OFFICE OF STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER

Policy Analyst

THE OFFICE

The Office of State Public Defender (OSPD) will be created as an independent office within the judicial branch on January 1, 2027. The 2025 FAIR Act, Public Act 104-0300, created the Office to provide for an effective public defense system throughout the State of Illinois. OSPD is charged with implementing uniform standards for trial-level public defense; systematically evaluating local needs and capacity; offering specialized support to local jurisdictions *(i.e., investigation, mitigation, and expert witness assistance*); and establishing clear and equitable procedures for distributing the Public Defender Fund, among other duties to ensure consistent, equitable, and high-quality defense services.

THE POSITION

The Policy Analyst provides strategic support to the Director of Policy and Government Affairs with the Office of Public Defender (OSPD) by leading research, analysis, and development of policies that strengthen Illinois' indigent defense services and criminal justice operations. This position ensures that OSPD initiatives are informed by current legislation, emerging trends, and best practices, and that agency programs effectively meet the needs of statewide justice partners. The Policy Analyst works under the general direction of the Director of Policy and Government Affairs, with considerable independence, exercising professional judgment.

SALARY, BENEFITS & LOCATION

The position is located in Springfield, Illinois. This position's headquarter location could change based on future operational needs.

The salary is commensurate with experience. The salary range for this position is $91,848 to $121,248.

The required working hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. The State Public Defender, in his or her discretion, may potentially approve a hybrid work schedule.

An attractive benefits package is offered, including pension, medical, dental, vision and life insurance, as well as deferred compensation and generous leave time. Information about benefits provided by OSPD can be found here:

State Employee General Benefits

OSPD Summary of Benefits

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- Serves as a key advisor to the Director of Policy and Government Affairs, providing timely, research-driven policy development and implementation related to public defense practices, court administration, and issues affecting indigent populations.
- Plans, directs, and coordinates internal and external affairs initiatives for OSPD in collaboration with the Director of Policy and Government Affairs.
- Participates in strategic planning activities mandated by legislation and OSPD leadership.
- Conducts research and policy analysis on state and federal legislation affecting public defense, criminal procedure and process, juvenile court practice, court administration, and client outcomes.
- Monitors statewide and national developments in public defense, criminal justice, family defense, and juvenile justice to identify emerging trends and issues.
- Addresses sensitive and confidential program policy matters, including quality assurance concerns.
- Develops and recommends innovative strategies to strengthen and enhance public defense services across Illinois.
- Serves as a liaison to senior leadership within OSPD, court system partners at the local and federal levels, advocacy organizations, and members of the public to identify and resolve issues related to OSPD programs and policies.
- Collaborates with external stakeholders to ensure OSPD programs effectively meet the needs of county-level partners and stakeholders.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS

MINIMUM

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent.
- Five years of progressively responsible experience in the legal sector, a large governmental organization, or advocacy environment.
- Three years of experience working in an organization, office, or agency providing public defense or other legal services to indigent clients or conducting advocacy to improve outcomes for low-income people and people who have experienced criminalization.
- Must possess a valid Illinois Driver's License and demonstrate proof of automobile insurance to operate a personal vehicle on state business, as well as maintain a safe driving record.

PREFERRED

- Juris Doctorate from an ABA-accredited law school or a master's degree in public policy, public administration, social work, criminal justice/criminology or a related field.
- Three (3) or more years of experience working in client-centered public defense.
- Licensed to practice law in Illinois.

OTHER KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES

- Demonstrated commitment to racial equity, cultural humility, accessibility, and reducing disparities within the criminal and juvenile legal systems.
- Experience developing organizational policies, practices, or programs informed by client or community input.
- Knowledge of and familiarity with restorative justice principles.
- Knowledge of holistic public defense.
- Ability to conceptualize and achieve long-term organizational goals.
- Ability to connect with and foster positive working relationships.
- Proficient in the use of Microsoft Office products (i.e., Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Outlook).

WORKING CONDITIONS/STRUCTURE

- Full-time position; private practice prohibited.
- Works closely with judicial branch entities, county stakeholders, advisory bodies, and state agencies.
- Substantial travel required. It is expected that this person may travel to locations throughout the state and will need to spend significant time in Springfield.
- Valid driver's license.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested individuals should submit a resume here. All jobs vacancy announcements and application links are also available here or at www.ilosps.gov/join-our-team.

A judicial branch application is not required to apply, but it will be required before final hiring decisions are made. The application can be downloaded from the Illinois Courts website here.

This position will remain open until filled. However, those individuals submitting materials by November 6, 2026, will be given first consideration.

Any questions about this position or the application process can be submitted via email at the following address: HR@ilosps.gov

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER