

Law Student Internships & Externships (Yakima, WA)

Description: The Federal Defenders of Eastern Washington & Idaho offers unpaid law student internships during the summer and externships during academic semesters/quarters in our Yakima, Washington office. The Yakima office primarily covers federal court in both Yakima and Richland, with occasional clients in Spokane, Washington. Externships during academic terms can be remote. Summer interns must work in-person.

Legal interns and externs will assist attorneys through legal research and writing in trial and appellate cases, which may include drafting pleadings to be filed in the U.S. District Court, the 9th Circuit, and the Supreme Court. Interns and externs will also have the opportunity to join attorneys and investigators during meetings with clients (both in and out of custody) and witnesses. Interns and externs are encouraged to observe court proceedings. All interns and externs are welcome at staff meetings as well as attorney-investigator meetings to discuss cases.

Legal interns and externs may also appear in federal district court to represent defendants at hearings. Our federal court does not follow Washington's "Rule 9" and so any law student may appear in court with a supervising attorney and the client's consent. Our office has supervised legal interns and externs representing clients at initial appearance, arraignments, detention hearings, and supervision revocation hearings.

Receiving academic credit for any internship or externship will be the responsibility of the student. Our staff will complete any requirements (ex. progress reports or evaluations) that your school may have for us. All internships and externships are unpaid. Students will be responsible for arranging their own housing and accommodations. You will be expected to dress professionally when in the office.

Why Yakima? You have definitely heard of Seattle, perhaps Spokane, and state capital aficionados will know Olympia. Odds are you are unfamiliar with Yakima. Yakima is quite an interesting place to practice federal criminal defense. Yakima and Richland see their fair share of federal crimes, with a somewhat heavier concentration of drugs, firearms, immigration, and child pornography cases. Yakima is also connected to the Yakama Reservation, which the federal court exercises jurisdiction over, leading to a number of cases normally prosecuted in state court (murders, sex crimes, assaults, arson) being assigned to our office. There is also a significant Spanish-speaking population, driven in large part by the agricultural workforce. As a smaller office with six attorneys, four investigators, and a social worker, you will have opportunities to get meaningfully involved in cases and learn from everyone in the office.

We think you will love it in Yakima even when you are not in the office. Yakima is home to an abundance of farms, breweries, and wineries. There are great hiking trails and plenty of areas for camping and backpacking, as well as all kinds of other outdoors activities like biking, kayaking, and skiing. We have music, wine, and beer festivals throughout the summer and fall. There are two farmers markets that run from May to October. We're approximately a 2 ½ hour drive from Seattle, 3 hours from Portland, and 3 hours from Spokane, making it easy to have some weekend getaways. We even have our own airport! (It only flies back and forth to Seattle, but still...)

Qualifications and How to Apply: Summer internships are open to any law student who has completed their first year of law school when their internship begins, with preference given to students who have completed two years. Externships during an academic semester or quarter are similarly open to any law student who has completed their first year of law school, though two years is preferred. All applicants must demonstrate a legitimate interest in indigent criminal defense and display strong research and writing skills. Remote externship placements will be considered during the academic year. Summer internships must be done in-person.

Interested law students should send a letter of interest, resume, references, and short writing sample (10 pages or less) to Paul Shelton, an attorney in the Yakima office who coordinates the intern/extern program. All applications and materials should be submitted by email (paul_shelton@fd.org).

Our office will contact applicants to schedule follow-up phone and/or video interviews as needed.

Deadlines and When to Apply: Preferred application dates are listed below, but please feel free to apply any time. If you are interested in coming to Yakima to work with us, please reach out to inquire whether any spots are available even if the preferred deadline has passed. Applications will be reviewed in the order in which they are received, and offers will be extended to applicants in the order in which they are reviewed. We try to update the website to note when spots are filled, but feel free to ask.

Summer Internships	February 1
Fall Externships	June 1
Winter/Spring Externships	November 1

Note to applicants: Please specify in your cover letter if you are also open to a placement in our Spokane office or if you are exclusively interested in coming to Yakima. If you are interested in a placement in Spokane, please send your application materials to both Paul Shelton (paul_shelton@fd.org) and Brandy Pinder (Brandy_Pinder@fd.org).