County of Sonoma

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Annual Salary $210,240-$253,980*
THE COUNTY OF SONOMA

Sonoma County offers a rare and compelling array of scenic, recreational, and geographic characteristics—including over 200 award-winning wineries, inspiring coastline and beaches, the Russian River, and majestic redwoods. The County encompasses over one million acres of land and water; rich with agriculture, parks, campsites, lakes, and open space. Sonoma County is also home to a wide variety of restaurants, art and music festivals, farmers’ markets, and concert venues. Local schools continually rank high on California’s Academic Performance Index, and the Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University offer higher education opportunities. Sonoma County is an increasingly diverse region and is home to approximately 500,000 residents. The Latino population has grown by almost 230% within the last 25 years and is approximately 27% of the population. In 2016, slightly over half of Sonoma County’s population was between 25 and 64 years old; however, between 2007 and 2016, the fastest growing age range in the county were those aged 65 to 74.

Sonoma is a general law county, governed by a five member Board of Supervisors. The Board is fully committed to a mission and vision that values high quality services to support and enrich the community, strong leadership, engages citizen participation, and provides transparency and accuracy in information and an efficient and fiscally sustainable government. The County Administrator leads a team of dedicated department heads who work collaboratively to address and strategically prepare for County initiatives and challenges. The County has 29 departments, agencies, offices, and special districts and employs over 4,100 regular personnel with an annual budget of approximately $1.98 billion for fiscal year 21-22.

Please visit www.sonomacounty.ca.gov and www.sonomacountyconnections.org for additional information about Sonoma County - the place to live, work, and build your career legacy.

THE LAW OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

The Law Office of the Public Defender has the mandated responsibility of defending any person who is not financially able to employ counsel and who is charged with the commission of any crime, contempt or offense subject to trial in the superior courts. The Office also represents qualified individuals in probate and welfare proceedings, and may represent any person who is not financially able to employ counsel in proceedings relating to the nature or conditions of detention prior to adjudication.

The Office handled approximately 2,100 new felony cases, 9,000 new misdemeanor cases, and 500 new juvenile cases in fiscal year 20-21. The Office also handled approximately 1,000 cases involving Conservatorship proceedings, child support contempt, and mental health writs. The Office provides representation in specialty courts such as Drug Court, Domestic Violence Court, Mental Health Court, Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Court, Veterans Court, and Homeless Court. The Office also handles Parole Hearings, Probate Conservatorships, LPS Conservatorships, Limited Conservatorships for the Developmentally Disabled, and Contempt’s.

THE POSITION

Appointed by the County’s Board of Supervisors, the Public Defender is a leader and collaborative partner within the County’s social and criminal justice system. This executive joins an organization that promotes a collaborative and team-based approach to meeting the needs of the county strategic plan and criminal justice system. In addition to serving as the Liaison to the Board of Supervisors, the Public Defender represents the office to other criminal justice departments (i.e., the Sheriff’s Office, the District Attorney’s Office, and the Probation Department), elected officials, social justice partners, interested community groups, the Sonoma County Bar Association, the California State Bar Association, the California Public Defenders Association, and the American Bar Association. This collaborative approach and involvement includes coordination with outside agencies and organizations.

As department head, the Public Defender is responsible for the development, administration, and direction of the County’s program for legal defense of indigent criminal defendants. As mandated in California Government Code section 27706, the office is responsible for providing representation of defendants who are unable to employ counsel in felony and misdemeanor trials, and preliminary hearings in the Superior Courts; minors whose parents are unwilling or financially unable to obtain counsel in Juvenile Court proceedings; and persons who are unable to employ counsel in mental health related proceedings which may result in incarceration or detention or other deprivation of liberty, and determining eligibility for the Public Defender’s services. Given the size of the office and current resource constraints, the Public Defender carries a significant caseload in addition to overseeing the office.

The Public Defender manages a current annual budget of $14.5 million and leads a staff of 54, which includes two chief deputies, 31 attorneys, and 8 investigators.
The Public Defender's Key Responsibilities are to:

- Direct the work of subordinate attorneys in all activities and evaluates their accomplishments.
- Formulate departmental policy and oversees its execution.
- Confer with Judges, the District Attorney, and other criminal and social justice partners regarding any and all matters related to the operation of the criminal justice system.
- Direct the fiscal, personnel, budget, and other administrative functions of the Office.
- Carry a caseload, which includes some of the most complex cases, and supports Deputy Public Defenders' caseloads as needed.
- Direct the filing of pretrial writs in appellate courts for those cases which an appeal might reasonably be expected to result in a reversal or modification of the original judgment.
- Keep abreast of pending legislation, statutory revisions, and court decisions affecting the Public Defender program, and directs the attention of staff, the Courts, and the County Administrator to relevant and material changes in the duties of the Office.
- Maintain effective public relations with other departments, agencies, members of the justice system and the public, and establishes a strong presence in meaningful involvement with civic and professional organizations to provide information and insight into the Public Defender program.
- Perform and adheres to a policy of community member representation consistent with a holistic and person-centered approach.

The ideal candidate for Public Defender will be an accomplished defense attorney, ideally having public defender experience, with a strong commitment to public service and the mission of the Office of Public Defender. This individual will have a strong reputation in administrative and legal defense work, and will be an excellent leader with extraordinary interpersonal and communication skills. An inclusive, collaborative, engaged, and practical management style will be effective in ensuring active communication takes place at all levels of the department and with the countywide organization, the County Administrator, elected officials, the Courts, and the community.

To be considered for this position, minimum qualifications must be met. Most typically, qualified candidates will possess a Juris Doctorate degree or equivalent from a US law school, at least ten years of extensive professional legal experience emphasizing the preparation and trial of felony cases, and three years of experience supervising staff. Current active membership in the California State Bar Association is required. Budgetary and administrative experience are highly desirable. In addition, qualified candidates must meet the conditions set forth in California Government Code Section 27701, which require the Public Defender to have been a practicing attorney in all of the courts of the State of California for at least the year preceding the date of their appointment.

Senior attorneys from Public Defender, District Attorney, State, Federal, and private sector offices (that specialize in criminal law) in California should consider applying for this exceptional opportunity.
WHAT WE OFFER

Sonoma County offers a total compensation package that is both attractive and competitive. Salary for the Public Defender is $210,240-$253,980*, depending upon the qualifications of the selected candidate. In addition, Sonoma County offers:

- **County paid premium contribution to several health plan options**
- **Excellent dental, vision, disability, life insurance, wellness and professional development benefits, and more**
- **Paid Time Off** - Competitive vacation accrual and additional management leave annually; 12 paid holidays, and an additional 8 floating holiday hours per year; generous sick leave accruals and 100% of accrual balance converted to service credit at retirement
- **Retirement** - County Employees Retirement Law of 1937. Retirement is fully integrated with Social Security. With pension reform, new employees, as defined and eligible, will receive a 2.5% at 67 formula (subject to PEPRA compensation limits), or for those individuals who meet certain criteria, including establishing reciprocity eligibility pursuant to PEPRA, will receive 3% at 60. Individuals who do not qualify for pension reciprocity pursuant to Government code section 7522.02(c), shall receive 2.5% of base hourly rate for each pay period with hours in a paid status
- **Incentive Retirement Savings Plan** - A defined contribution 401(a) plan; a 3% County “foundation” contribution
- **IRS 457 Plan** - Pre-tax employee contribution up to the IRS annual maximum, plus a 100% County match of employee contribution deposited into the 401(a) account (up to 1% of base salary)
- **Retiree Medical** - County contribution to a Health Reimbursement Arrangement to help fund post-retirement employee health insurance/benefits
- **Vehicle Allowance** - $215 per pay period
- **Relocation** - Relocation reimbursement may be authorized for the successful candidate (Note: For out of area candidates, the expectation of the Board of Supervisors is for the Public Defender to relocate to Sonoma County within a reasonable amount of time, if selected for the position.)
- **Additional details on employment for management employees may be found at:** www.sonomacounty.ca.gov/HR/Employee-Relations/Labor/Salary-Resolution/

*The annual base salary range for the position is $203,040-$246,780. In addition to the base salary, the position receives a cash allowance of approximately $600 per month. Combined, the annual salary is $210,240-$253,980. Salary is negotiable within the established base salary range. Benefits described herein do not represent a contract and may be changed without notice.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process has been designed as follows:

- **For first consideration, apply by September 8, 2021**
- **Panel Interviews will be September 27, 2021**
- **Finalist Selection Interviews with the Board of Supervisors will be held October 4, 2021**

Please be mindful of the planned timeframe. Although it may be subject to some change, it would be wise to plan availability around these dates and submit application materials as early as possible.

HOW TO APPLY

To be considered for this exciting career opportunity, please send a cover letter, a resume that clearly demonstrates your qualifications, background, and education as they relate to this position’s requirements, your responses to the supplemental questionnaire (link below), and a minimum of five professional references (who will not be contacted until mutual interest is established).

The Public Defender recruitment will remain open until filled. For first consideration, apply by **September 8, 2021**.

The Supplemental Questionnaire is located at:

https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/HR/Recruitment-and-Classification/PDF/County_of_Sonoma_Public_Defender_Supplemental_Questionnaire

Submit your materials (email with attachments preferred) to:

Spencer Keywood, Recruitment and Classification Manager
spencer.keywood@sonoma-county.org

OR

County of Sonoma Human Resources Department
Attn: Spencer Keywood
575 Administration Drive, Suite 116B
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Telephone 707-565-2658|Facsimile 707-565-3770

The County of Sonoma is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We value diversity and are committed to having a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve.