

# ALASKA Public Defender Agency

The Alaska Public Defender Agency was established by the state legislature in 1969 to provide indigent clients with legal services in criminal proceedings and in some civil matters. The agency handles a broad range of cases that include: felony and misdemeanor cases; appeals; probation and parole revocations; extradition cases; post-conviction relief matters; child support prosecutions; mental health commitments; fifth amendment issues; juvenile delinquency cases; and parental defense in child protection cases.

The Agency continues to fulfill its mission with a deep commitment to the needs of our clients. The Agency embraces a holistic defense model and utilizes staff and volunteers to assist clients in accessing services to improve case outcomes.

## Ready for Adventure?

The Agency's 13 offices span the entire state, with offices north of the Arctic Circle, on islands, in rainforests, and in urban environments; we have locations both on and off the road system.

One of the largest law firms in Alaska, the Agency employs over one hundred attorneys and dozens of staff as legal assistants, paralegals, and investigators. The Agency has a dedicated leadership and administrative team handling statewide operations and providing infrastructure support.

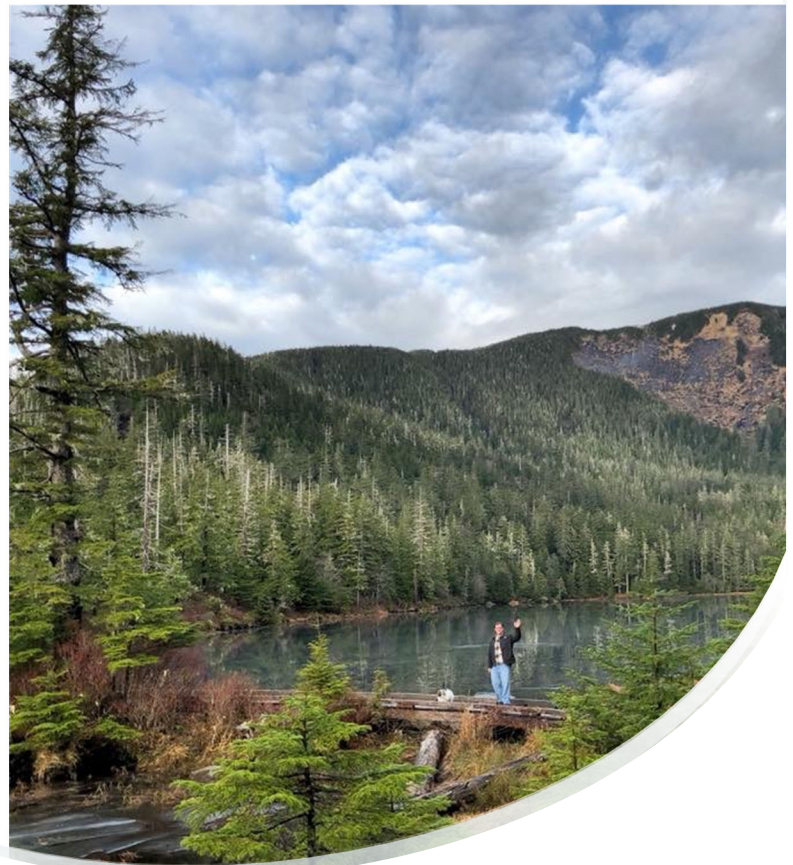
Attorneys in the Agency come from all across the country, and many have years of experience they use to supervise and mentor colleagues who have just graduated from law school or are new to practice in Alaska. The hallmark of working in the Agency is collegiality, where there is always someone willing to brainstorm issues, assist with emergency legal research, and provide the support that reinforces the feeling that no one lawyer is in this fight alone.

## Applying to the Agency

The Agency will consider applications on a rolling basis, including for law students who intend to start in the summer or fall. Interested applicants should submit a cover letter with resume, writing sample, and references to: [PDARecruitment@alaska.gov](mailto:PDARecruitment@alaska.gov)

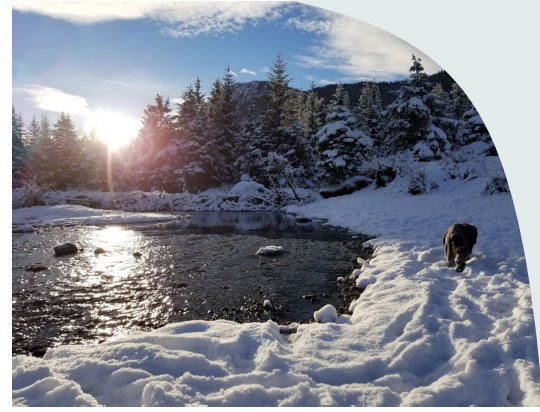
## Website

For more information on our agency, employment with the Agency or to learn about internships and externships visit our website: [https://  
doa.alaska.gov/pda/home.html](https://doa.alaska.gov/pda/home.html)



# What We Offer

## Compensation and Benefits for Attorneys



### COMPENSATION

We offer competitive starting salaries and benefits. Recent law school graduates start at \$90,000 annually, with regular merit increases and opportunities for promotion. Starting salaries for experienced attorneys vary based on years and types of cases previously handled. Many locations in the state also include cost of living adjustments increasing the base level of compensation.

### BENEFITS

**Paid Leave:** New employees accrue personal leave every 2 week pay period, totaling 21 days per year. Personal leave is used for any absence, including illness or vacation. Personal leave accrual rates increase at two, five, ten, and fifteen years of service up to 36 days annually.

**Paid State Holidays:**

In addition to leave accrual, the State has 12 paid State holidays.

**Health Insurance:** Health insurance is provided by the State of Alaska. You will have a choice of three different health plan options: Consumer Choice, Economy, and Standard. Each option provides different levels of benefit based on your needs. You choose the plan that is

right for you. For more information, including a chart comparing plan premiums, please visit:

<http://doa.alaska.gov/drb/alaskacare/employee/plans/premiums.html>.

**Retirement:** All new employees are enrolled in the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) -Tier IV, a defined contribution retirement plan. Employees contribute 8% of their gross pay pre-tax each pay period. The State contributes a total of 22% towards the retirement plan, retiree medical, occupational death and disability, and health reimbursement plans. Employees are immediately vested in the balance of their own contributions.

There is also a Supplemental Benefits System (SBS), which is an annuity plan provided by the State in lieu of Social Security. Employees contribute just over 6% of gross pay, pre-tax, each pay period to this mandatory system. Your employer matches your contribution. You can

make decisions about the investment of your contributions to maximize your return or minimize your risk. This annuity is intended to supplement your retirement.

Employees can also voluntarily participate in a deferred compensation plan to set aside a portion of their income either before or after taxes for a future date.

**Life Insurance:** The State provides a life insurance policy to each employee free of charge. You may also elect additional optional life insurance under this plan for which you pay the monthly premium post-tax.

**Travel Accident Coverage:** All employees are automatically enrolled in Travel Accident Insurance for personal injury at no cost and are provided coverage while in authorized travel status on official state business.

**Parking:** Parking in most offices is plentiful and free. In urban offices, the Agency provides parking passes, in parking lots next to Agency offices at no cost to employees.

**Personal Consumer Discounts:** There are numerous consumer discounts for State employees in Alaska. Everything from discounted gym memberships, cell phone service discounts at AT&T, and soft-







# Internships and Externships

## Criminal Practice

Criminal law interns in the Agency may have the opportunity to carry their own case-loads: handling various hearings, including jury trials under the supervision of an attorney. Interns handle daily arraignments, bail hearings, changes of plea, and sentencing in misdemeanor cases. These positions engage in client and witness interviews, various stages of case preparation, and work with other attorneys on felony cases by handling bail hearings, conducting legal research, and writing motions and memoranda. Interns work on writing and arguing motions to suppress

and dismiss, trial and evidentiary issues.

## Civil Practice

Civil law interns (parental defense in family law proceedings, juvenile delinquency proceedings, and mental health commitment proceedings) are responsible for interviewing, researching, witness preparation, and courtroom presentations while under the supervision of an attorney.

## Intern and Extern Positions

Each summer 20-24 interns work in any one of the 13 statewide offices. Additionally, each summer the Anchorage

civil law unit hires an intern to work exclusively in civil law matters. The Agency also welcomes interns during the traditional academic year (September – May). Externs are also welcome to apply for either summer or academic-year positions.

## Desired Qualifications

Students must have completed half of their law school course work to qualify as bar-certified interns and appear in court unsupervised. Students must also have completed a course in evidence. A twelve-week work commitment is required.

## Applying

Submit a cover letter with resume, writing sample, and references. Positions are available year-round. Summer decisions begin in September and hiring will continue until positions are filled

**Contact:** Claire DeWitte, Assistant Public Defender, 907-795-9247, [claire.dewitte@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.dewitte@alaska.gov)

**Website:** For more information on our agency and its internship/externship program please visit our website: [https://  
doa.alaska.gov/pda/  
Employment/interns.html](https://doa.alaska.gov/pda/Employment/interns.html)

## WHY I CAME TO ALASKA AND STAYED



*"I grew up in California backpacking throughout the Sierra Nevada mountains. When I was finishing law school and applying to clerkships, I focused on places that had pretty mountains to rival the Sierra. Alaska, having some of the prettiest mountains of*

*all, was high on my list. When I got an offer to clerk in Anchorage, I accepted it immediately. I soon decided I wanted to stick around and lined up a second clerkship. The second judge, who had worked at the Public Defender Agency for several years, encouraged me to apply to the PD, and it was the best decision of my career. Our work is exciting and challenging. Our coworkers are endlessly supportive with ideas or motion templates or time or just emotional support. Our wins are amazing, and our losses still leave me feeling proud to stand up in court and defend our clients. It's a job and a place that easily becomes a passion, and I wouldn't trade working here for anywhere else."*

-Lars Johnson  
Deputy—Training & Development

*"I moved to Alaska from the Midwest right after graduating from law school. The beauty of Alaska and the outdoor activities, from kayaking, snowboarding, and rock climbing, to hunting and fishing, are huge draws for many people, but I was not particularly outdoorsy, and everyone I knew couldn't understand my decision to go to Alaska. They couldn't imagine a place further from where they pictured me; they all agreed I belonged in a big city, not the wilderness. I knew they were right. But that is why I moved to Alaska. I knew that if I didn't push myself to go further than I was comfortable then, I never would. I thought it would be a two-year adventure designed to establish my independence and force me to try new things. That was over twenty years ago.*

*I spent some time in Kotzebue-off the road system, north of the Arctic Circle, population 3,000-making all kinds of foolhardy choices, that have become some of the best stories of my life, before settling down in Anchorage. It turns out, even with practice and an open mind, I am still not particularly outdoorsy, but the view is spectacular, the fishing and smoked salmon incredible, and I can't imagine a life more completely 'me' anywhere else."*

-Shannon Ewing Tetlow  
Deputy—Operations



# Office Locations



Office Location	# of Attorneys
Anchorage	64
Bethel	9
Dillingham	2
Fairbanks	16
Juneau	7
Kenai	9
Ketchikan	3
Kodiak	2
Kotzebue	2
Nome	3
Palmer	13
Sitka	1
Utqiagvik	1



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 900 West 5th Avenue, Suite 101  
 Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
 907.334.4400 phone  
 907.269.5476 fax  
<https://doa.alaska.gov/pda/home.html>