

Department Name	Public Defender's Office
Account(s)	1170

Department Function
The Office of the Public Defender serves indigent people requiring legal representation in criminal or family court proceedings, under Article 18A and 18B of the County Law. We represent people in 15 separate city, town, and village courts, as well as Albany County Court and Albany County Family Court. Upon arraignment of a defendant in criminal matters or at the first appearance of family court cases, clients are screened for eligibility. The court, in many cases, will appoint our Office to represent the defendant or party to the matter. If a person is not assigned by the court, they may, if deemed eligible, utilize our services. The Public Defender provides legal services at all stages of proceedings, from pre-arrest interviews/investigations through final disposition, including appeals, post-conviction motions and sealing and expungement applications.

Current Year Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigned felony level trial attorneys to the Adolescent Part (Raise the Age) in Albany Family Court. Utilized the Office's Social Services Coordinator, two Criminal Defense Caseworkers, two Mitigation Specialists and two Family Court Caseworkers to provide successful mitigation support and assistance to clients. Counsel at First Appearance (CAFA) attorneys continue to provide legal representation to all defendants, often appearing at "off hour" arraignments. Receipt and retention of discovery evidence from the prosecution continues to increase substantially, with Axon Justice Premier utilized by the Office as a vital tool for discovery storage and management. Recruited class of six recent law school graduates to begin employment in September 2025 as the class of 2025. Developed and implemented a replicable and comprehensive substantive law and practical skills based training program for the recent law graduates who began work as Assistant Public Defenders as part of the inaugural class of 2024. Continued to develop a Family Court legacy intern program for law school students interested in joining the Office after graduation.

Next Year Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize and implement an ILS and County approved plan to increase attorney and supervisory salaries to address the well-recognized statewide problem of recruiting and retaining experienced attorneys to undertake representation of clients charged with felonies. Continue the Public Defender's necessary growth by utilizing funding provided by New York State, and pursue competitive grant opportunities to expand our ability to provide quality representation in Family Court. Continue to utilize and expand local, State and national partnerships with recognized organizations such as Gideon's Promise to enhance the Office's community-oriented mission and provide continued professional development and support to the Office's attorneys, mitigation team and other staff. Develop and expand the role and responsibilities of the Director of Training position to effectuate our goal of becoming a Statewide leader in public defense representation. Anticipating the volume of cases to rise next year, our Office will continue to make investments in staffing, technology, and training to maintain the "best in class" legal representation the Office of the Public Defender has a reputation of providing. Recruit class of 4-6 new attorneys for class of 2026.

Link to Website	www.albanycounty.com/PublicDefender
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