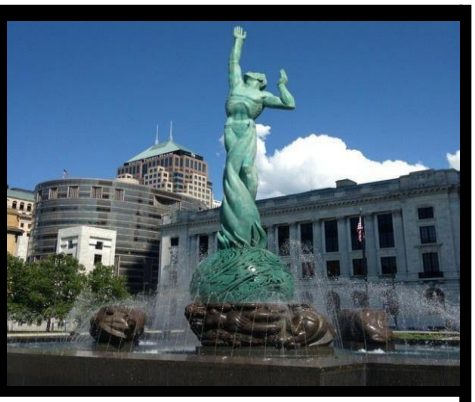


FEDERALPUBLIC

# DEFENDER

Northern District of Ohio

## CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT RESEARCH AND WRITING SPECIALIST ATTORNEY

FOR OUR OFFICE IN

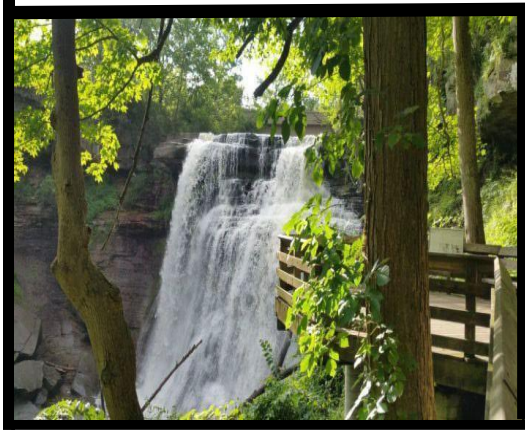
## Cleveland, Ohio

## $64,448-$197,200

*Plus Excellent Benefits*

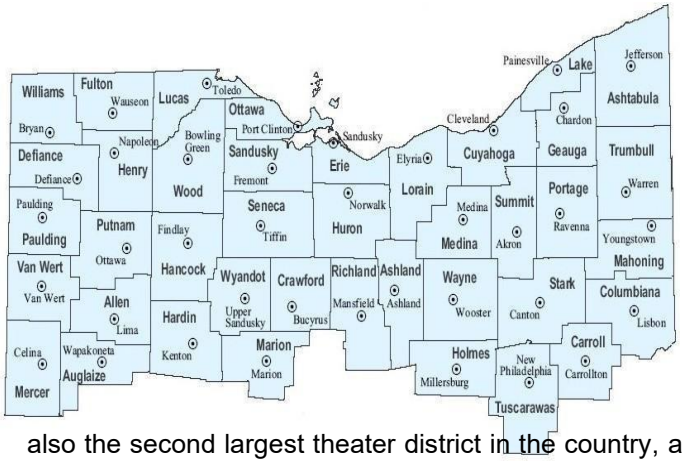
*Salary heavily dependent on prior experience* ***For Preferential Consideration****, apply by* ***September 25, 2026***

*(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 country, 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, 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, two Research and Writing Specialist Attorneys, two Mitigation Specialist, two investigators, and three Paralegals.

## 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. A minimum of 3-years criminal litigation and/or appellate experience is preferred. Federal court experience or clerkship is desirable. You are trustworthy and reliable with good judgment and initiative.

As a CHU Research & Writing Specialist 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 RESEARCH & WRITING SPECIALIST ATTORNEY

If selected as Research & Writing Specialist Attorney in our Capital Habeas Unit, you will work collaboratively with a team of other Assistant Federal Public Defenders, Research and Writing Specialist Attorneys, Investigators, Mitigation Specialist, and Paralegals. While training is available, the selected candidate will be expected to quickly assume a large caseload, so prior capital litigation or state postconviction experience is preferrable. In general, the ideal candidate will demonstrate capability and qualifications in the following areas:

- The initiative, judgement, and integrity to operate and think independently, while still working cooperatively as part of a team.
- Demonstrate good interoffice communication skills.
- The ability to research and draft capital habeas petitions and motions in federal district courts.
- Advocating in hearings and oral arguments.
- Assisting in the development of fact and mitigation investigations.
- 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.
- Participating in creative narratives and video productions for state clemency.
- Demonstrated skills working one on one with clients accused of capital offenses.
- Demonstrated skills and ability to provide zealous, professional legal representation to indigent clients.
- Demonstrated ability to communicate professionally and effectively with the Court and opposing Counsel.
- The ability to review voluminous discovery.
- 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. Additionally, if not a member of the Ohio Bar the selected candidate must 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, the 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.

## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

- **$64,448 - $197,200**

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

- Health & Life Insurance
- FERS Retirement
- Social Security
- Thrift Savings Plan
- Transit Subsidy Voucher
- Paid 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 **September 25, 2026** (first review, open until filled — multiple vacancies may be filled by this advertisement). Applications, supplemental questions, resumes and cover letters will only be accepted electronically. Only applicants selected for interviews will be contacted. 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, three (3) references, and a recent writing sample, limited to 10 pages, to: **ohn_employment@fd.org, subject line: "*2026-08 Research and Writing Specialist Attorney*"**.

This is an exciting opportunity for anyone interested in a challenging and rewarding career in public defense! Come join our team! Apply now!

## 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. This 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.

AO 78 (5/24)

# FEDERAL JUDICIAL BRANCH
## APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

If you need additional space, continue under "Remarks" listing item number.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Name *(Last, First, Middle Initial)* | 2. Phone Number |
| 3. Present Address *(Street, City, State, Zip)* | |
| 4. Email Address | 5. Place of Birth *(city/town, state, & country) (required for background investigation)* |
| 6. Other Names Previously Used for Employment Purposes | 7. Date of Birth *(complete only for law enforcement positions)* |

**GENERAL**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Are you a U.S. Citizen? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If no, give the Country of your citizenship |
| 9. a. Were you ever a federal civilian employee? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, give highest civilian grade: ____ / ____ / ____ (Pay Plan / Grade / Step) |
| b. Are you receiving a federal civilian annuity payment? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | |
| c. Are you receiving federal severance pay? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, give former agency contact/telephone: |
| d. Have you received a federal separation incentive payment in the past 5 years? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, state mo/yr received and former agency contact/telephone: |
| 10. Do you have any relatives who are Judges, Officers or employees of the United States Courts? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, give their names, positions, and relationships to you. |
| 11. Have you ever served on active duty with the military? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | *(If selected, you will need to provide your DD-214 (copy 4), Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, so that your service may be verified and credited)* |

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12. During the last 5 years, have you been fired from any job for any reason, did you quit after being told that you would be fired, did you leave any job by mutual agreement because of specific problems, or were you debarred from Federal employment by the Office of Personnel Management or any other Federal agency? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, provide in Section 18 the date, explanation of problem, reason for leaving, and employer's name/address. |
| 13. Are you delinquent on any Federal debt? *(Include delinquencies arising from Federal taxes, loans, overpayment of benefits, and other debts to the U.S. Government, plus defaults of Federally guaranteed or insured loans (e.g., student loan, home mortgage loan)).* | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, provide in Section 18 the type, length, and amount of delinquency/default, and steps being taken to correct the error/repay the debt. |

## EDUCATION

14. a. Do you have a high school diploma or G.E.D. equivalent? ☐ YES ☐ NO

| b. Name and location of colleges or universities attended *(including law schools)* | Dates Attended mm/dd/yyyy Start | Finish | Credit Hours Quarter | Semester | Type of Degree (if applicable) | Date Received mm/dd/yyyy | Grade Point Average and/or scholastic standing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

15. Other schools or training attended *(list name/location of school, dates attended, subject studied, certificates received, and other pertinent data):*

## JOB RELATED SKILLS, AWARDS, SPECIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

16. List any skills (e.g., language, computer, keyboarding speed), honors, awards, or special accomplishments (e.g., memberships in professional/honor societies, leadership activities, performance awards) that you believe are relevant to your ability to perform the job:

## APPLICANTS FOR LEGAL POSITIONS

17. a. Are you admitted to the Bar? ☐ YES ☐ NO

If yes, list the name of Bar(s) and date(s) of admission.

Name of Bar:_____ Date (mm/dd/yyyy):_____
Name of Bar:_____ Date (mm/dd/yyyy):_____

b. Is your Bar membership? ☐ ACTIVE ☐ INACTIVE

If active, list the name of Bar(s).

Name of Bar:_____ Date (mm/dd/yyyy):_____
Name of Bar:_____ Date (mm/dd/yyyy):_____

c. What was your scholastic standing in law school? ☐ UPPER ½ ☐ UPPER ⅓ ☐ UPPER ¼

d. Were you a member of an editorial board of law review or a moot court participant? ☐ YES ☐ No

## 18. REMARKS *(Use this space for continuation of answers. List the item number being explained.)*

## WORK EXPERIENCE

*(Start with your present position and work back 10 years. Include any military service. Use additional page if necessary.)*

**A**

| Dates of Employment *(mm/dd/yyyy)*<br>From: _____ To: _____ | Number of hours worked per week:<br>☐ Full-Time ☐ Part-Time | Exact Title of Your Position |
|---|---|---|
| Salary or Earnings<br>Starting $ _____ Per _____<br>Final $ _____ Per _____ | Pay Plan/Grade<br>*(If in federal Service)* | Place of Employment<br>City _____<br>State _____ |
| Name of Immediate Supervisor<br>Title of Immediate Supervisor<br>Business Telephone: (Area Code and Phone Number) | | Name of Employer *(firm, organization, etc.)*<br>Address of Employer |
| Reason for Leaving | | |
| Description of Work | | |

**B**

| Dates of Employment *(mm/dd/yyyy)*<br>From: _____ To: _____ | Number of hours worked per week:<br>☐ Full-Time ☐ Part-Time | Exact Title of Your Position |
|---|---|---|
| Salary or Earnings<br>Starting $ _____ Per _____<br>Final $ _____ Per _____ | Pay Plan/Grade<br>*(If in federal Service)* | Place of Employment<br>City _____<br>State _____ |
| Name and of Immediate Supervisor<br>Title of Immediate Supervisor<br>Business Telephone: (Area Code and Phone Number) | | Name of Employer *(firm, organization, etc.)*<br>Address of Employer |
| Reason for Leaving | | |
| Description of Work | | |

**C**

| Dates of Employment *(mm/dd/yyyy)*<br>From: _____ To: _____ | Number of hours worked per week:<br>☐ Full-Time ☐ Part-Time | Exact Title of Your Position |
|---|---|---|
| Salary or Earnings<br>Starting $ _____ Per _____<br>Final $ _____ Per _____ | Pay Plan/Grade *(If in federal Service)* | Place of Employment<br>City _____<br>State _____ |
| Name of Immediate Supervisor<br>Title of Immediate Supervisor<br>Business Telephone: *(Area Code and Phone Number)* | | Name of Employer *(firm, organization, etc.)*<br>Address of Employer |
| Reason for Leaving | | |
| Description of Work | | |

**D**

| Dates of Employment *(mm/dd/yyyy)*<br>From: _____ To: _____ | Number of hours worked per week:<br>☐ Full-Time ☐ Part-Time | Exact Title of Your Position |
|---|---|---|
| Salary or Earnings<br>Starting $ _____ Per _____<br>Final $ _____ Per _____ | Pay Plan/Grade *(If in federal Service)* | Place of Employment<br>City _____<br>State _____ |
| Name of Immediate Supervisor<br>Title of Immediate Supervisor<br>Business Telephone: *(Area Code and Phone Number)* | | Name of Employer *(firm, organization, etc.)*<br>Address of Employer |
| Reason for Leaving | | |
| Description of Work | | |

## OPTIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION – RESPOND ONLY IF REQUIRED BY THE VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

**Answer questions 19, 20, and 21, only if required by the vacancy announcement.** Your answers should include convictions resulting from a plea of nolo contendere (no contest), but omit (1) traffic fines of $300 or less, (2) any violation of law committed before your 16th birthday, (3) any violation of law committed before your 18th birthday if finally decided in juvenile court or under a Youth Offender law, (4) any conviction set aside under the Federal Youth Corrections Act or similar state law, and (5) any conviction for which the record was expunged under Federal or state law.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 19. During the last 7 years, have you been convicted, imprisoned, on probation, or on parole? *(Include felonies, firearms or explosives violations, misdemeanors, and all other offenses)* | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, provide in Section 22 the date, explanation of violation, place of occurrence, and name/address of police dept or court. |
| 20. Have you been convicted by a military court-martial in the past 7 years? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, provide in Section 22 the date, explanation of violation, place of occurrence, and name/address of military authority or court. |
| 21. Are you now under charges for any violation of law? | ☐ YES | ☐ NO | If yes, provide in Section 22 the date, explanation of violation, place of occurrence, and name/address of police dept or court. |

## 22. REMARKS *(Use this space for continuation of answers. List the item number being explained.)*

**APPLICANT CERTIFICATION**

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information on and attached to this application is true, correct, complete and made in good faith. I understand that false or fraudulent information on or attached to this application may be grounds for not hiring me, or firing me after I begin work, and may be punishable by fine or imprisonment. I understand that any information I give may be investigated.

SIGNATURE DATE SIGNED