

County of Humboldt Job Specification
PUBLIC DEFENDER
Classification 0828
FLSA: Exempt



DEFINITION

Under administrative direction, plans, organizes, manages, and provides direction and oversight for all functions and activities of the Public Defender's office; formulates departmental policies, goals, and directives; coordinates assigned activities with other County Departments, officials, outside agencies, and the public; fosters cooperative working relationships among County Departments and with intergovernmental, regulatory agencies, and various public and private groups; provides highly responsible and complex professional assistance to the County Administrative Officer, County Departments, and Board of Supervisors in areas of expertise; and performs related duties as assigned.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Receives administrative direction from the County Administrative Officer and/or the Board of Supervisors. Exercises direct supervision over supervisory, professional, technical, and administrative support staff through subordinate levels of supervision.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

This is an at-will Department head position appointed by the Board of Supervisors and, pursuant to County Charter, is evaluated by the County Administrative Officer for submittal to the Board of Supervisors. Under a delegation of authority from the Board of Supervisors, this class has the overall responsibility for coordination and direction of the Public Defender's office. The incumbent is responsible for overall policy development, fiscal management, administration, and operation of the Public Defender's office. Successful performance of the work requires knowledge of public policy, municipal functions and activities, including the role of an elected Board of Supervisors, and the ability to develop, oversee, and implement projects and programs in a variety of areas. The incumbent is accountable for accomplishing Departmental planning and operational goals and objectives, and for furthering County goals and objectives within general policy guidelines.

EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL JOB FUNCTIONS (Illustrative Only)

Management reserves the right to add, modify, change, or rescind the work assignment of different positions.

- Assumes full management responsibility for all programs, services, and activities of the Public Defender's office.
- Develops and directs the implementation of goals, objectives, policies, procedures, and work standards for the Public Defender's office; directs the preparation and administration of the Department's budget.
- Manages the strategic direction for the Department, based upon the vision, mission, service

level needs, requirements, and overall County “Strategic Plan.”

- Develops and manages the development of Department goals, objectives, and policies to meet the Department’s strategic direction.
- Formulates and recommends policy to the County Administrative Officer and Board of Supervisors and implements after adoption.
- Provides professional and technical advice to attorneys in the office; may defend complex, difficult, sensitive, and high penalty cases, from arraignment to final resolution; may perform trial work, including jury selection, examination, cross-examination, and arguing the defense case.
- Reviews the sufficiency of cases prepared by staff, including strategy, documentation, alternative approaches, and case disposition.
- Selects, trains, motivates, and evaluates the work of Department personnel; provides direction or coordinates staff training; works with employees to correct deficiencies; and implements discipline and termination procedures as required.
- Prepares and directs the preparation of a variety of periodic and special reports related to the activities and cases defended by the office.
- Assists staff with interpreting County policies and procedures.
- Monitors legal developments, including legislation and court decisions related to the defense of the public.
- Attends and participates in professional group meetings; stays abreast of new trends and innovations in the field of law and other services as they relate to the area of assignment.
- Represents the Public Defender's office and the County in meetings with a variety of public and private groups and individuals.
- Performs related duties as assigned.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

QUALIFICATIONS

The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge and ability required.

Knowledge of:

- Organization and management practices as applied to the development, analysis, and evaluation of programs, policies, and operational needs of the assigned area of responsibility.
- Principles and practices of employee supervision, including work planning, assignment review and evaluation, discipline, and the training of staff in work procedures.
- Principles and practices of leadership.
- Administrative principles, practices, and methods including goal setting, program development, implementation and evaluation, policy and procedure development, quality control, and work standards.
- Advanced principles and procedures of criminal law, particularly as they relate to the defense of court-referred clients.
- Advanced principles, methods, and practices of legal research and investigation.
- Judicial procedures and the rules of evidence.
- Advanced pleadings, practices, and effective techniques in the presentation of court cases.

- Applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulatory codes, constitutional provisions, ordinances, and procedures relevant to County governmental and public agency operations.
- Responsibilities and obligations of public officials and administrative agencies.
- County government organization, structure, and functional responsibilities.
- Principles and techniques for working with groups and fostering effective team interaction to ensure teamwork is conducted smoothly.
- Techniques for providing a high level of customer service by effectively dealing with the public, vendors, contractors, and County staff.
- The structure and content of the English language, including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
- Modern equipment and communication tools used for business functions and program, project, and task coordination, including computers and software programs relevant to work performed.

Ability to:

- Select and supervise staff, provide training and development opportunities, ensure work is performed effectively, and evaluate performance in an objective and positive manner.
- Develop and implement goals, objectives, practices, policies, procedures, and work standards.
- Perform complex legal research, analyze complex administrative and legal situations, evaluate alternatives, and make sound recommendations.
- Analyze and apply legal principles and precedents, develop defense strategies, and make effective court and hearing presentations.
- Conduct effective negotiations.
- Handle the full range of public defense cases.
- Prepare clear, concise, and complete legal documentation and reports, correspondence, and other written material.
- Make effective court and hearing presentations.
- Analyze and apply legal principles and precedents to specific local government problems.
- Understand, interpret, and apply all pertinent laws, codes, regulations, policies and procedures, and standards relevant to work performed.
- Effectively represent the department and the County in meetings with governmental agencies; community groups; various business, professional, and regulatory organizations; and in meetings with individuals.
- Independently organize work, set priorities, meet critical deadlines, and follow-up on assignments.
- Use tact, initiative, prudence, and independent judgment within legal, and general policy and procedural guidelines.
- Effectively use computer systems, software applications relevant to work performed, and modern business equipment to perform a variety of work tasks.
- Communicate clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing, using appropriate English grammar and syntax.
- Establish, maintain, and foster positive and effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.

Education and Experience:

Any combination of training and experience that would provide the required knowledge, skills, and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the required qualifications would be:

Bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university and a Juris Doctorate from an accredited school of law
and

ten (10) years of experience in the active practice of criminal law in the State of California as a practicing attorney, which includes at least four (4) years in the defense of the indigent in the State of California and three (3) years in a supervising or managing attorneys and support staff.

Licenses and Certifications:

- Must possess a valid US driver's license upon date of application. Must obtain California driver's license following hire date per California DMV regulations.
- Possession of an active membership in good standing with the State Bar of California.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

- Mobility to work in a standard office setting and use standard office equipment, including a computer, and to operate a motor vehicle to visit various County and meeting sites; primarily a sedentary office classification although standing in work areas and walking between work areas may be required; occasionally bend, stoop, kneel, reach, push, and pull drawers open and closed to retrieve and file information; ability to lift, carry, push, and pull materials and objects up to 10 pounds.
- Vision to read printed materials and a computer screen; and hearing and speech to communicate in person and over the telephone.
- Finger dexterity is needed to access, enter, and retrieve data using a computer keyboard or calculator and to operate standard office equipment.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

- Office environment with moderate noise levels, controlled temperature conditions, and no direct exposure to hazardous physical substances.
- Employees may interact with upset staff and/or public and private representatives in interpreting and enforcing departmental policies and procedures.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Must be willing to attend meetings outside of regular working hours.
- Some departments may require pre-employment screening measures before an offer of employment can be made (i.e. background screening, physical examination, etc.).