Office of Muskegon County Public Defender’s
Job Description - Student Interns

Student Interns will conduct intake; may attend and assist with pre-trials, trials, jury selection, sentencing/pleas; may attend probation violations; assist in bond reduction hearings and diversions; investigations; will organize and review files; may conduct jail and home visits; may attend meetings/conferences as representation of Defenders; may participate in strategy sessions; will work with a highly skilled group of attorneys who have been trained to be outstanding supervisors and mentors; will work in a professional legal setting with other students and professional staff. As an intern you will develop professionalism, an understanding of Michigan law, and become emerged in the community we serve.

Student Interns will also participate actively in a wide array of investigative research and studies. These activities include:

- Analyses of police reports and videos
- Productive visits to crime scenes to gather available facts
- The adequate and accurate recording of events, codes, and data in case files and computers for important appeals where appropriate;
- Assessing the reliability of and accuracy of related identifications
- Sequential memorializing of events and procedures related thereto
Why We Exist

As a whole, the Office of Public Defender was established pursuant to landmark U.S. Supreme Court decisions interpreting and implementing both Federal and State law plus the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and the Michigan Constitution of 1963, Art. 1, Sec. 20, Michigan Court Rules 5.915, 6.005, 6.905, 6.610 and Michigan Compiled Laws 775.16.

Although our criminal justice system is one of the best in the world today, it has deficiencies because imperfect human beings are the ones who must make it work. Some of the defects within the system are corrupt or inaccurate scientific evidence, the abuse of authority by officials who are in positions of power, sheer human error, false testimony, false confessions (particularly from the mentally ill and/or intellectually disabled), false memories, false perceptions and conscious or subconscious biasness.

The consequence of these inadequacies in the criminal justice system is that innocent persons can be charged and convicted. This results in the double tragedy of an innocent person being undeservedly punished while the guilty completely escape penalty and continue to abuse, harm, and endanger our community.

Because many persons charged with crimes have been disadvantaged in their lives by poverty, dysfunctional families, child abuse and neglect, drug and alcohol addictions, illiteracy, significant mental and/or physical challenges, and the damage done by generations of discrimination and legally institutionalized denial to some of the ability to fully participate in society. When charged with a crime, these persons are often powerless when the government brings its enormous powers to bear to seek conviction. Thus, there has to be some form of checks and balances in the best interests of all of us.

The Office of the Muskegon County Public Defender’s role is to serve those local persons who are indigent or partially indigent. The organization exists to enforce their constitutional guarantees, protect them against the possibility of coerced confessions, double jeopardy, unreasonable searches, unfair treatment, unjust convictions, and from being overwhelmed by the sheer weight that law enforcement and the prosecution can bring. Being defended in legal matters is not a privilege, it is a right.