

UNDERGRADUATE ASSIGNMENT POSSIBILITIES

United States Attorney's Office
Judiciary Center Building
555 4th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530

FRONT OFFICE

A law student in the Front Office will gain insight into the mechanics of the United States Attorney's Office as a whole. Clerks are expected to provide support to Principal and Executive Assistant United States Attorneys, Office of Professional Development, Special Counsel, and staff. Clerks will have an opportunity to get involved in a wide-array of projects that impact the legal system here in the District of Columbia. In providing support to the Office of Professional Development, law clerks will perform legal research and writing on a variety of topics relevant to criminal trial practice, observe criminal jury trials, participate in the development and presentation of training programs and assist in the production of a office trial bulletin.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION (LECC)

The Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee program was designed to enhance the relationship between the United States Attorney's Office and the federal and local law enforcement agencies that operate in and around the District of Columbia. The LECC program develops and administers training programs for law enforcement officers and agents as well as for United States Attorney's Office personnel in such areas as investigations, interviewing techniques, and other practical law enforcement issues. Additionally, the LECC program is instrumental in suggesting policy to the United States Attorney that affects law enforcement in this district.

Interns may participate in the development and administration of various training programs. Short term projects with the LECC staff and other divisions within the United States Attorney's Office are assigned to gain comprehensive knowledge of the Washington, D.C. Criminal Justice System. Interns will be expected to attend meetings and briefings at both local and federal law enforcement levels, observe courtroom proceedings in local and federal court, and gain first hand knowledge of community policing within the District of Columbia. Highly motivated candidates need to have strong computer and writing skills. This position provides a great environment for a student who is undecided in their careerchoice between law enforcement and law practice.

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Office of Professional Development is responsible for providing training to attorneys and administrative staff .for attorneys in the U.S. Attorney's Office. OPD presents training programs for attorneys on a variety of subjects relevant to criminal trial practice, including constitutional law, trial advocacy and scientific and technical issues. Law clerks assigned to the Office will perform legal research and writing, observe and report on criminal trials, and participate in the development of training material. In addition, they will participate in the presentation of training programs and the production of an office newsletter.

VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE UNIT (VWAU)

The Victim Witness Assistance Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia is responsible for assisting victims and witnesses of crime by providing information on the criminal justice system and providing services to enable them to better cope with the consequences of crime. The U.S. Attorney's Office is responsible for prosecuting criminal violations of federal law as well as violations of the District of Columbia Code, therefore the VWAU provides assistance to victims and witnesses involved in cases in U.S.

District Court cases and D.C. Superior Court. The VWAU provides victims with counseling, crisis intervention, referral services, and assistance with the court process.

The VWAU internship is designed to provide interns with exposure to all areas of victim services and advocacy, as well as an opportunity to focus on special projects. A highly motivated, self-directed person with a strong interest in victim's issues or advocacy work is required. Computer knowledge and writing skills are highly desirable.

The VWAU accommodates special victim populations, sex assault physical abuse adult and child victims, disabled victims, elderly victims, domestic violence victims, and survivors of homicide victims. The following are special emphasis areas on which interns may choose to focus their time and energies:

Assist with domestic violence intake/advocacy in conjunction with the new domestic violence prosecution unit.

Working with D.C. Superior Court and the Office of Corporation Counsel.

Assist with implementation of the KidsCourt, the U.S. Attorney's Office court orientation program for child victims and witnesses who must testify in court.

Assist the U.S. Attorney's Office Sex Offense Specialists with services for child victims, including escorting children to court, and to Child Advocacy Center. # Assist with the update and organization of VWAU resource library on victim witness issues.

Students will work with Victim/Witness Specialists in the following areas: Adult Sexual Assault, Child/Physical/sexual abuse, Violent Crime, Felony, Criminal Prosecution and families of Homicide victims, providing VWAU services explaining criminal justice issues, court escort, and referrals to community services.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

The Administrative Division provides support to the entire Office in the following areas: Budget and Finance, Human Resources, Library and Research, Information Technology, and Support Services. Interns could rotate through all or some areas or could focus in one particular area of interest. Public and business administration undergraduates and graduate students could get hands on experience in overall administrative management or specific experience in accounting, auditing, budget formulation and execution, staffing and recruiting, position management, procurement, facilities management, developing policies and procedures, or conducting various management analyses. Students with strong research skills from various fields of study could provide support in the Library, responding to attorney requests for information to support case development and prosecution. Within the Administrative Division, the Information Technology Section is responsible for designing, implementing and maintaining computer information systems for the Office. With more than 700 employees, this includes litigation and trial support for cases, case management, local and wide area network administration, computer security, inter-connectivity with local criminal justice agencies, IT training, telephone/pager/cell phone support, help desk operations, user technical support for hardware/software, and management of the Office intranet and internet sites. An IT intern could get exposure to front line customer support issues, would perform Windows and Office productivity software reloads, and assist with documenting processes and procedures. Prior knowledge of, or experience with, Windows 2000, NT and/or XP is required. MIS/CIS and other technical majors are also welcome.

DISTRICT COURT ASSIGNMENTS

CIVIL DIVISION

The Civil Division is primarily responsible for the defense of virtually all civil actions filed against the United States, its agencies, officers, and employees. The Civil Division, with its 37 Assistant United States Attorneys and Law Clerks, defends over 2000 cases per year, with heavy emphasis on cases involving Constitutional and common law torts, employment discrimination, the Freedom of Information Act, government contracts and review of agency action under the Administrative Procedures Act. The Civil Division also has an active affirmative litigation docket focused primarily on recovering monies from persons and corporations that defraud the United States.

A law clerk assigned to the Civil Division can anticipate intense work with an attorney on a one-to-one basis on significant problems in that attorney's major cases. In particular, the law clerk can anticipate original research and memo writing on issues at the "cutting edge" of the law relating to Constitutional torts, Federal employment problems and challenges to major governmental programs. Additionally, the law clerk can anticipate participating in the formulation of litigation strategy with regard to discovery and trial matters on significant cases.

A law clerk is also likely to have an opportunity to attend one or more depositions and various court proceedings connected with the attorney's caseload, as well as other proceedings handled by the Civil Division. Finally, the law clerk can anticipate aiding an attorney in defending against emergency requests to halt decisions made by officials of the United States. At the end of the semester, the law clerk will be familiar with civil litigation in Federal Court, with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, class actions, trials, and the Federal appellate process. The law clerk also will be familiar with the substantive areas of law handled in the Civil Division.

CRIMINAL DIVISION, FEDERAL MAJOR CRIMES SECTION

The Federal Major Crimes Section is responsible for investigating and prosecuting civil rights violations, bank robberies, immigration fraud, child pornography, environmental crimes, counterfeiting, assaults and threats on federal officials, theft from interstate shipments, routine gun prosecutions, standalone drug cases, and short term bank and credit card fraud.

CRIMINAL DIVISION, FRAUD AND PUBLIC CORRUPTION SECTION

The Fraud and Public Corruption Section is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of a variety of white collar crimes. These include economic crimes, such as tax violations, thefts, and embezzlements, as well as business, banking, securities, telemarketing, credit card, computer, identity theft, mail, wire, health care, and consumer frauds. In addition, this section prosecutes misconduct by officials of both federal and local governments for violations of the public trust, including improper use of office and improper personal enrichment. It also has responsibility to prosecute private individuals for aiding and abetting government officials in their unlawful conduct, and handles allegations of false statements to government agencies, obstruction of justice, and perjury.

Working with various law enforcement agencies, Inspectors General and regulatory agencies, Assistants in the Section conduct grand jury investigations, draft and obtain indictments, and try cases. Service in the Section offers Assistants the opportunity to investigate and prosecute offenders who have developed sophisticated financial schemes and as well as high profile cases against public officials. Although it is staffed primarily by senior attorneys, rotational positions have been created in the Section to provide junior attorneys with exposure to these complex prosecutions.

Law Clerks assigned to this Section can expect to perform legal research and draft motions in pending cases, to research legal issues for indictments and investigations, to participate in witness conferences and to observe hearings and trials of cases on which they are working.

CRIMINAL DIVISION, ORGANIZED CRIME AND NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING

Experienced Assistants are assigned to this section and are responsible for the investigation and prosecution of complex federal cases using conspiracy, continuing criminal enterprise and RICO statutes in order to target and disable the most significant violent gangs and major narcotics traffickers in the District of Columbia. The objective of this section is to stem the flow of narcotics and other dangerous drugs into the District of Columbia by eliminating the drug distribution networks at their sources.

The section is also compound of junior Assistants in rotational assignments. These Assistants prosecutes arrest-generated narcotics and firearms offenses that give rise to mandatory penalties under the provisions of the United States Code. These cases generally arise from undercover operations, the execution of search warrants, or the interdiction of drug couriers at public transportation terminals. Service in this section offers these rotational attorneys substantial experience in Federal criminal trial work.

Law clerks assigned to the Section can expect to do research and drafts for motions in pending cases; to research legal issues for indictments and investigations; to participate in witness conferences; and to observe at hearings and trials of cases on which they are working, or in which they are interested.

SUPERIOR COURT ASSIGNMENTS

FELONY MAJOR CRIMES

The Felony Major Crimes of the United States Attorney's Office is responsible for prosecuting most serious felony offenses, ranging from property offenses to serious assaults in the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. The FMC is a vertical prosecution section and the assistants assigned to the section investigate and prosecute all cases which are assigned to them. FMC prosecutors are assigned to specific police districts in order to give them greater familiarity with the neighborhoods as well as the police officers assigned to the respective districts.

Law clerks are assigned to a team of three to four attorneys. The senior person on the team serves as the law clerk's mentor. A Felony Major Crimes law clerk is expected to have completed, or be taking classes in criminal law and procedure, evidence, and constitutional law. A law clerk's duties include, but are not limited to, assisting the attorneys in their trial preparation. In doing so, the law clerk will have the opportunity to prepare discovery materials for the defense, review transcripts and police reports, locate and/or interview witnesses, and interact with the Victim Witness Unit on issues relating to witness security and attendance. The law clerk will also strengthen his or her legal skills by being the primary drafter of responses to motions to suppress evidence and statements. The law clerk will also attend the suppression hearings to see the outcome of their research.

Law clerks in the Felony Major Crimes are often given a great deal of responsibility in assisting Section attorneys in the prosecution of assigned criminal cases. Law clerks will have the opportunity to become familiar with the criminal justice process, from arrest of an accused to prosecution and sentencing. Law clerks are often given the opportunity to be present during a trial, thus enabling them to actually participate in the litigation process from beginning to end.

GENERAL CRIMES SECTION

The General Crimes Section is comprised of two units: Felony Trial Unit and Misdemeanor Trial Unit. The General Crimes Section handles the majority of the cases prosecuted in D.C. Superior Court.

The Felony Trial Unit is responsible for the post-indictment prosecution of most felony cases brought in the Superior Court. The Section's attorneys handle a variety of cases involving narcotics trafficking, weapons offenses and stolen vehicles. Interns are generally assigned to a team of two attorneys and a paralegal. The intern's primary duty is to assist the attorney and/or paralegal to prepare for trial. These duties include organizing files, assisting with witness conferences, copying witness statements, providing discovery material to defense counsel, tracking down a defendant's criminal record, and supervising the preparation of trial exhibits. Interns will also be given an opportunity to observe hearings and trials.

The Misdemeanor Trial Section prosecutes most misdemeanor crimes in the District of Columbia, including offenses involving narcotics and weapons possession, theft, prostitution, animal cruelty, illegal dumping, destruction of property, threats and simple assault. The Section is divided into teams which typically include four attorneys, a paralegal and a legal assistant. Each team is assigned to one judge sitting on the Superior Court misdemeanor calendar. Members of the Section are in court every day trying cases. The Section also administers various diversion programs.

An intern selected to work in this Section is assigned to a team. Work will entail ensuring that the calendar for the team is ready and that all court jackets and other materials needed are in order. Additionally, interns assist the attorneys in preparing their cases for trial by arranging witness conferences, sending out subpoenas, researching criminal records on defendants and in a wide variety of evidence gathering duties. Interns will be given the opportunity to observe hearings and trials. The experience gained from being in the courtroom when hearings and trials are taking place, as well as from working with prosecuting attorneys, often is invaluable in helping interns decide whether to pursue a legal career.

HOMICIDE SECTION

The Homicide Section is responsible for the prosecution of virtually all crimes committed within the District of Columbia, including homicides and other violent crimes. The Homicide Section frequently assigns its attorneys to specific neighborhoods (also known as patrol service areas). As a general rule, each attorney assigned to this Section investigates crimes occurring there, whether it is a murder, a robbery, or a federal drug investigation, from arrest through final disposition. The Section also works in combination with the General Crimes and strives to handle its cases in such a way as to improve the quality of life for the residents of the area and to better our working relationship with citizens, civic groups, and other city and Federal agencies.

Law clerks in this Section are considered part of the General Crimes team and receive practical, hands-on experience in all aspects of criminal law. Working in the Section provides the student with the opportunity to assist in the interviewing of police officers and witnesses, analyzing factual situations, doing research on legal issues, and drafting motions and responses concerning some of the most complex and challenging issues confronting AUSAs in the Office. In addition, students are called upon to assist attorneys in trial preparation and are frequently asked to attend a trial to support the litigation effort. The degree of responsibility given to students will depend upon their performance and ability to gain the confidence of attorneys. A student will find his or her work in the Section to be an unforgettable educational and real-life experience.

SEX OFFENSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SECTION

The Sex Offense and Domestic Violence Section is an advanced component of the Superior Court Division, responsible for the prosecution of homicides in certain categories (murders of children, murders arising from domestic violence situations, and murders arising from rapes or other sexual assaults,) as well as all other felony sexual assaults (including rape and child molestation,) child physical abuse, and domestic violence—along with associated crimes such as burglary..."

The Sex Offense and Domestic Violence Section prosecutes each case vertically, that is one prosecutor is responsible for the case from the initial interview of the victim, through the investigation and charging process, to trial, plea, or other disposition. The Sex Offense and Domestic Violence Section has two primary Units. The Sex Offense Unit currently handles all felony sex offense cases. The Domestic Violence Unit is responsible for the prosecution of all misdemeanor intrafamily offenses ranging from assaults to property crimes. The Domestic Violence Unit is committed to aggressive prosecution of all forms of domestic violence including spouse abuse, partner abuse, intra family child abuse, and elder abuse.

Law clerks working with this Section will find their research, analytical and interpersonal skills challenged. They may assist in the interviews of victims and witnesses (including police officers), prepare case jackets, help write motions and other pleadings, and provide trial support. The nature of caseload in the Sex Offense and Domestic Violence Section lends itself to a variety of research topics including voir dire, witness competency, admissible hearsay, search and seizure, DNA evidence, evidence of a victim's prior sexual history or drug use, evidence of other similar crimes committed by the defendant, AIDS testing, expert witness testimony, testimonial privileges, and jury instructions. The combination of a compelling caseload and intriguing research issues yields an invaluable experience for law students interested in the practical aspects of criminal prosecution with a special emphasis on violence against women and children.