



Franklin County, Ohio



invites your interest in the position of

Public Defender



Recruitment Services Provided by
Ralph Andersen & Associates

Career Opportunity

An extensive state-wide and open recruitment is now underway to attract highly qualified individuals interested in leading this critically important county function as the new Public Defender for Franklin County, Ohio. This top legal professional will be both an excellent administrator and an effective criminal defense practitioner in the fast-paced, ever changing, and demanding environment of indigent defense. This career opportunity is the result of the retirement of a long-standing and highly regarded Director, Mr. Yeura Venters.

The person chosen to lead the Franklin County Office of the Public Defender will be committed to excellent legal representation for persons unable to afford counsel and have a passion for as well as commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This top choice will also:

- ◆ Be results-driven and well-balanced individual;
- ◆ Have a proven record of commitment to collaboration;
- ◆ Have a strong working knowledge and experience in a client-centered, community-oriented, and holistic approach to client representation in a legal services environment;
- ◆ Have criminal trial experience including serious felonies, high-profile matters, or other complex cases;
- ◆ Possess emotional intelligence skills to mentor and assist less experienced attorneys in providing excellent client representation; and
- ◆ Have experience in staff performance management (training, coaching, and contributing feedback related to the overall performance of others).

Public Defender Commission

The Franklin County Public Defender Commission appoints and provides oversight to the Franklin County Public Defender. This five-member appointed board meets quarterly. Current members and terms are:

LeShel Hutchings, Esq. (Chair) October 1, 2022 to September 15, 2026

Mark Hunt, Esq. February 24, 2020 to February 24, 2024

Sherri Lazear June 30, 2020 to May 31, 2024

Dave Thomas, Esq. February 23, 2022 to February 23, 2026

Christopher Dusseau September 1, 2022 to August 23, 2026

Office of the Public Defender

The Public Defender is appointed by the Franklin County Public Defender Commission and serves a term not-to-exceed four years. This position also functions as the “Director” of the Office and is a member of the County’s executive management team. The Director is an integral part of a dynamic and cohesive criminal justice system that values collaboration with all partners.

The Public Defender’s Office provides comprehensive legal representation services in criminal, juvenile, and custody proceedings to indigent persons in Franklin County misdemeanor criminal matters and does not handle civil matters associated with these criminal matters.

The Franklin County Public Defender’s Office is comprised of Municipal, Juvenile, Common Pleas, Appellate departments, and an Investigation Unit headed by the Chief Investigator. As one of the largest legal services offices in the state of Ohio, each department is staffed with attorneys, social workers, law clerks, and secretaries dedicated to ensuring high quality legal services. There are 91 attorneys, 12 social workers, and various support staff totaling 156.25 FTEs. The current management structure includes four-unit chief positions (Appellate, Juvenile, Common Pleas, Municipal) and the Chief Investigator.

The 2024 approved budget for the Office of Public Defender is \$17.6 million.

Conflict legal representation is handled through court appointment and is staffed by a pool of private attorneys in the Columbus metropolitan region.

The office location of the Director is located on the 12th floor at 373 S. High Street in Columbus.

For more information about the Office of the Public Defender, click here (defender.franklincountyohio.gov/).

Responsibilities of the Public Defender



The Public Defender will be a recognized leader and collaborative partner within Franklin County's criminal justice system. This dynamic executive will join an organization culture that promotes a collaborative and team-based approach to ensure the achievement of county-wide goals. Key responsibilities in this leadership role include oversight of the Office of the Public Defender's services and activities, including the provision of mandated legal counseling and defense services to eligible persons. The Public Defender represents the Office of the Public Defender to other departments (i.e., County's District Attorney Office, Probation Department), elected officials, interested community groups, and the Local Bar Association. This collaborative approach and involvement will also include coordination with all outside agencies and organizations, community-based organizations, and the faith community.

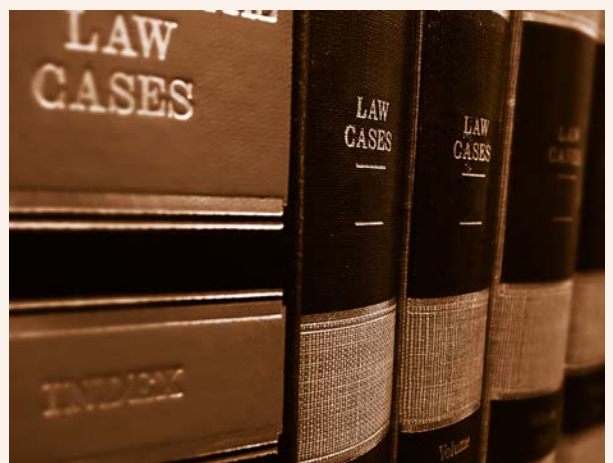
Importantly, the Public Defender also represents the County through participation with professional organizations and various affiliations to monitor and testify on pending and mandated legislation both on a statewide and national basis.

Other key responsibilities of the Public Defender include:

- ◆ Administration, agenda setting and management oversight of quarterly meetings of the Franklin County Public Defender Commission;
- ◆ Provide the strategic vision and direction for the Office of Public Defender;
- ◆ Lead and guide other attorneys on specific strategies for all aspects of trial work and the expected protocols for representation of clients;
- ◆ Communicate, justify, and defend programs, policies, and activities including negotiation and resolution of sensitive and controversial issues; respond to and resolve difficult and sensitive citizen inquiries and complaints;
- ◆ Manage the development and implementation of department goals, objectives, and priorities for each assigned service area; recommend and administer policies and procedures to complement legal revisions affecting the execution of efficient legal services;

Responsibilities *continued*

- ◆ Development and administration of the annual budget for the Office of the Public Defender; approve expenditures and implement budgetary adjustments as appropriate;
- ◆ Engage and confer with attorneys regarding policies, procedures, and functions of the departmental program; provide information regarding the public defender program to the Public Defender Commission, Franklin County Administrator and County Commission, judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, and the public;
- ◆ Keep up to date on pending legislation, statutory revisions, and court decisions affecting the public defender program and direct the attention of staff, the Courts, and the Franklin County Administrator and County Commission to relevant and material changes in the duties of the Office;
- ◆ Establish a strong presence and meaningful involvement in a leadership capacity with civic and professional organizations on a local (i.e. Franklin County Criminal Justice Planning Board), statewide, and national basis to provide information and insight into the public defender program; and
- ◆ Oversee and present statistical and narrative reports at the direction of the Public Defender Commissioners.



Characteristics of the Ideal Candidate



The individual selected for this position will be recognized as a dynamic and collaborative leader with a commitment to the mission of the Office of the Public Defender. Strong interpersonal and communication skills are essential. This ideal candidate will bring immediate credibility to this position through their professional achievements, including client representation in court. This top individual will also be skilled in adapting to the unique challenges faced by public defender organizations, as well as the ongoing organizational and financial challenges facing local government agencies.

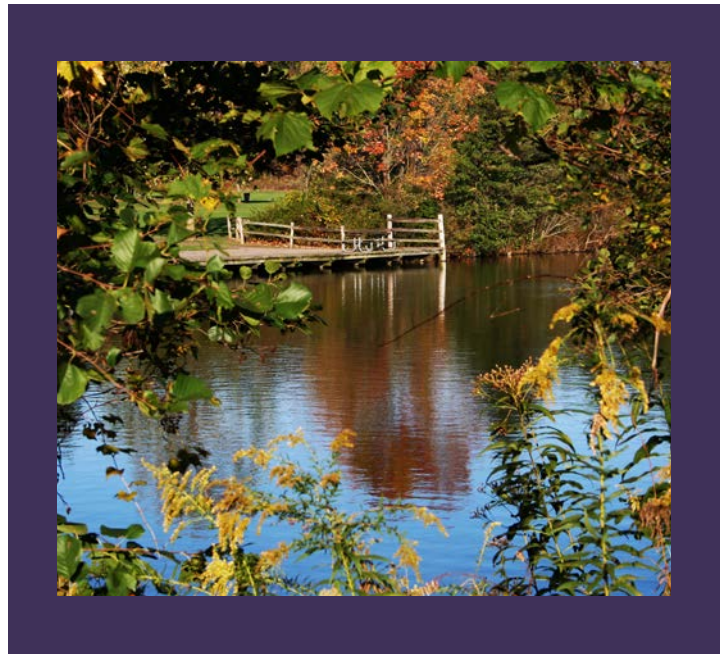
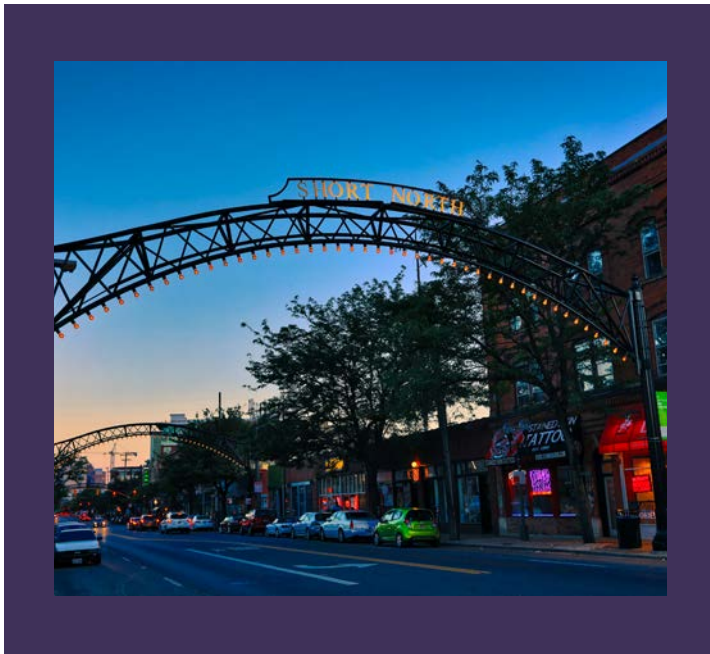
Additionally, and equally important, this top candidate will have a demonstrated track record of success at looking at each client situation through an equity lens to address cultural disparities that disproportionately impact people of color and those who may be socially or economically disadvantaged. The ideal candidate will have a strong understanding of the criminal legal system in Ohio and support a more holistic approach to client representation, by actively seeking alternative programs of incarceration.

A commitment to being an inclusive leader who supports extensive collaboration with county and community partners is also essential in this role. This will mean continuing with the prior history and direction of the Office of the Public Defender, to embrace and promote open dialogue and involvement with county-wide and community partners. This ideal candidate will be able to establish, expand, and sustain external relationships in the legal community and throughout community networks as well as foster and further develop internal relationships within the County.

This top caliber executive will also have broad-based experience dealing with process efficiencies, technology enhancements, and organizational streamlining.

Equally important, the Public Defender will be an action-oriented person who can successfully address a variety of issues at a high-level using sound judgment and a well-honed business sense while managing and mentoring a talented staff.

In summary, the Public Defender should have unquestionable personal integrity and display honesty and approachability in his/her commitment to work in a first-class organization that continually strives for organizational excellence and celebrates diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.



Qualifying Education, Experience, and Professional License

Education: Juris Doctorate from a fully accredited institution.

Experience: Ideally, top candidates for consideration will have extensive professional legal experience with emphasis upon the preparation and trial of felony cases, including oversight of other legal staff. Budgetary and administrative experience overseeing a legal office, unit, or department in the public sector is highly desirable.

In the evaluation of candidates, the Public Defender Commission, in conjunction with the Search Firm of Ralph Andersen & Associates, will consider a full range of highly qualified candidates in Ohio that have current and relative experience as detailed in this solicitation.

Other considerations that will be further evaluated for final selection will include:

- ◆ Overall career history;
- ◆ Approach and commitment to equity and social justice;
- ◆ Ability to provide strategic leadership in managing a robust and dynamic legal office; and
- ◆ Effectively achieve the established goals for the Office of Public Defender.

Professional License: Active license in good standing with the Supreme Court of Ohio is required at time of submittal and appointment.

Ohio Law Section 120.15 County Public Defender Revised Code: This position requires an attorney with a minimum of two years of experience in the practice of law and admitted to the practice of law in Ohio at least one year prior to appointment.

Compensation and Benefits

The salary for this appointment will be based on experience and education. The anticipated annual salary will be \$165,000+. The Public Defender Commission will set the salary and term for this position based on the candidate's career history.

Franklin County offers a full benefits package, including Medical, Dental, Vision, Pension/Retirement, deferred compensation, and flexible spending accounts. Retirement is offered through Ohio Public Employees' Retirement System (OPERS) at www.opers.org.





Application and Selection Process

This position will be handled based on existing laws in the State of Ohio regarding public appointments and release of information. Please refer to “Ohio Law” call-out box to the below before submitting interest for this position.

Ohio Law: Resumes Received Become Public Record / Released

In accordance with Ohio law, all applications and résumés for public positions are a matter of public record and may be disclosed to the media or public upon proper request.

***Important to note:** Serious candidates are strongly encouraged to discuss their interest with the Search Firm, Ralph Andersen & Associates, in advance of submitting their qualifications to ensure appropriate experience and the desire to proceed. Candidates are encouraged to call Ralph Andersen & Associates at (916) 630-4900 to schedule a confidential telephone appointment with Heather Renschler, Project Director, to discuss this career opportunity.*

Application *continued*

Interested candidates are asked to apply by Monday, February 12, 2024. Electronic submittals are strongly preferred via email to Ralph Andersen & Associates at apply@ralphandersen.com, and should include a compelling cover letter and comprehensive resume.

Resumes will be screened in relation to the criteria outlined in this brochure. Ralph Andersen & Associates will conduct the initial evaluation of submitted materials to determine the best overall match with the established criteria as outlined in this recruitment profile. Candidates with the most relevant qualifications and experience will be referred to the Public Defender Commission for evaluation and final selection. In-person interviews will be scheduled in late February/early March with the Public Defender Commission.

Detailed backgrounds, verifications, and reference checks will be done on the top candidate(s) for final consideration. Candidates will be required to sign an extensive release form prior to beginning this process. Ideally, the selected Public Defender will join Franklin County in late March/early April 2024 or at a mutually agreeable date.



Franklin County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity at all levels of the organization.