



**NEVADA
COUNTY**
CALIFORNIA

PUBLIC DEFENDER

COUNTY OF NEVADA | NEVADA CITY, CA

ANNUAL SALARY: \$192,250.92 – \$234,698.76 DOE/DOQ

THE COUNTY OF NEVADA, CALIFORNIA IS SEEKING AN EXPERIENCED AND COLLABORATIVE PUBLIC DEFENDER to lead the Public Defender’s Office and advance integrated approaches that connect legal advocacy with services and support for vulnerable community members. This role offers a unique opportunity to provide strong courtroom leadership while working closely with the Health and Human Services Agency and justice system partners to support diversion, treatment-based solutions, and whole-person approaches to care. The Public Defender oversees a team of 14 total staff and a \$3.8 million budget, serves as a key legal advisor to County leadership, and guides case strategy, staff development, and the continuous improvement of policies, procedures, and service delivery. The ideal candidate brings strong expertise in criminal law and public defense administration, along with the ability to maintain a positive work culture, and set clear direction and follow-through with consistency and reliability. ***Advance justice through strong advocacy and whole-person, client-centered leadership, apply today!***



THE COMMUNITY

THE COUNTY OF NEVADA IS PERFECT FOR THOSE WHO CRAVE a peaceful and fulfilling lifestyle in the rural, great outdoors. The County is home to over 102,000 residents and covers an area of 974 square miles. Surrounded by the stunning Sierra Nevada Mountains, this county is a nature lover's paradise, with state parks, lakes, and trails galore for hiking, camping, biking, and fishing. Nevada County is also home to renowned ski resorts and snow parks, offering exceptional winter recreation opportunities and enhancing the region's year-round appeal. The region also has a thriving arts and cultural scene with a vibrant community of artists and musicians, galleries, theaters, and performance spaces. The Nevada County Fairgrounds host events year-round, including the ever-popular Nevada County Fair, the Draft Horse Classic, Strawberry Music Festival, and more. Nevada County is also an economic powerhouse, with local businesses and industries thriving in technology, health, and tourism, where residents can enjoy affordable California living!

THE COUNTY

THE COUNTY OF NEVADA IS GOVERNED BY A FIVE-MEMBER BOARD OF SUPERVISORS who are dedicated to providing outstanding public service through working with the community to develop sound and innovative public policy and deliver excellent services in a fiscally responsible manner. With an approximate budget of \$415.5 million, the County is comprised of 931 full-time employees, who provide essential services across the County's 25 departments. The County strives to be a community where all residents thrive, visitors feel welcome, and we care for one another and value our differences.

CLICK
LINK

LEARN MORE ABOUT
THE COUNTY

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BUTTON

THE PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE & PARTNERSHIP WITH HHSA

THE PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE IS A MISSION-DRIVEN LEGAL DEPARTMENT

dedicated to providing high-quality, client-centered representation for the community's most vulnerable members. The Office represents indigent adults and juveniles charged with criminal offenses and provides legal services in civil conservatorship and Assisted Outpatient Treatment (Laura's Law/AOT) matters. Grounded in constitutional principles, the Public Defender's Office approaches its work with respect, dignity, and without judgment, recognizing the complex social, economic, and behavioral health factors that often intersect with the justice system. Through collaboration with community partners and County agencies, the Office strives not only to protect clients' legal rights in court but also to address underlying needs, promote fairness, and contribute to a more just and effective local justice system.

The Nevada County Public Defender's Office is known for its zealous client advocacy and, through its unique alignment with Health and Human Services, has become a leader in reform and system change that benefits both clients and the broader community. The Office prioritizes diversion and connection to supportive services and has partnered with Public Health as a Narcan distributor, embedded a housing case manager within the defense function, and plays an active role in collaborative courts. These efforts were recognized with the 2025 CSAC Achievement Award for the Incompetent to Stand Trial Response Team, honoring the Office's innovative, cross-agency work to improve outcomes for patients with behavioral health needs. This recognition reinforces the Office's dual commitment to constitutionally mandated representation and building a more just, effective justice system.

THE JOB

REPORTING TO THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY DIRECTOR, the Public Defender plans, organizes, and directs all activities of the Public Defender's Office and may personally handle complex criminal defense cases as needed. The position oversees a dedicated team of 14 total staff, manages a \$3.8 million budget, and serves as the County's principal authority on public defense matters.

Key Responsibilities Include:

- Leading and managing the Public Defender's Office, including staff supervision, mentoring, training, and professional development
- Establishing departmental goals, policies, procedures, operational standards, and outcomes
- Preparing, administering, and advocating for the department budget and resource needs
- Managing and monitoring attorney caseloads to ensure high-quality, timely legal representation
- Reviewing complex or high-impact cases and advising staff on legal strategy, case management, and courtroom practice
- Appearing in court as needed to represent clients and support office operations
- Serving as a senior legal advisor to County leadership and the Board of Supervisors on public defense matters
- Working in close partnership with the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) to align legal advocacy with behavioral health, housing, and social service resources
- Participating in shared leadership and cross-departmental initiatives that support diversion, treatment-based solutions, and whole-person approaches to justice
- Coordinating regularly with HHSA leadership and program staff to strengthen system integration and improve outcomes for shared clients
- Building and maintaining strong working relationships with the courts, District Attorney, law enforcement, community-based organizations, and justice system partners
- Connecting clients to services and alternatives when appropriate, while remaining a firm and trusted advocate in the courtroom.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE IS A SEASONED PUBLIC DEFENSE PROFESSIONAL with substantial courtroom experience who brings a strategic, solutions-focused approach to serving vulnerable populations and advancing effective public defense systems. They are a proven organizational leader and effective communicator, capable of establishing clear expectations, mentoring and supporting a developing management team, and fostering accountability across the office. The successful candidate exercises sound judgment in fast-paced and evolving environments and is comfortable making well-reasoned decisions, while remaining adaptable and open to differing perspectives. They are professional, empathetic, and composed, effectively navigating complex interpersonal dynamics and building trust through consistency, follow-through, and reliability. With strong knowledge of criminal law, trial practice, and public defense administration, as well as an understanding of diversion, treatment-based approaches, and system reform, the Public Defender aligns staff, processes, and partnerships to strengthen performance and client outcomes. Through ongoing collaboration with courts, justice system partners, the Health and Human Services Agency, and community-based organizations, the role advances high-quality, mission-driven public defense services for the community.



The ideal candidate will demonstrate the following core competencies...

Sensitivity: Demonstrates empathy, cultural awareness, and respect when working with clients, staff, and partners, while also serving as a strong and effective legal advocate who fights for clients' rights and interests within the justice system.

Visioning: Articulates a clear and compelling direction for the Public Defender's Office, balancing immediate operational needs with long-term system improvement, innovation, and reform.

Political Acumen & Relationship Building: Effectively navigates the public-sector environment by building trusted relationships with the Board of Supervisors, courts, justice system partners, the Health and Human Services Agency, and community stakeholders to advance shared goals.

Team Development: Builds, mentors, and supports a high-performing team by fostering accountability, professional growth, collaboration, and a shared commitment to excellence in public defense.



EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Education: Graduation from an accredited law school.

Experience: Six years of experience practicing criminal defense law with prior administration experience.

Licenses / Certifications:

- Active membership in the California State Bar.
- Enrollment in the Nevada County Community Leadership Institute with completion within one year of date of hire.
- Enrollment in the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Senior Executive Credential Program with completion within 2 years of hire date.

UPCOMING PROJECTS & OPPORTUNITIES

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM / CARE COURT. Advancing collaborative, treatment-focused alternatives within the justice system, including CARE Court initiatives, to better serve individuals with behavioral health needs while promoting public safety and improved client outcomes.

NEW FUNDING & HOUSING SUPPORT. Securing and leveraging new funding streams and expanding housing-related resources to strengthen diversion efforts, stabilize clients, and reduce repeat system involvement.

CLIENT-CENTERED SYSTEM DESIGN. Leading cross-agency efforts to design and implement a more coordinated, client-centered public defense system that integrates legal advocacy with health, housing, and supportive services.



SALARY & BENEFITS

Annual Salary: \$192,250.92–\$234,698.76 DOE/DOQ, PLUS a generous benefits package that includes:

Medical, Dental, and Vision Plans Available

Retirement: The County participates in CalPERS' defined benefit retirement system.

Deferred Compensation: 457 and 401(a) plans available.

Life Insurance: 2X annual salary; up to \$250,000.

Tuition Reimbursement

Leave Accruals: Personal, Administrative, Paid Time Off, and Floating Holidays.

Management Benefit Allowance: \$1,000 per fiscal year.

Car Allowance: \$500 per month.

Flexible Work Schedules Available

Relocation: Negotiable on a case-by-case basis.

HOW TO APPLY

For first consideration, apply by **MARCH 16** at:

WBCP JOB BOARD



SAVE THE DATES. Round one virtual interviews will take place on **APRIL 21**. Finalists will move forward to round two in-person interviews on **MAY 4**. *Selected candidates must be available for both dates.*

QUESTIONS? Please contact your recruiter, **Terri Maus-Nisich**, with any questions:

terri@wbcpsc.com

866.929.WBCP (9227) toll free

541.664.0376 direct



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