



# FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER

Northern District of Ohio



## CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT ASSISTANT FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER

FOR OUR OFFICE IN

**Cleveland, Ohio**

**\$80,138 - \$197,100**

*Plus Excellent Benefits*

*Salary heavily dependent on prior experience*

*This posting may be used to fill one or more vacancies*

*For Preferential Consideration, Apply By*

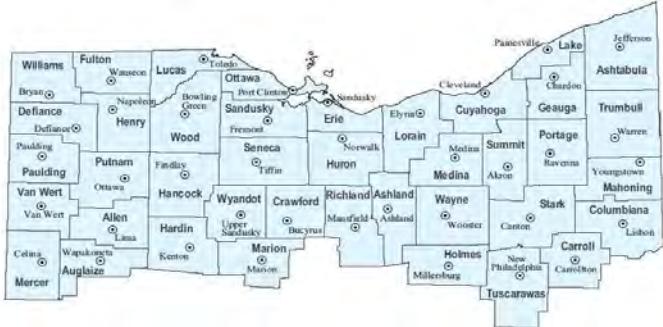
**March 4, 2026**

*(First Review, Open Until Filled)*



## WHY APPLY?

This is an exciting opportunity for anyone with a heart for public service and an interest in criminal law to join a dedicated team of professionals in one of the most vibrant locations in the country, Northeast Ohio! Located on the shores of Lake Erie, not only does Cleveland and our surrounding locations offer professional sports, but



also, the second largest theater district in the county, a world-class art museum, a world-class orchestra, and a national park with hiking, biking, kayaking, and fishing opportunities.

Our Capital Habeas Unit (CHU) focuses on the representation of State prisoners sentenced to death who have exhausted their claims through the State court appellate processes and who are seeking final review of their claims in federal habeas corpus. Our habeas representation covers all stages of representation in federal court from the initial petition through the Circuit and Supreme Court stages of appeal and State clemency.

## WHAT WE DO

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Ohio zealously represents and defends indigent citizens in order to preserve, protect and defend the principle of equal justice for all.

We do this in accordance with the Criminal Justice Act. We provide representation to individuals in federal criminal cases or under federal criminal investigation who are financially unable to retain counsel.



## WHO WE ARE

We are attorneys, paralegals, investigators, office administrators, information technology specialists, and mitigation specialists, dedicated to defending our fellow citizens by providing them with legal counsel. We are zealous advocates for our clients, providing independent trial defense services free from outside influence. We represent every client within the guidelines of the laws, consistent with our professional ethics, and in accordance with all applicable rules of practice. We work together as a team of legal professionals to uphold every person's right to be presumed innocent, and when required to a fair sentence. Our defense is vigorous at trial, sentencing, and on appeal. We advocate for humane sentences by showing judges and prosecutors that we represent people, not criminals.

We are committed to cultivating a culture of acceptance and connectedness that honors the diverse backgrounds of the people we represent. We value diversity, and believe better legal representation occurs when members of the defense team have diverse backgrounds. We seek out and embrace the unique contributions that you can bring, including your culture, ethnicity, education, opinions, race, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, nation of origin, age, languages spoken, veteran's status, religion, disability or economic status.



## THE ORGANIZATION

Established in August of 1973, the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Ohio operates four offices, including a main office in downtown Cleveland and branch offices in Akron, Youngstown, and Toledo. Our staff of 51 employees is split between the Trial Unit, performing traditional indigent criminal defense and appeals, and the Capital Habeas Unit, providing post-conviction representation to inmates sentenced to death. There are currently 22 Capital Habeas Units throughout the country. Our CHU was opened in 2008 with a staff of two attorneys and a paralegal. It has grown to a Unit currently comprised of 14 members, including five Assistant Federal Public Defenders, three Research and Writing Specialist Attorneys, two Mitigation Specialist, two Investigators, and three Paralegals. The position will be in the Cleveland office.

## WHO YOU ARE

You thrive in high-stakes, complex legal environments and bring exceptional writing, research and oral advocacy skills. You are collaborative by nature, able to work effectively as part of an interdisciplinary team, and comfortable navigating both the emotional weight and intellectual rigor of capital work.

You are trustworthy and reliable with good judgment and initiative. As a CHU attorney you have a demonstrated commitment to working with marginalized communities and with clients from a range of backgrounds. You put the client first while standing on your values, your personal and professional ethics, and your professionalism. You use sound judgment to carry out your responsibilities. You appreciate the importance of diversity. You possess strong client-centered instincts, treating every client with dignity, empathy, and humanity. You are resilient,

reflective and grounded in your purpose—committed to continuous learning, high professional standards, and advocacy that makes a difference.

You are candid in your advice, but respectful of others. You don't just recognize problems but identify solutions. You harness your creativity, legal acumen, and writing skills to overcome difficult problem sets.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CHU ASSISTANT FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER

If selected as an Assistant Federal Public Defender in our Capital Habeas Unit, you will collaboratively work with a team of other Assistant Federal Public Defenders, Research and Writing Specialist Attorneys, Investigators, Mitigation Specialist, and Paralegals. In general, the ideal candidate will demonstrate capability and qualifications in the following areas:

- Serving as Team Leader or co-counsel on cases in various stages of litigation.
- Identifying and developing legal claims.
- Bringing a creative and committed approach to research and writing to address the historical significance of capital punishment and its ongoing relationship to race and slavery.
- Advocating in court hearings and oral arguments.
- Directing fact and mitigation investigations.
- Building long-term rapport with clients, including clients with severe mental illnesses, intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Participating in creative narratives and video productions for state clemency.
- Demonstrate good interoffice communication skills and the ability to maintain a friendly, open, demeanor during periods of increased work tempo.
- The ability to immediately handle a substantial case load.
- Engage in ongoing training and continuing legal education (CLE) to maintain and enhance professional skills.
- Serve as a mentor to interns, or newer attorneys when assigned, helping support a culture of learning and collaboration.
- Serving as a resource to CJA panel attorneys, including planning and presenting Capital Habeas Seminars for the defense community.





## IDEAL CANDIDATE

### Education and Experience

To qualify, interested persons must have graduated from an accredited law school, be a member in good standing of any state bar, or if not a member of the Ohio Bar, be willing to pursue admission to the Ohio Bar and be willing to obtain admission to practice before the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio, United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, and the Supreme Court of the United States.

Additionally, applicants must:

- Have exceptional writing skills, and be able to manage difficult, complex, litigation.
- Have a strong commitment to addressing the ongoing and underlying disparate treatment of people of color and marginalized communities within the criminal legal system.
- Have a demonstrably firm grasp of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) litigation under 28 U.S.C. § 2254.

Specialized knowledge, skill, and experience in the following areas is preferred:

- Education or practical experience in mitigation work or relatedly, relevant education, skill, or practical experience in fields of mental health, sociology, psychology, childhood trauma, and/or social work.



### COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

- **\$80,138 - \$197,100**

*(Dependent on education and years of relevant experience consistent with federal guidelines and regulations)*

- Health, Dental, Vision, and Life Insurance
- FERS Retirement
- Social Security
- Thrift Savings Plan
- Transit Subsidy Voucher
- Free Parking
- 11 Federal Holidays
- Annual Leave and Sick Leave
- Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)

### How To APPLY

All qualified candidates are strongly encouraged to apply by **March 4, 2026** (first preferential review, open until filled). Applications, supplemental questions, resumes and cover letters will only be accepted electronically. To apply send a single Adobe .pdf document via email which includes a letter of interest, your resume, a completed AO78 Application for Judicial Employment, and three (3) references to [ohn\\_employment@fd.org](mailto:ohn_employment@fd.org), subject line: "2026-02 CHU Assistant Federal Public Defender".

### NOTICE

Employees are considered at-will and are not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act. This posting is subject to the availability of funds. The position offers responsibility, independence, dynamic teamwork, and generous federal benefits. The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Ohio is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Employment is provisional pending the successful completion of a required background check. You must be a United States citizen or eligible to work in the United States.