

## Law Clerks and Staff Attorneys

Law clerks and staff attorneys provide the court with procedural and substantive legal advice regarding the disposition and completion of cases. Their research and recommendations are essential in assisting the court with resolving legal arguments and deciding cases expeditiously. Their work includes:

- Reviewing case records and filings;
- Performing research;
- Conducting legal analysis; and
- Providing objective advice to judges, chambers, and court staff.

The federal Judiciary hires law clerks and staff attorneys with term, temporary, and permanent appointments. Each of the 13 U.S. courts of appeals has a staff attorney office where they employ staff attorneys working on behalf of the judges of the court. Law clerks are employed by the court and work in a judge's individual chambers. Law clerks and staff attorneys must be graduates of law schools, in good standing and possess other qualifications as specified by employing judges and courts.

## Assistant Federal Public Defenders

Under the United States Constitution, Sixth Amendment right to counsel, assistant federal public defenders represent individuals charged with federal crimes who cannot afford legal representation. More than 80 federal defender organizations located in every state employ the assistants according to the Criminal Justice Act. They are court appointed and their duties include:

- Establishing meaningful attorney-client relationships;
- Representing clients at various stages of the court process;
- Researching case law;
- Directing the defense investigation of alleged offenses; and
- Determining trial strategies and defense approaches that affect jury selection, opening statements and closing arguments, client testimony and cross-examination of witnesses.

Requirements for the assistant federal public defender position include a law school degree and admission and good standing before the federal bar, combined with state bar admission and good standing.

## Attorney Advisors and Assistant General Counsel

The federal Judiciary employs legal professionals to support individual courts and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts in its mission of providing service to the courts and public in the administration of justice. These attorneys perform research and provide guidance to the judiciary in many areas, including:

- Court program services,
- Criminal law,
- Policy making,
- Employment matters, and more.

*The federal Judiciary provides diverse and rewarding careers for new and experienced attorneys, from law clerks to staff attorneys to federal public defenders to in-house counsel at the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.*





## WHAT WE DO

The federal courts have jurisdiction over cases involving:

- The United States government;
- The Constitution or federal laws; and
- Controversies between states, citizens of different states, or the United States government and foreign governments.

Court of appeals judges, district court judges, magistrate, and bankruptcy judges work to ensure equal justice under the law.

- Article III of the Constitution governs the appointment of court of appeals judges and district judges, who are nominated by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.
- Bankruptcy judges are judicial officers appointed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the district where they preside exclusively over bankruptcy proceedings and cases.
- Magistrate judges are judicial officers of the district court appointed by the district judges of the court to handle a variety of judicial proceedings.



## WHO WE ARE

The U.S. Courts are composed of 13 circuits and 94 districts across the country, including:

- Appellate courts,
- District courts,
- Bankruptcy courts,
- Courts of special jurisdiction,
- Probation and Pretrial Services offices,
- Federal Defenders' offices, and
- The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.



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## THE UNITED STATES COURTS

# Legal Careers in the Federal Courts



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