

# Introduction

The State Public Defender Board is conducting a national search for a new head State Public Defender. The position is expected to be filled by Summer 2024.

## Our Mission

The mission of the Wisconsin State Public Defender is to zealously represent clients, protect constitutional rights, and advocate for an effective and fair criminal justice system. Our commitment is to treat our clients with dignity and compassion.

## Who We Are

The Wisconsin State Public Defender (SPD) is an independent, executive branch state agency charged with providing legal representation to indigent clients in criminal and certain civil cases. The SPD has 40 officers around the state. It appoints counsel in more than 125,000 cases statewide per year.

# Position Summary

The Wisconsin State Public Defender is appointed by the State Public Defender Board and serves at the pleasure of the Board. They must be a member of the State Bar of Wisconsin.

- a) Duties
  - i) Supervise the operation, activities, policies and procedures of the Wisconsin State Public Defender's office.
  - ii) Be the chief legal officer of the office of the state public defender and make all final decisions regarding the disposition of any case handled by the office.
  - iii) Prepare and submit to the board for its approval the biennial budget of the office of the state public defender.
  - iv) Appoint one deputy, the number of division administrators specified in s. 230.08 and all staff attorneys in the unclassified service and appoint all other employees in the classified service.
  - v) Prepare and submit to the board for its approval such personnel and employment policies as the board shall require.

- vi) Prepare and submit to the board and such other persons as may be appropriate an annual report of the activities of the office in such form as the board shall direct.
  - vii) Determine when and where it is necessary to establish offices for the state public defender and arrange for the rental of such space consistent with the policy and procedure of the department of administration.
  - viii) In accordance with state statute accept referrals and requests for appointment of counsel and provide legal services to qualifying applicants in the trial and appellate courts.
  - ix) Represent or arrange representation for members of the staff of the office of the state public defender that are named as defendants in lawsuits arising from their duties within the office.
  - x) Commence actions in the name of the state public defender or any client or group of clients to seek declaratory judgment on any matter of concern to persons being represented by the office.
  - xi) Perform all other duties necessary or incidental to the performance of any duty enumerated in Ch. 977 Wis. Stats.
- b) Powers
- i) Delegate the legal representation of any person to any staff attorney or member of the State Bar of Wisconsin certified under s. 977.08.
  - ii) Negotiate contracts with local public defender organizations as directed by the board.
  - iii) Sponsor conferences and training for attorneys and may charge tuition for attendance at the conferences and training.
- c) Profile
- i) Vision - The State Public Defender must have a vision and direction that ensures the long term health of the State Public Defender. Skills in strategic planning and goal setting are vital. The State Public Defender must have the ability to thrive in and take advantage of an ever-changing political, funding, and legal environment. Their vision must be collaborative and involve partnerships with many stakeholders.
  - ii) Advocacy - The State Public Defender must take a leadership role in advocating for the clients and our expanded mission at the state, national, and international level. The State Public Defender must be willing to serve as an advocate on various boards, committees, and task forces that seek to improve the lives of clients and ensure the necessary resources for the agency.
  - iii) Staff Relationships - The State Public Defender must win and maintain the confidence of all staff. The mission of the agency is best advanced when we are all working in a coordinated, strategic effort. The State Public Defender must embrace the idea that our agency is client centered.
  - iv) State Public Defender Board - The State Public Defender serves at the pleasure of the State Public Defender Board. The individual is responsible for delivering reports on many issues and developing an annual budget that is approved by the Board. It is essential that the State Public Defender have the support and respect of all board members.

- v) Political Relationships - The State Public Defender must be able to forge positive relationships with political leaders at the municipal, state, and national level. Maintaining a non-partisan approach to policy makers at all levels to forward the interests of the agency.
- vi) Evaluation and Measurement - The State Public Defender must be committed to conducting evaluations on services that the agency provides and be willing to make prudent and strategic decisions. The individual must also be willing to eliminate or change efforts that are not effective. Tools used to measure outcomes must generate a clear picture of results. They must also pursue continuous improvement with programs that have promise and demonstrated success.
- vii) Budget Management - The State Public Defender must have knowledge of the importance of budget management and be creative in making budget decisions that maximize the use of appropriated funds.
- viii) Technology - The State Public Defender must understand the importance of technology services as an essential resource in providing ethical representation for clients.
- ix) Commitment to Diversity - The State Public Defender has responsibility to implement the agency's diversity, equity, and inclusion plan. They must lead the agency efforts to create and maintain a work environment that promotes the importance of diversity.

## Salary & Benefits Information

The starting salary will be between \$50.05 to \$82.59 per hour (\$104,104 to \$171,787 annually) depending on qualifications, plus great benefits. The position is unclassified and in pay schedule/range 90-06. Pay for current state employees will be set in accordance with the Wisconsin State Compensation Plan.

**State of Wisconsin Benefits** include 3.5 weeks of vacation, 9 paid holidays, ample earned sick time, great health plan options, low cost insurance starting at \$39/month for single plans and \$97/month for family plans, and participation in one of the best retirement systems in the country. Additionally, employees may be eligible for student loan forgiveness through the **Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program**.

Final selected candidates may be eligible for moving expense reimbursement to relocate to the place of employment.

## Job Details

All applicants who may be appointed to this position will be required to complete a criminal background check prior to an offer of employment.

Successful candidates must be admitted to practice law by the Wisconsin Supreme Court prior to their start date. Soon to be graduates are encouraged to apply, and an appointment date would be set after being admitted to the Wisconsin Bar. See the [Wisconsin State Bar](#) for admission requirements.

## Qualifications, Skills, and Knowledge

- Qualifications.
  - The candidate must have been a licensed attorney for at least 5 years.
  - The candidate must demonstrate substantial experience working on behalf of disenfranchised people.
  - The candidate must have been in a leadership role of a large agency, law firm, or business for at least 3 years.
  - The candidate must have held a position with supervisory experience over lawyers or other professionals.
  - The candidate must demonstrate substantial experience developing business or program strategies and goals.
  - The candidate must have held a position that involved the development or monitoring of an organizational budget.
  - The candidate shall not have had their license to practice law suspended or revoked in any jurisdiction on disciplinary grounds.
- Skills
  - The candidate should be able to articulate their vision that ensures the long term health of the State Public Defender.
  - The candidate should have a demonstrated history of implementing programs, policies, or initiatives.
  - The candidate should have a clear vision for political and community engagement and be able to describe specific examples of past engagement.
  - The candidate should have demonstrated experience working in a team environment and be able to describe specific accomplishments of the team.
  - The candidate should have a demonstrated history of creating or supporting innovations in legal practice and be able to describe specific examples of their work.
  - The candidate should have outstanding written and verbal communication skills. Writing samples may be requested.
- Knowledge
  - Background or training in criminal law, juvenile law, and trial and/or appellate law.

- Background or training in access to justice for the indigent.
- Background or training in legal and professional ethics.

## How To Apply

To apply, submit a cover letter and resume to [plotkina@opd.wi.gov](mailto:plotkina@opd.wi.gov).

Your cover letter and resume are very important parts of your application and are used during our evaluation process to determine your qualifications as they relate to the job. If both of these documents are not submitted, you will not be eligible for consideration.

The cover letter should address the qualifications as they relate to the position description, qualifications, skills, and knowledge, with a particular emphasis on:

- Previous leadership experience
- Development or monitoring of an organizational budget
- Experience working with disenfranchised people
- History of implementing program, policies, or initiatives
- Experience with political management
- Experience working in a team environment
- Vision to ensure long term health of the Wisconsin State Public Defender

## Deadline to Apply

If you have any questions on this recruitment or how to apply; please contact Adam Plotkin at [plotkina@opd.wi.gov](mailto:plotkina@opd.wi.gov).

**The deadline to apply is 11:59 pm on Monday, February 5, 2024.**