



King County

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Recruitment Announcement

The Department of Public Defense (DPD) is seeking a **Public Defender** to lead the **Department**. The Public Defender must be a **visionary and strategic leader** with a demonstrated commitment to the delivery of **high-quality legal representation to indigent clients**. Candidates should have strong administrative skills suitable to a complex organization that values employees' professional judgment and their active engagement in the development and implementation of policy. The Public Defender must be able to advocate effectively on behalf of the department within a complex political system while protecting the independence essential to quality public defense. Candidates should have an in-depth understanding of the public policy areas that connect with public defense, a demonstrated commitment to reforms in systemic change, and competency working with communities of color and other impacted communities.

About the Department

The King County Department of Public Defense was established in 2013, by voter approval of a charter amendment. Prior to the Department's creation, four nonprofit law firms contracted with the county to provide public defense services. The Department now has four divisions, each created from the staff of one of the former firms and led by its own Managing Attorney, who is appointed by and reports to the Public Defender. The department is required under the county charter to foster and promote system improvements, efficiencies, access to justice and equity in the criminal justice system, as well as other duties assigned by ordinance. The Public Defender manages the department. Once nominated by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council, the Public Defender enjoys operational independence from the political branches of County government pursuant to the charter amendment that created DPD.

DPD is widely regarded as one of the best public defense offices in the country, drawing graduates from the nation's top law schools while also prioritizing hiring local law graduates dedicated to serving their community. DPD's reputation stems from the department's holistic approach to public defense with in-house investigators, mitigation specialists, paralegals, and legal assistants available to support attorneys on every case.



Led by the Public Defender, staff in DPD's Director's Office have a proven track record of substantial systemic change to support the Department's clients. In recent years, DPD has worked in coalition with community partners to pass legislation both locally and in the state legislature, successfully advocated for court rule amendments affecting both civil and criminal practice, and engaged in affirmative litigation to vindicate clients' rights.

The Department represents individuals accused of crimes (in both conventional and therapeutic courts), involved in the child welfare system, or subject to involuntary commitment. Cases are assigned to a division after a screening process to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The four divisions handle about 90 percent of the county's public defense cases; the remainder go to private attorneys on an assigned counsel panel overseen by the Department.



The Department employs more than 480 people, about half of whom are attorneys. Its biennial budget is approximately \$177 million. DPD is the single largest provider of public defense services in the first state in the country whose Bar Association has voted [to adopt new caseload standards](#) for public defenders following the release of the [2023 ABA/RAND study](#) on public defense workloads. Advocating for the resources needed to implement those standards over the next several years will be a core responsibility of King County's next Public Defender.

Public defenders at DPD enjoy competitive pay, top-flight benefits including a county pension, ample funding for expert witnesses, continuing education and training provided by both local and nationally recognized experts, and support from experienced supervisors.

The Department's Mission Statement

The King County Department of Public Defense represents indigent adults and children facing a loss of liberty. Our department is an independent voice that promotes justice and equity for our clients and advocates for their objectives, interests, and dignity.

DPD advocates to reduce the harm and reach of the criminal and civil legal systems that restrict our clients' liberty, and advances policy reforms to reduce systemic racism. We strive to create a flexible workplace culture that is inclusive, respectful, and supportive, premised on a shared anti-oppression framework.

To learn more about DPD, visit our [website](#).

Advisory Board

The 2013 charter also established an 11-member Public Defense Advisory Board, which advises the department, reviews its proposed budget, advocates for high-quality public defense, and issues an annual report on the state of the county's public defense system. The Advisory Board also plays a key role in the selection of the Public Defender: After a county-led recruitment process, the board selects and interviews the top candidates and then forwards to the County Executive the names of three candidates the board believes are best able to serve the county as Public Defender.

About the Position

In accordance with [King County Code \(KCC\) 2.60.026](#), the Public Defender is appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the County Council. The term of appointment for this position is aligned with the election cycle of the King County Prosecutor (four-year terms), with removal permitted only for cause.

The Executive may reappoint the Public Defender to additional terms, subject to confirmation by the Council.

The annual salary for this position is \$241,873.10.

Job Duties

- Oversee the Department's financial, information, and human resource operations, and, in partnership with the Office of Labor Relations, effectively build and guide relations with labor partners.
- Recruit, support, and lead a staff of attorneys, investigators, mitigation specialists, paralegals, and other administrative staff that provides every client with high-quality representation.
- Ensure that the Department complies with [Washington State Standards for Indigent Defense Services](#) and the [ABA's Ten Principles for a Public Defense Delivery System](#).
- Advocate within county government, supported by appropriate data, for funding sufficient to provide high-quality representation.
- Ensure the effective operation of an assigned counsel panel able to represent individuals whom the Department's staff are not able to represent.
- Serve as a voice for the concerns of public defenders, their clients, and their clients' communities.
- Work to promote system improvements, especially those that enhance access to justice and equity.

Position Requirements

- The Public Defender must be an attorney admitted to practice law within the United States, in active status and in good standing.
- Applicants must have at least seven years of experience as an attorney primarily practicing criminal defense, including both felonies and misdemeanors, as well as supervisor and managerial experience.
- If not already admitted to practice in the state of Washington, the Public Defender must be admitted within two years after appointment and be an active member of the Washington State Bar Association.



The Most Competitive Candidates will Demonstrate the Following:

- Demonstrated success in leading large and complex organizations, including the management of senior-level managers.
- Demonstrate commitment and competency in navigating complex, multi-department, agency and government relationships.
- A deep commitment to and experience in upholding and implementing principles of equity and social justice, with a proven ability to integrate these principles into all facets of an agency's operations.
- Experience working with human resources to support supervisors and staff with hiring, coaching, staff development, and performance management activities in a unionized environment.
- Experience managing programs, overseeing budgets and identifying funding opportunities, ensuring deliverables, managing projects and tasks, and communicating results.
- Ability to create a climate in which people want to do their best; can motivate many kinds of direct reports, team, or project members; enables co-workers to grow and succeed through feedback, instruction, and encouragement.
- Skill in building and maintaining collaborative relationships with internal and external partners.



Why King County?

At King County, our work is guided by our True North and values. Our True North is what we aspire to: Making King County a welcoming community where every person can thrive. King County offers great benefits, including a pension plan, holidays, transit pass, plus training and education opportunities to promote growth and development. Our focus is to provide our employees with work life balance.



ARE YOU READY TO APPLY?

This position is open to **all qualified applicants**. Persons interested in this position should submit the following information:

- A cover letter describing your interest in and qualifications for the position
- A current resume.

If you have questions regarding this announcement, please call Marissa Karras at 360-956-1336. This position will remain open until filled but the screening process will move quickly. In order to be considered for the first round of interviews please submit your application materials at karrasconsulting.net by December 4, 2024.

We will review application materials based on clarity, completeness, and alignment with the required experience, qualifications, knowledge, and skills for this position.

If you are interested in pursuing this position, please follow the application instructions carefully. If you need this announcement in an alternate language or format, would like to request accommodation or assistance in the application or assessment process or if you have questions, please contact the recruiter listed on this job announcement.

Relocation: in accordance with [King County Code \(KCC\) 3.24.170](#), reasonable and necessary moving expenses up to a maximum of \$15,000 may be available if the successful candidate is relocating from outside of Washington.

Any employment offer will be contingent upon the results of a criminal background check and reference check.

Work Schedule and Location

This position will be located in Seattle. The typical workweek is 40 hours per week, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This position is exempt from the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

In this role you should expect to work both in the office and in the field, while being required to report to other locations, such as court or jail facilities. DPD maintains physical offices in the following locations:

- Dexter Horton Building, 710 Second Avenue, Seattle
- Jefferson Street Building, 1401 East Jefferson, Seattle
- Meeker Street Building, 420 West Harrison Street, Kent





DPD Policies

Outside Work Policy for Attorneys will apply to employees, such that you must receive approval from your supervisor before being permitted to engage in outside employment for compensation or volunteer.

Union Membership

This is an appointed position and is not represented by a union.

Forbes recently named King County as one of Washington State's best employers.

Together, with leadership and our employees, we're changing the way government delivers service and winning national recognition as a model of excellence. Are you ready to make a difference? [Come join the team](#) dedicated to serving one of the nation's best places to live, work and play.

Guided by our "[True North](#)", we are making King County a welcoming community where every person can thrive. We value diversity, inclusion and belonging in our workplace and workforce. To reach this goal we are committed to workforce equity. Equitable recruiting, support, and retention is how we will obtain the highest quality workforce in our region; a workforce that shares and will help advance our guiding principles--we are one team; we solve problems; we focus on the customer; we drive for results; we are racially just; we respect all people; we lead the way; and we are responsible stewards. We encourage people of all backgrounds and identities to apply, including Native American and people of color, immigrants, refugees, women, LGBTQ+, people living with disabilities, and veterans.

King County is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Employer

No person is unlawfully excluded from employment opportunities based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation and pregnancy), age, genetic information, disability, veteran status, or other protected class. Our EEO policy applies to all employment actions, including but not limited to recruitment, hiring, selection for training, promotion, transfer, demotion, layoff, termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation.