

COUNTY OF DEL NORTE

C A R E E R
O P P O R T U N I T Y

COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

ANNUAL SALARY: \$142,771 - \$200,893 DOE

Del Norte County is seeking an experienced criminal defense attorney to serve as the County's first Public Defender, a Board appointed position responsible for overseeing and developing the County's indigent defense program. This role reflects the County's direction to strengthen the level of representation and increase coordination, accountability, and oversight of indigent defense services while continuing to rely on contracted private attorneys to provide representation to eligible clients through a Managed Assigned Counsel approach.

This position offers an opportunity for a seasoned practitioner to apply professional judgment, leadership, and innovation in a small, rural county environment. The County is seeking a practical and collaborative leader who understands both the legal and operational realities of indigent defense and who is interested in building upon an existing system to improve public defense.

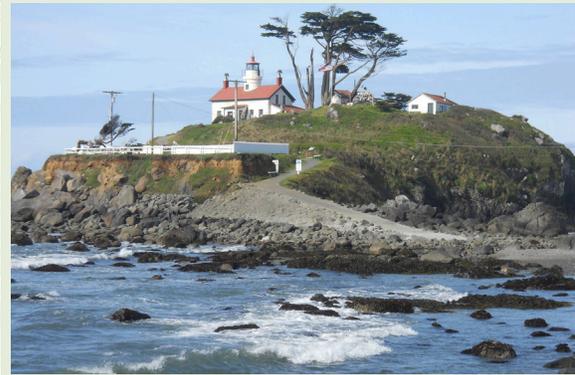
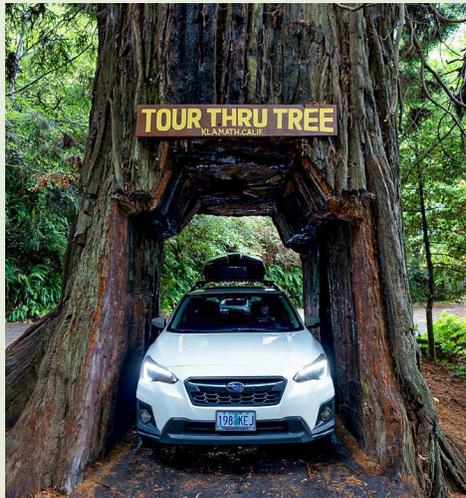
Candidates who are interested in applying their experience and judgment to the continued development of the County's indigent defense program are encouraged to apply.

THE COMMUNITY

DEL NORTE COUNTY IS KNOWN FOR ITS STUNNING natural beauty and tranquil, small-town charm. It is home to a significant portion of the Redwood National and State Park and the Smith River National Recreation Area where visitors and residents alike can marvel at some of the tallest and oldest trees in the world. The rugged coastline along the Pacific Ocean and the inland recreational areas offer breathtaking views, pristine beaches, and abundant opportunities for outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, and surfing. The Smith River, the only undammed river in the state, is renowned for its crystal-clear waters, and is a popular area for rafting, kayaking, fishing, and swimming.

Nestled less than 30 minutes from the Oregon border, Del Norte County offers exceptional local accessibility, with most areas reachable within 15-minute drive. The County lies within the ancestral and contemporary homelands of several federally recognized Tribes, whose peoples have lived since time immemorial along the Smith River, Klamath River, and the surrounding redwood coast.

The only incorporated community in the County, Crescent City, offers a friendly atmosphere where neighbors know one another and community events are a regular occurrence. The smaller unincorporated communities of Gasquet, Hiouchi, Smith River, Fort Dick, and Klamath are portals to world-renowned outdoor adventure experiences—including yoga in the redwood forest, coastal horseback rides, vibrant tidepools, the beloved Craigs Creek Bridge rope swing, and a gondola ride above the redwood trees at a popular historic attraction.



Office of the Public Defender

The County Public Defender serves as a department head responsible for the overall administration of the County's Public Defense Department and indigent defense program pursuant to Government Code section 27706, utilizing a Managed Assigned Counsel model authorized by the Board of Supervisors. Under this framework, indigent defense services are primarily delivered by contracted private attorneys, with the County Public Defender providing centralized oversight, coordination, and management of those services, as well as direct representation when necessary.

The department is being established to enhance structure, consistency, and accountability within the County's indigent defense system while supporting ongoing improvement and adaptability in service delivery. The County Public Defender administers attorney contracts, oversees support functions such as case management and investigative services, and ensures that representation is provided consistent with constitutional requirements, professional standards, applicable law, and statutory duties.

Initial staffing is limited and focused on administrative support, with the expectation that the County Public Defender will work within the budget appropriated by the Board of Supervisors and make strategic use of available resources to deliver high-quality, cost-effective defense services. The organization and methods of service delivery may continue to evolve to best meet program needs and uphold the County's commitment to effective indigent defense.



IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate is an experienced criminal defense attorney who brings a strong understanding of indigent defense practice and the ability to manage programs, contracts, and operate creatively in an environment with limited resources. The County is seeking a leader who is comfortable operating in a hybrid system in which most representation is provided by private attorneys under contract, rather than through a large County staffed office, and who is also capable of handling a personal caseload when it is necessary and conflict-free.

This is an executive level position that requires the ability to operate with a high degree of professional independence and judgment. The County Public Defender is expected to function with limited day to day oversight, exercising discretion in program administration, contract management, and legal decision making, while remaining accountable to the Board of Supervisors for overall performance, budget adherence, administrative functions of the department, and compliance with County policies and applicable law.

Successful candidates will demonstrate sound professional judgment, the ability to work constructively with justice system partners, and the capacity to balance the independence of defense services with public accountability. Experience supervising legal work, managing complex caseloads, or administering indigent defense programs is highly desirable, as is the ability to approach program development with flexibility and creativity. This position is well suited for a candidate who values practical problem solving, understands the constraints and opportunities of a rural county, and is interested in shaping a sustainable indigent

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

The County will consider any combination of relevant skills, knowledge, and experience as qualifying for this position. A typical way to qualify would be:

Education: A Minimum of a Bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university and a Juris Doctorate from an accredited school of law.

Experience: A Minimum of Seven (7) years of experience as a practicing attorney with a focus on criminal defense, including four (4) years performing managerial level supervisory (lead) and administrative duties over attorneys providing legal counsel and indigent defense services in a Public Defender Office or comparable legal office.

Pursuant to Government Code Section 27701, must have been a practicing attorney in all of the courts of the State of California for at least the year preceding the date of appointment.

Current membership in the California State Bar Association.



SALARY & BENEFITS

Annual Salary Range \$142,771 - \$200,893 DOE
compensated on a biweekly schedule, **PLUS** an attractive benefits package that includes:

HEALTH AND WELFARE

PLAN. 5% employee contribution paid bi-weekly includes medical, dental, vision, and employee welfare benefits (additional rates apply for covered dependents).

LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE.

\$250,000 Coverage paid by the County.

HOLIDAYS. 13 designated

County holidays per year, plus three (3) floating holidays.

VACATION. 15 vacation days

per year for year 1-5;
20 days for years 6-10;
25 days for years 11-15; and
30 days for 16 years or more.

Vacation may be exchanged for compensation per County Policy

RETIREMENT. CalPERS 2% @ 55 for "Classic" members and 2% @ 62 for new members as defined by PEPRA. The County is a reciprocity employer.

Employee sponsored 457 plans

SICK LEAVE. One day earned per month; unlimited accumulation

ADDITIONALS

Aflac

EAP

Wellness Programs

Emergency Air and Ground



HOW TO APPLY

For first consideration, apply by March 27, 2026 at:

[Job Board](#)



CLICK TO APPLY

At the close of March 27, 2026, qualifying candidates will receive notice of initial interviews to be scheduled the beginning of April. Then passing candidates will be invited to a secondary interview with the Board of Supervisors at the end of April.

QUESTIONS? Please contact County Director of Human Resources, Kerri Vue @ kerri.vue@dnco.org or 707-464-0893