



Job Posting

Deadline: May 26, 2024

State Appellate Defender Office
3031 W. Grand Blvd., Ste. 450, Detroit, MI 48202

www.sado.org

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Assistant Youth Appellate Defender

Hybrid (Remote/Office)

Job Summary

Join Michigan's State Appellate Defender Office (SADO) as our first-ever Assistant Youth Appellate Defender working statewide to represent children as they appeal their juvenile adjudications. The position pays from \$64,728 to \$131,397, depending on experience. Our office follows a hybrid workplace model that mixes in-office and remote work to offer flexibility and support to staff. This position is for either the Detroit or Lansing office.

Why Michigan

In the last couple of years, Michigan has seen ongoing efforts to reform its youth justice system. In 2021, the Governor formed a Juvenile Justice Task Force, charged with analyzing Michigan's juvenile justice system and recommending changes to improve outcomes for children and their families. The Task Force found problematic policies that were not based on research and best practices. Among other [recommendations](#), the Task Force suggested the formation of a statewide juvenile public defense system and minimum standards. One of the first steps the state took to fulfill this recommendation was to adopt [legislation](#) in 2023 that allows SADO to represent children on appeal. SADO's first-ever Assistant Youth Appellate Defender will be a part of monumental change in Michigan and will be at the forefront of establishing fundamental rights for children brought into the system.

Job Responsibilities

The Assistant Youth Appellate Defender will represent young people on their direct appeals or for other post-disposition proceedings. Appeals involve challenges to adjudications following trials and pleas. Job responsibilities will include:

- Effectively, proactively, and compassionately communicate with clients, family members, team members, colleagues, community resources, and service providers to ensure optimal outcomes and resolve challenges
- Travel to Michigan's youth detention centers to consult with clients and evaluate conditions of confinement
- Investigate, develop, and litigate novel and cutting-edge legal arguments to advance and expand the rights of young people in contact with the youth justice system
- Research legal issues and compose appellate and trial court briefs and motions
- Argue in the trial and appellate courts, including the Michigan Supreme Court
- Work to identify and advocate for solutions to systemic issues

- Interview witnesses, investigate and develop new evidence, and conduct evidentiary hearings in the trial courts, including direct and cross examination of witnesses
- Collaborate with staff investigator and mitigation specialist to develop claims on appeal
- Work collaboratively with team and community resources to assist clients and their families in matters related to housing, education, school discipline, mental health, and other collateral matters that contribute to deepening system involvement
- Continuously seek professional and personal development through trainings and skills courses

Qualifications

- Applicants must be current members of the Michigan Bar or eligible to waive into the bar
- Applicants must have a demonstrated commitment to youth defense, indigent defense, public service, and racial equity
- The ideal candidate will have experience representing children in delinquency proceedings and be an experienced youth defense trainer; youth public defense experience is preferred
- Knowledge, training, and experience related to adolescent development, neuroscience, education, mental health treatment, and best practices for rehabilitation of children
- Skills in legal research and writing, client communication, and oral advocacy
- Ability to communicate effectively with people of different backgrounds and lived experiences and proven expertise in communicating with children and adolescents is preferred

About Us

This position is new to SADO as traditionally we have only represented individuals in adult court. The Assistant Youth Appellate Defender will integrate into SADO's existing structure and mission of obtaining just outcomes for our young clients. SADO attorneys work in trial courts and appellate courts across the state to achieve tangible results for the people we represent and to improve the system. We strive to show the courts that each person we represent is more than a case number and is entitled to equitable treatment and justice. We focus on our clients as people and actively work to challenge injustices and disparities in the criminal legal system based on race, class, ability, behavioral health, and other identifying characteristics and statuses.

Michigan is one of the only states in the country that allows appellate attorneys to develop new evidence and hold evidentiary hearings in trial courts as part of a direct appeal. Working directly in the trial courts to expand the record on appeal contributes to frequent grants of [new trials](#) and significant reductions in a person's prison [sentence](#).

SADO attorneys frequently appear in the Court of Appeals and the Michigan Supreme Court and play an important role in shaping criminal law in Michigan.¹

Our eighty staff members form a community advocating for the people we represent and a fairer criminal legal system.

Benefits

State employee benefits are comprehensive and include:

- Medical, dental, vision, and life insurance
- 401k plan with up to a 9% employer contribution
- 13 paid holidays
- 3 weeks of paid vacation in year one
- Paid sick time and, for eligible employees, paid parental leave
- Long-term disability insurance
- Flexible work hours
- Hybrid work environment (remote/office)
- Paid training opportunities

SADO employees are members of the UAW Local 2200.

To Apply

Submit a cover letter stating your interest in the position. Include your resume and a redacted writing sample.

Writing Sample Special Instructions: As part of its commitment to diversity in the workplace and its goal to prevent hiring bias, we ask that applicants submit redacted writing samples, which will be reviewed without access to applicant information and scored based on objective criteria. Your name, address, work affiliation, and other identifiers should be redacted from your writing sample. Files should be named generically, and your name should not be a part of the filename. For example, you can name the file WS1.pdf or WritingSample.pdf.

Applications should be emailed by May 26, 2024, to hr@sado.org and include "Job ID 03-2024" in the subject line.

¹ See SADO arguments before the Michigan Supreme Court in [People v Parks](#) and [People v Poole](#). As a result of SADO advocacy, the Court came to "the inescapable conclusion that mandatorily condemning 18-year-olds to die in prison, without consideration of the attributes of youth that 18-year-olds and juveniles share, no longer comports with the 'evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturity society.'" Read the opinion in [People v Parks](#) [here](#).

SADO is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We recognize people of color are disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system and actively seek to employ staff with backgrounds representative of the people we represent and the defense community. We strongly encourage people of color, people with disabilities, veterans, LGBTQ people, and people directly affected by the criminal legal system to apply. A felony conviction does not prohibit employment at SADO.

If you have questions about this application or are unable to send application materials electronically, please contact Human Resources at 313-420-2942 for assistance.

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