

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

CLASSIFICATION: NON-COMPETITIVE/PENDING NYSCSC APPROVAL

APPROVED: AUGUST 3, 2026

FLSA Status: Exempt/ Professional

ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER TRAINEE

This is a trainee position for which eligible graduates of law schools approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) may apply for temporary authorization to practice law under the supervision of a New York State registered attorney. Niagara County recognizes the unique challenges that are confronting recent law graduates and seeks to provide an impactful means of assisting these graduates in pursuing legal employment in Niagara County pending their admission to the New York State Bar. The term of appointment is limited to one (1) year. If the employee fails to obtain admission to the New York State Bar within this traineeship, his/her employment may be discontinued. Trainees who are admitted to the bar automatically will be promoted to Assistant Public Defender.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS: The incumbent performs legal work as permitted by the Temporary Authorization Program (Practice Order) issued by New York State. Work is performed under the tutelage of a supervising Assistant Public Defender as assigned by the Niagara County Public Defender. The Public Defender and higher-level Assistants will supervise and review work for conformance with law. Does related work as required.

TYPICAL WORK ACTIVITIES:

1. Engages in extensive training, including on the job in-court training, in preparation for assuming the job responsibilities of an Assistant Public Defender upon admission to the New York State Bar;
2. Assists in reviewing and defending criminal cases as assigned by the Public Defender;
3. Tries criminal cases before municipal courts, within the parameters of a Practice Order and assists the Public Defender in conducting trials in the County and Supreme Court;
4. Conducts preliminary hearings and, when assigned, suppression hearings within the parameters of the Practice Order;
5. Performs legal research and prepares briefs, affidavits and other legal documents, such as motions;
6. Collaborates with supervising attorneys and investigators in interviewing witnesses and defendants; representing eligible clients at all stages of criminal proceedings; conducting legal research; and preparing motions and other legal documents.
7. Confers with treatment providers, social workers, housing assistance providers, probation officers, and defendants' family members to strengthen community support, coordinate services, and develop mitigation on behalf of defendants;
8. Assists in preparation of appeals from lower courts to County Courts and courts of higher jurisdiction.

FULL PERFORMANCE KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS, ABILITIES AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: Good knowledge of the principles and practices of criminal law applicable to state and federal criminal laws; good knowledge of criminal court procedures and of the rules of evidence; ability to utilize modern office software applications, equipment, and related peripherals at an acceptable rate of speed and accuracy; ability to analyze, appraise and apply legal principles, facts and precedent to legal problems; good command of language; initiative; tact; courtesy; sound professional and administrative judgment; physical condition commensurate with demands of the position.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

Graduate of a Law School approved by the American Bar Association **and** awaiting New York State Bar exam results and admission to the New York State Bar.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENT:

Candidates must be eligible for and obtain a Practice Order within three (3) months of appointment and must maintain it for the duration of the Traineeship.