regions of the state. Investigators think critically, communicate clearly, and contribute meaningfully to case strategy.

This role is well suited for someone who values careful fact-gathering, thoughtful analysis, and collaborative work, and who is motivated by the responsibility of supporting strong, ethical defense advocacy in high-stakes cases.

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Conduct thorough and timely investigations in support of federal criminal defense cases at all stages of representation, including pretrial, trial, sentencing, and post-conviction proceedings.
- Review and analyze discovery and other case materials to identify investigative leads, factual issues, and areas requiring further development.
- Locate, interview, and assess witnesses, including clients, family members, community members, law enforcement personnel, and other relevant individuals.
- Gather, verify, and analyze documentary, physical, and electronic evidence, including records from law enforcement agencies, institutions, employers, schools, and service providers.
- Visit and document relevant locations or scenes, including measuring, photographing, and otherwise recording physical environments when necessary.
- Prepare clear, accurate, and well-organized written and oral investigative reports for attorneys and the defense team.
- Assist attorneys with trial preparation, including witness coordination, subpoenas, exhibits, and demonstrative materials.
- Investigate background information relevant to sentencing, including personal history, institutional records, and other factors that may inform advocacy or mitigation.
- Coordinate with experts and consultants as needed, including assisting with evaluations and clarifying investigative scope.
- Maintain complete, accurate, and confidential case files and investigative materials.
- Testify in court when required and assist during hearings and trials as requested.
- Build and maintain professional working relationships with individuals and agencies involved in the federal criminal justice system.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

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

- Brings strong investigative instincts and exercises sound judgment in complex and evolving situations.
- Is comfortable working independently while collaborating closely with attorneys and other members of the defense team.
- Approaches fact-gathering with curiosity, persistence, and attention to detail.
- Communicates clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Navigates sensitive situations with discretion, professionalism, and respect for clients and others involved in the process.
- Is organized, reliable, and able to manage multiple cases and competing deadlines.
- Understands the role of the investigator in defense work and is committed to supporting ethical, thorough, and client-centered advocacy.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Demonstrated experience conducting independent investigations, including fact development and witness interviews, is required. Experience in criminal defense, investigative journalism, or social services involving firsthand investigation and witness interviews is strongly preferred.
- A minimum of six (6) years of work experience is required, including at least three (3) years performing criminal investigation or information gathering.
- Substantial experience in investigation, information gathering, fact development, or related work requiring independent judgment.
- Ability to analyze and evaluate facts, evidence, and related information with care and sound professional judgment.
- Strong written and oral communication skills, including the ability to prepare clear, well-organized reports.
- High school diploma or equivalent required; additional education or relevant coursework may substitute for some required experience.
- Comfort using technology and standard computer applications; experience with investigative tools or litigation support systems is a plus.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality and understand the ethical obligations inherent in defense work.
- Valid driver's license and ability to travel, including overnight and out-of-state travel, as required.

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 11 to JSP Grade 14. 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

All qualified candidates are strongly encouraged 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, "Investigator 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).
- A writing sample is optional, but strongly encouraged.

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.