



Job Posting

Deadline: October 6, 2026

State Appellate Defender Office
3031 W. Grand Blvd., Ste. 450, Detroit, MI 48202
www.sado.org
@sadowich | @sadoreentry

Assistant Appellate Defender – Direct Appeals Unit

Detroit or Lansing (Hybrid)

Job Summary

Join Michigan's State Appellate Defender Office (SADO) as an Assistant Appellate Defender working statewide to represent people on direct appeal of their felony convictions. We welcome applications from experienced attorneys who can start in the near future, as well as law clerks and recent graduates ready to start around September 2027. The position pays from \$81,891 to \$153,676, depending on experience. Our office follows a hybrid workplace model that mixes in-office and remote work to offer flexibility and support to staff.

Positions Available:

We have a number of positions available from different funding sources. Some available positions are ongoing and some are "limited term," which requires us to advocate for continued funding each year. Because this program is a core priority, we expect all hired positions to be ongoing, regardless of the funding source, and we hope to support long-term careers here at SADO. All positions offer identical salary ranges, comprehensive health benefits, retirement plans, and professional growth opportunities. If you are not interested in being considered for the "limited term" position, please indicate that in your cover letter.

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. SADO team members include attorneys, investigators, mitigation specialists, paralegals, reentry specialists, programmers, IT, clerks, and administrative staff. Our over one hundred staff members form a community advocating for the people we represent. At SADO, 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. We strive to show the courts that each person is more than a case number and is entitled to equitable treatment and justice.

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 is rewarding and contributes to frequent grants of new trials and significant reductions to prison sentences. 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. Appellate defenders in Michigan are well-rounded advocates that shine while working with clients, while advocating in court, and on the written page.

Although focused on individual representation, SADO also contributes to the greater good of our legal community in part through several internal committees and projects, such as Court Rules and Legislation and the Racial Justice Initiative. Visit www.sado.org to learn more.

Job Responsibilities

Assistant Appellate Defenders represent people on their direct appeals or other post-conviction proceedings. Appeals involve challenges to convictions and sentences following trials and pleas. SADO Assistant Defenders do many different things as part of an appeal, including:

- Travel to Michigan's prisons and jails to meet clients and to begin working together on appellate strategy
- Read transcripts and lower court records to identify legal issues
- Research legal issues and write appellate pleadings, which could include pleadings in the trial court, Court of Appeals, Supreme Court, and occasionally federal courts
- Present oral argument in the trial and appellate courts, including the Michigan Supreme Court
- In conjunction with investigation team, interview witnesses, investigate and develop new evidence, and conduct evidentiary hearings in the trial courts, including direct and cross examination of witnesses
- In conjunction with mitigation team, mitigate for resentencing hearings in the trial courts
- Negotiate with prosecutors
- Communicate with our clients' family, friends, and loved ones
- Work together with colleagues on brainstorming, case rounds, and moot arguments, and contribute to an environment of collaboration and collegiality
- Look for ways to creatively and strategically change the law in Michigan to protect the rights of Michiganders in the criminal legal system
- Successfully manage an active and robust caseload with ongoing assignments at regular intervals

Qualifications

Applicants must either be current members of the Michigan Bar, eligible to waive into the bar, or eligible to sit for the July 2027 bar exam. Applicants must have a commitment to indigent defense, public service, and racial equity. Skills in legal research and writing, client communication, and oral advocacy are required. Ability to manage competing deadlines, under time constraints is required.

Benefits

State employee benefits are comprehensive and include:

- Medical, dental, vision, and life insurance
- 401k plan with up to a 9% employer contribution (partial vesting begins at 2 years)
- 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)

- Casual dress as appropriate
- Paid training opportunities
- Annual pay increases up to the maximum of the pay range with satisfactory performance

SADO employees are members of the UAW Local 412.

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.
- AI Certification - The first page of your writing sample must include a signed coversheet or statement certifying that: 1) you are the primary and original writer of the content within the document and 2) no generative AI tools were used to write or draft the document.

Applications should be emailed by October 6, 2026, to jobs@sado.org and include “Assistant Appellate Defender 2026-10” in the subject line.

SADO is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. 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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