



Our Vision: A community that prioritizes love, compassion, and equity over judgment, shame, and division.

Assistant Public Defender – Level I

Salary: \$87,907 - \$96,503

Kalamazoo Defender is an independent non-profit organization that provides legal representation to the adult indigent population charged with a crime within Kalamazoo County. We take a holistic approach, employing compassionate professionals who work with our clients to identify and address additional needs beyond their legal case. In collaboration with our robust network of area service providers, we aim to connect our clients with relevant support services.

We fight for justice in the courts, care in the community, and dignity in the world. Our mission is rooted in the conviction that poverty and various forms of discrimination put our clients on inequitable footing within and beyond our criminal justice system. Our job is to be their zealous defender in the face of these systemic barriers, fighting for them in court, organizing care for them in our community, and advocating for their inherent dignity in the broader world.

THE JOB:

Kalamazoo Defender is seeking a full-time Assistant Public Defender I to provide indigent defense services within Kalamazoo County Courts, primarily handling misdemeanor cases under the supervision of the Misdemeanor Supervisor. Applicants must hold a Juris Doctorate and be licensed to practice in the state of Michigan in good standing, or be eligible for admission by waiver.

This role involves a deep commitment to the holistic defense model, zealous representation of clients, and maintaining strong communication with multidisciplinary defense team members. Responsibilities include covering arraignment shifts, meeting with clients, negotiating with prosecutors, and litigating cases as necessary. In this role, you will participate in training, maintain detailed case notes, and adhere to MIDC Standards of Compliance. The APD I is expected to collaborate with internal and external investigators, present well-researched legal issues in court, and stay updated on legal trends. This position requires someone with excellent communication skills, the ability to manage a misdemeanor caseload, a strong desire to develop litigation skills, and the willingness to collaborate with more experienced defenders.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Provide legal representation for indigent clients in Kalamazoo County courts, focusing on misdemeanor cases.
- Handle a weekly arraignment docket.
- Adhere to MIDC Standards of Compliance.
- Engage in continuing legal education and participate in internal training opportunities.
- Meet with clients promptly, identifying their goals and special needs, and making referrals to Village services and collaborating with the defense team when appropriate.

- Review charging instruments, police reports, and other discovery materials to develop case strategies.
- Identify areas of the case that need further investigation and coordinate with the Chief Defender to employ investigators or experts.
- Research legal issues and litigate as necessary.
- Negotiate with the prosecution and communicate developments with clients.
- Prepare for and litigate cases in trial, handling all legal issues that arise.
- Maintain availability to other staff members for consultation and education; participate in training programs; maintain current knowledge of appropriate support functions.
- Maintain accurate, complete and well-organized electronic case files.
- Participate in or administer legal clinics held in community forums.
- Maintain open communication with all members of the defense team, including Paralegals, Client Navigators, Mitigation Specialists, Investigators, and Reception.
- Embrace a holistic, client-centered approach for criminal defense.
- Demonstrate a commitment to indigent defense.
- Perform any other duties as assigned, contributing to the overall effectiveness and success of the defense team.

QUALIFICATIONS:

REQUIRED:

- A Juris Doctorate, licensed to practice law and in good standing with the State Bar of Michigan, or ability to waive in, is required. *(If you do not yet have a license, but are still eligible to practice under MCR 8.120, please refer to the Law Clerk job posting [here](#).)*
- Compelling references and solid performance in law school and internships.
- Strong commitment to Kalamazoo Defender's mission and values.
- Ability to work effectively with diverse populations, including individuals with disabilities, those struggling with addiction, and those experiencing mental health crises.
- Commitment to cultural awareness, maintaining professionalism, ensuring confidentiality, and acting with compassion and integrity.
- Excellent verbal and written communication abilities
- Ability to maintain complete and accurate files and timely case notes.
- Ability to prioritize work tasks while working both collaboratively and independently.

PREFERRED:

- Experience in a court and/or a legal office setting, particularly in criminal defense or a non-profit environment, including participation in legal clinics, internships, or externships.
- Demonstrate developing judgment in recognizing when to apply de-escalation techniques and when to seek guidance to support effective communications.
- Proven ability to work under pressure and prioritize effectively within a fast-paced environment.
- Bilingual abilities.

BENEFITS:

- Health care coverage including medical, dental, and vision, with employee premiums covered 100%.
- Life insurance and short- and long-term disability coverage, with optional supplemental benefits including voluntary life, accident, hospital indemnity, and critical illness insurance.
- Retirement program offering both 403(b) and Roth options with employer match of 1.5 times employee contributions up to 5%.
- Five weeks of paid time off (pro-rated for start date), paid holiday closures, and additional paid parental leave program.
- Robust Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Health Advocate services, available to all household members.
- Optional Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts (DCFSA).
- Health Savings Account (HSA) available with eligible high-deductible health plan.
- Kalamazoo Defender is a Michigan Tri-Share participating employer. Qualifying employees may be eligible for childcare assistance, with costs shared between the employee, the employer, and the state.
- An opportunity to work with like-minded, mission-driven individuals in a dynamic and innovative holistic legal program, backed by a county capable of maximizing Kalamazoo Defender's mission.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:

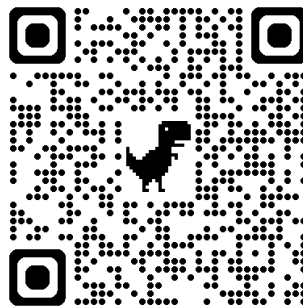
Kalamazoo Defender is committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all individuals. We uphold a policy of equal opportunity and prohibit discrimination in any form against employees, employee applicants, directors, board members, interns, clients, volunteers, vendors, or any other individuals associated with our organization. We prohibit discrimination based on race, including hairstyles associated with race such as braids, locs, twists, afros, cornrows, Bantu knots, etc., sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, including clothing associated with religion such as hijabs, turbans, etc., national origin (ancestry), citizenship status, age, height, weight, pregnancy, ability, socio-economic background or circumstances, military or veteran status, marital or partnership status, genetic predisposition, carrier status, or body art, including piercings and tattoos.

We are committed to maintaining a workplace and environment free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, and will comply with and aim to surpass antidiscrimination policies set forth by local, state, and federal laws protecting against such actions.

Kalamazoo Defender values diversity and strives to create an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to bring their unique perspectives, experiences, and full authentic selves into the space.

HOW TO APPLY:

Kalamazoo Defender is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applicants from all backgrounds to apply. Please submit your resume and cover letter using [this link](#) or by scanning the QR code below.



If you require reasonable accommodation to complete a job application, pre-employment testing, a job interview, or to otherwise participate in the hiring process, please contact the HR Department directly.

Email: jobs@kalamazoodefender.org

Phone: 269-250-5000

Address: 151 S. Rose Street Ste 200,
Kalamazoo, MI 49007