

September 9, 2026

**JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
ILLINOIS STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER
OFFICE OF THE STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER**

Position: Illinois initial State Public Defender

Agency: Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD)

Benefits: An attractive judicial branch benefits package is offered, including pension, medical, dental, vision and life insurance, as well as deferred compensation and generous leave time. Please refer to the following [Benefits Information Sheet](#) for additional details.

Compensation: \$218,400 (per statute the State Public Defender receives a salary equivalent to that of the Illinois Attorney General)

APPOINTMENT AND TERM

The successful candidate will be appointed by a majority vote of the Illinois Supreme Court to a **two-year term** beginning January 1, 2027. Before assuming the duties of the position, the appointee must take the statutory oath of office. The appointee may be removed from office only for cause and following a hearing before the Illinois State Public Defender Commission (Commission).

POSITION SUMMARY

The Illinois Supreme Court seeks an experienced and visionary leader to build a client oriented Public Defender office. This is an opportunity to lead a statewide public defense system committed to providing the adversarial testing required by constitution when representing indigent people throughout Illinois.

The Illinois State Public Defender is the chief executive officer of the Office of the State Public Defender, an independent agency within the judicial branch of Illinois government. The State Public Defender will be responsible for establishing, supervising, and administering a statewide public defense system that ensures constitutionally required legal representation for indigent persons in criminal, juvenile delinquency, and dependency matters.

The State Public Defender shall promote a client-centered culture of representation that respects the dignity, humanity, voice, and the constitutional rights of each client and ensures that the experiences of clients and directly impacted communities inform the development and evaluation of statewide public defense policy.

The State Public Defender must devote full time to the duties of the office and may not engage in the private practice of law.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Licensed attorney in good standing in Illinois.

- At least 5 years of licensed practice (Illinois or another state).
- Demonstrated experience in representing persons accused of crime.
- Demonstrated administrative experience.
- Dedication to high-quality indigent defense and improvement of statewide defense services.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS/LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

- Demonstrated commitment to client-centered public defense and meaningful engagement with directly impacted communities.
- A recognition of the diversity of our society and have a regard for our multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-gender society.
- 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.
- Knowledge of family defense and juvenile criminal proceedings.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Statewide Representation & Legal Services

- Serve as the State's leading advocate for the rights and interests of individuals represented by Illinois' public defense system and promote policies, practices, resources, and reforms necessary to ensure effective and meaningful representation.
- Serve as attorney, without fee, for all otherwise unrepresented persons when found unable to afford counsel and appointed by a court.
- Ensure that representation is client-centered and that clients receive timely, accessible, understandable, and meaningful communication regarding their cases, legal options, potential consequences, and rights.
- Provide representation in counties served by regional offices in addition to appointed counsel and county public defenders.
- Ensure access to high-quality legal representation consistent with constitutional standards and state law.

Leadership, Administration & Agency Management

- Direct and oversee statewide operations of the Office of the State Public Defender, including attorneys, investigators, administrative staff, social service staff, and

regional offices.

- Establish the organizational structure of the office and issue rules, instructions, and orders defining staff duties.
- Hire and train OSPD employees and authorize deputy public defenders to hire assistant defenders and support staff.
- Maintain and oversee a statewide website providing public information, program resources, data, reports, employment information, and Commission materials.
- Maintain confidential and sensitive information as required under FOIA exemptions applicable to public defense agencies.
- Uphold all ethical requirements.
- Perform any other tasks necessary for the effective management of the agency.

Standards, Quality Assurance & Professional Development

- Draft and effectuate trial level public defense standards to ensure rights guaranteed under the Sixth Amendment; standards must be approved and published by the Commission.
- Establish and supervise training programs for all OSPD employees.
- Incorporate client-centered representation, communication, cultural humility, trauma-informed advocacy, client autonomy, and respect for client decision-making into statewide public defense standards and employee training.
- Create statewide maximum workloads, minimum staffing levels, independence requirements, conflict-free representation rules, office space standards, technology needs, and evaluation protocols.
- Implement recruitment and retention plans, including competitive salary scales and strategies to maintain a skilled and diverse workforce.

Collaboration, Advisory Boards & Coordination with Stakeholders

- Participate in meetings of the State Public Defender Commission, providing updates on agency activities and securing approval for the annual budget request.
- Establish and collaborate with a Public Defender Advisory Board composed of attorneys from each Appellate Court District to advise on workload, staffing, salary standards, practice issues, and resource needs.
- Establish and manage a Client Community Advisory Board composed of former clients and impacted community members to advise the Office on client needs, statewide standards, accessibility of services, client communication, quality assurance, policy development, and other matters affecting the experience, delivery and quality of public defense representation.
- Create and administer a working group assessing public defense availability and resources in Juvenile Court Act Article II proceedings.

- Cooperate and consult with state and county agencies, courts, professional associations, and advocates to improve administration of criminal justice and juvenile matters.
- Represent OSPD at meetings of Illinois organizations impacting public defense, including task forces, committees, bar associations, and commissions; designate representatives as appropriate.

County Public Defender System Oversight & Support

- Provide direct assistance to county public defenders, including attorneys, expert witnesses, investigators, social workers, technology, and other resources.
- Maintain a statewide panel of private attorneys available for appointment on a case-by-case basis.
- Develop and administer the Public Defender Fund distribution process, ensuring state funding supplements but does not supplant county budgets.
- Collaborate with the Advisory Board to develop statewide application standards, appointment processes, performance and retention standards, and removal procedures for Chief County Public Defenders.

Budgeting, Finance & Reporting

- Submit OSPD's annual budget request to the State Public Defender Commission for approval before submitting it to the General Assembly.
- Submit quarterly reports and annual comprehensive reports to the Commission.
- Ensure compliance with statutory reporting requirements to the General Assembly, Illinois Supreme Court, and Governor.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Ability to interpret and implement statutory mandates and statewide standards.
- Highly advanced legal knowledge pursuant to the practice of public defense, including, but not limited to, areas such as criminal procedure, trial advocacy, and evidence.
- Deep understanding and experience with indigent and public defense, including extensive trial level experience.
- Deep understanding of indigent defense resource needs, workloads, staffing models, and performance metrics.
- Demonstrated ability to serve as a strong, independent, and effective advocate for people accused of crimes and other individuals entitled to public defense representation.
- Demonstrated commitment to client-centered and dignity-based public defense, recognizing clients as active participants in their representation and ensuring that their

goals, priorities, lived experiences, and expressed interests inform both individual representation and system-wide policy.

- Ability to center client interests when navigating relationships with courts, prosecutors, government agencies, county officials, policymakers, funders, and other institutional stakeholders.
- Experience with change management and process improvement.
- Ability to conceptualize and achieve long-term organizational goals.
- Flexible and responsive to evolving needs.
- Ability to connect with and foster positive working relationships including with all public defender offices, the Commission, and the Legislature.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills are required.

WORKING CONDITIONS/STRUCTURE

This is a full-time position; private practice is prohibited. The State Public Defender works closely with judicial branch entities, county stakeholders, advisory bodies, and state agencies and is responsible for establishing and supervising deputy public defenders in regional offices statewide. Substantial travel is required. It is expected, if not required, that this person will travel often to public defender's offices throughout the state and will need to spend significant time in Springfield. A valid driver's license is required.

Interested persons should submit - via email - a letter of interest, resume, and three professional references to:

courtempoyment@IllinoisCourts.gov

Application materials must be received no later than Friday, October 9, 2026.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER