

How to Apply for a Slot in a Local Public Defender Office

For Trial Work, Juvenile Representation, Appeals and Several Other Forms of Lawyering
Once you secure a position for the Fall or Spring, you are eligible to enroll in the following class:
Externship Focus: Criminal Defense/ 4 Credits/One Semester/Prof Ross

I - Washington DC

How to apply for a placement at the Public Defender Service (PDS):

1. Here's a website that shows some of the breadth of their possible placements:
<http://www.pdsdc.org/about-us/legal-services/community-defender-division>
 2. When to apply? Some placements fill up more quickly than others (nine or ten months in advance), but some slots remain open to the last minute for fall or spring semesters. (It's never too early to apply.)
 3. Feel free to contact Jennifer Thomas, PDS' Director of Legal Recruiting.
Email: JenThomas@PDSDC.ORG. She can help you think about what placement you want. (For example, do you want client contact? An interest in helping those with mentally illness, or juveniles? Is appellate practice more your style?)
 4. Here's where you submit your application (for all positions):
<http://www.pdsdc.org:8000/InternshipsAndClerkships/Clerkships.aspx>
 5. Once you submit your application, you will be contacted for an interview. PDS interviews can be challenging (unlike the surrounding offices) and it is important to prepare for them. To do so, contact Professor Ross (jross.howardlaw@gmail.com) or an alum who works (or worked) at PDS to help you prepare. [Professor Ross will keep names of Howard alumni who can answer questions.]
 6. The interviews proceed on a rolling basis and you should know within two weeks after the interview if you secured a slot.
-

II – Maryland

How to apply for a placement at an office in Maryland:

1. Apply for a "law clerk" placement in Maryland by submitting an application to the Maryland Office of the Public Defender (a central location).
2. Here's the website for their application:
<http://www.opd.state.md.us/AboutOPD/Careers/LawClerk.aspx>
3. When to apply? Some placements fill up quickly, especially a location like Rockville (the only one close to DC that is on the metro). Some slots remain open to the last minute for fall or spring semesters. (It's never too early to apply.)
4. Consider your choice of office. Here's the list of the 12 county offices:
<http://www.opd.state.md.us/Districts.aspx>
5. Consider whether you want to work with a trial attorney or in a specialty such as juvenile justice. Other specialties include appeals (a strong, popular program in Baltimore), immigration (must have courses or prior experience in this area), parental defense and mental health. [Note for juvenile representation: Every office will slot law a few law clerks with the attorneys handling the juvenile cases, with the largest departments for juvenile representation in Baltimore County and PG county.]
6. Feel free to contact Johanna Cohen Leshner, the state's Director of Recruitment when deciding where to work. Email: jleshner@opd.state.md. [In addition, Professor Ross will keep names of Howard alumni who can answer questions.]

7. After you submit your application to the Maryland Office, the director will forward your application to one of the district offices you request. Within five business days of your application you will receive an email telling you which particular district office now has your application. Next, the attorney in charge of hires at the particular district office should contact you within a week. If you do not receive an email, I recommend writing to him or her with a cc to Prof. Ross (jross.howardlaw@gmail.com). You should expect to be interviewed in person or by phone within three weeks of your application.

III – Virginia

How to get a placement at a Virginia Public Defender Office:

1. First, choose the office or offices in Virginia you wish to apply to. Every jurisdiction in Virginia has its own application process. Virginia has twenty-one Public Defender offices and the three Capital Defender offices http://www.vadefenders.org/vidc_offices/.
2. For Alexandria, send a resume to Melinda Douglas at mdouglas@ale.idc.virginia.gov and “a cover letter that addresses what they bring to our office and our clients.” Alexandria will schedule you for an interview.
3. For Arlington, send a resume to Lauren Brice at Lbrice@arl.idc.virginia.gov with “a cover letter explaining why the work of criminal trial attorney interests you.” Also, if you have a particular interest in juvenile work, let her know. For third year students who have taken the prerequisite courses, there’s an opportunity to practice with a supervisor.
4. If it’s another office, call the Public Defender or Capital Defender office in which you are interested to determine their needs and policies. For questions about Virginia PD work, feel free to reach out to Maria Jankowski at mjankowski@adm.idc.virginia.gov; (804) 615-1976.
5. The offices closest to DC are:
 - **Alexandria Office:** (703) 746-4477
132 N. Royal St, Suite 200 Alexandria, VA 22314
Attention: Melinda Douglas at mdouglas@ale.idc.virginia.gov
 - **Arlington Office:** (703) 875-1111
One Courthouse Metro, 2200 Wilson Blvd, Suite 510, Arlington, VA 22201
Attention: Lauren Brice at Lbrice@arl.idc.virginia.gov
 - **Fairfax Office:** (703) 934-5600
4103 Chain Bridge Rd, Suite 500, Fairfax, VA 22030
Attention: Melissa Hasanbelliu at mhasanbelliu@fai.idc.virginia.gov (Ext. 106)

Once you have your position, it is time to apply for the HUSL externship:

- **Apply online:**
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScgi9N3o0nu0tvCfPDPVCZbJNvT5pxII-jyGqzNaYZK72ICDQ/viewform>
- Once you are accepted into the externship, your name will be forwarded to the law school registrar’s office so you can officially sign up for the course.
- Course Schedule - Try to keep two full days open for this placement as you will be working 15 hours per week.

Questions?

- Feel free to email Josephine Ross - jross.howardlaw@gmail.com