



## Public Defender and Prosecutor Jobs

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There are thousands of prosecutor and public defender jobs. There are prosecutors in virtually every city in the United States. What an excellent way to get actual courtroom experience and uphold the Constitution!

### **Prosecutors**

#### *District Attorneys*

Generally, there are district attorney's offices and criminal divisions of the state attorney's general offices at the state level. These offices are organized by county. The District Attorney for the county is usually an elected official. Depending upon the size of the District Attorney's office, it may have multiple units that focus upon different types of crimes, such as domestic violence or homicides. If you work with a smaller District Attorney's office, you may have the option of handling diverse caseloads.

One of the largest advantages of working for a District Attorney's office is that you can get immediate and meaningful trial experience. This is something that many attorneys who work in law firms must wait for years to get. As an Assistant District Attorney, you will generally start out doing smaller misdemeanor cases and then work your way up to more significant work. On the higher end, District Attorneys have a great deal of discretion in how cases are investigated and prosecuted. The entire process of working as a District Attorney can result in a tremendously fulfilling career for people who want meaningful trial and court experience.

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#### *State Attorney General Offices*

These offices generally prosecute cases that have statewide significance and work with local District Attorney's offices in the prosecution of cases. In addition, virtually every state has a State Attorney General's office that is charged with representing the state in litigation.

#### *Federal Prosecutors*

At the federal level, prosecutors work at the Department of Justice in Washington, DC, and at U.S. Attorney's Offices throughout the United States. At present, there are more than 90 U.S. Attorneys who manage the majority of all federal prosecution in the United States. Each U.S. Attorney reports directly to the Attorney General.

The majority of people working as federal prosecutors are Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSAs), who carry out the bulk of federal prosecution in the federal courts. There are numerous specialized units within the U.S. Attorney's office, and some AUSAs prosecute drug crimes, organized crime, or economic crimes, for example. In addition, there are also appellate divisions in the U.S. Attorney's Office that carry out appeals for the government.



## Public Defenders

At the state, federal, and local levels, public defenders serve as court-appointed attorneys for those who cannot afford attorneys. If you are seeking immediate and substantial trial experience, working as a public defender is an excellent way to find it.

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Since public defender offices must accept all cases referred to them, the number of cases a public defender handles at one time can be tremendous. Most public defenders start out on smaller misdemeanor cases, and as their understanding increases, they are given more complex trials such as felony and even capital cases. It is not uncommon for a public defender with as little as five years of experience to be handling a murder trial, for example.

There are several legal myths that surround getting a position as a prosecutor or public defender. We have addressed some of the more common ones below.

### Legal Myth

### LEGAL AUTHORITY

**Only the top students can get jobs as prosecutors or public defenders.**

There are tens of thousands of prosecutor and public defender jobs. Certainly, some are more difficult to get than others, but for the determined job seeker, an expansive search will very likely find success.

**Prior criminal trial experience is needed to get hired as a prosecutor.**

This is not necessarily true, but in some situations, people who have volunteered in the prosecutor's office may have a better chance of getting a position.

**The salaries are very low.**

As a general rule, the salaries range from \$25,000 to \$55,000 for those just starting out. For experienced prosecutors, the salaries are often in excess of \$100,000. In addition, the emotional fulfillment has proven to be much higher than at a law firm or inhouse position.

Questions about jobs as a prosecutor or public defender? Contact Legal Authority at 800-283-3860 today.