

Rhode Island Public Defender

Assistant Public Defender

The Rhode Island Public Defender is seeking an entry level Assistant Public Defender to join its Adult Criminal Unit representing low-income people charged with crimes in Rhode Island state courts.

About the Office: The Rhode Island Public Defender is the country's first statewide public defender office, established more than two decades before *Gideon v. Wainwright*. Animated by this tradition, RIPD's goal is to provide zealous, client-centered representation to those who cannot afford an attorney. RIPD employs about sixty attorneys in the Adult Criminal, Juvenile, Family Court, and Appellate Units, who are supported by a team of social workers, investigators, interpreters, intake interviewers, case managers, and other support staff. RIPD's main office is in Providence, and public defenders are also stationed at courthouses in Kent County, Washington County, and Newport County.

About the Position: Entry level Assistant Public Defenders represent clients charged with misdemeanors and probation violations in District Court. Over the course of their work in District Court, Assistant Public Defenders will be reassigned to different courtrooms and may be reassigned to different counties depending on attorney development and office needs. After gaining experience conducting bench trials in District Court, Assistant Public Defenders in the Adult Criminal Unit may advance to representing clients charged with probation violations, and ultimately felonies, in Superior Court. Assistant Public Defenders on this trajectory are expected to eventually be ready to represent clients in felony jury trials in Superior Court.

This is a position that requires near-daily courtroom appearances, extensive client communication (including office visits and prison visits), careful maintenance of case files, and coordination with investigators, social workers, and support staff. Assistant Public Defenders are responsible for the cases assigned to them; casework will include reviewing discovery, identifying legal issues, developing defenses, advising clients, negotiating with prosecutors, presenting mitigation, advocating before judges, writing motions and memoranda, and representing clients effectively at hearings and trials. A typical day is a morning spent in court and an afternoon talking to clients, updating case files, and preparing for upcoming court dates.

Entry level public defenders receive initial training and periodic additional skills and substantive instruction from experienced advocates who serve as Trainers. Trainers guide less experienced defenders through trial preparation and provide trial support, including sitting as second chair. Trainers also remain available for informal consultation and case strategy discussions.

Assistant Public Defenders are expected to attend continuing legal education programs and to stay abreast of applicable court rules and relevant law.

RIPD is a collaborative work environment. Attorneys are expected to support colleagues, participate in office trainings and initiatives, and contribute to the work of the office as needed.

Requirements: Applicants must hold a J.D. from an accredited law school and be admitted to the Rhode Island Bar or eligible for admission. See the Rhode Island Supreme Court's [Attorney Resources](#) for more information.

RIPD is looking for applicants with a demonstrated interest in zealously representing low-income people charged with crimes. Applicants should have an understanding of the serious challenges RIPD clients contend with, including poverty, housing instability, mental health issues, and substance use disorders. Applicants should possess a solid knowledge of the Rules of Evidence and be familiar with criminal law and criminal procedure. Completion of a trial advocacy course, defense clinic, or similar experience is preferred. The ideal applicant has good judgment, strong interpersonal and analytical skills, tenacity in the face of obstacles, and a desire to grow as a courtroom advocate.

This is an in-person position.

Bilingual attorneys are encouraged to apply.

Salary Range: \$85,819–\$97,149.

To Apply: Please send a cover letter and resume to careers@ripd.org.

The Rhode Island Public Defender participates in the J.R. Justice Loan Repayment Assistance Program.

The Rhode Island Public Defender is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications from people whose backgrounds are underrepresented in the legal profession.