

# Public Interest/Service Career Brief

## Sample Job Types

- **Civil Legal Services** – Civil legal services attorneys help clients on a wide variety of non-criminal matters, including public benefits, family law, disability issues, employment, farm-worker issues, community economic development, housing, homelessness, elder law, etc.<sup>1</sup>
  - **Public Defense** – Public defenders provide free or low cost representation to those who are accused of a crime and unable to afford private legal counsel. In practice, public defenders handle all types of criminal matters, from crimes such as driving with a suspended license to homicide, and sometimes do specialized work with specific types of defendants, such as juveniles and death row defendants. Public defenders do a great deal of litigation on both the trial and appellate levels.<sup>2</sup>
  - **Solicitor/Prosecutor** - Prosecutors are local, state, and federal. Sometimes, the responsibility for prosecuting misdemeanors and felonies is split among different offices in the same jurisdiction. Offices of state attorneys general may also have some responsibility for criminal matters of statewide significance or for criminal appellate or post-conviction matters. Federal criminal matters (e.g., financial crimes, drug enforcement, and organized crime) are typically handled by the U.S. Attorney's Office either exclusively or in cooperation with the Criminal Division of the Office of the U.S. Attorney General.<sup>3</sup>
  - **Issue-Specific Advocacy** – many nonprofit organizations focus on specific legal issues, or on helping a specific group of people in need. This advocacy may be performed via direct representation of clients, through policy work and lobbying, or a mix of both. Some of this work overlaps with that done by civil legal services and public defenders, like advocacy for the homeless or death-row defendants. Further examples include: child welfare, civil liberties, environmental work, government reform, human rights, justice system reform, labor and employment..<sup>4</sup>
  - **International Issues/Non-Governmental Organizations** – the international public interest arena has become very popular, with many public interest advocates working on a broad array of international issues from the U.S. or by going abroad. Public-interest minded law students should consider organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, as well as quasi-governmental bodies like the United Nations and the International Criminal Court.<sup>5</sup>
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## Loan Repayment Assistance & Forgiveness Programs

- South Carolina American Bar Association (SC ABA) – Amounts vary; see [sabar.org](http://sabar.org)
  - University of South Carolina PILLFF – Amounts vary; see [http://www.law.sc.edu/loan\\_forgiveness/](http://www.law.sc.edu/loan_forgiveness/)
  - College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 - Forgives remaining debt after 10-years of public service
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## Summer Grant and Post-Grad Fellowship Resources

- University of South Carolina School of Law Public Interest Law Society (PILS) Grant - see PILS officer
  - Equal Justice Works – see [equaljusticeworks.org/](http://equaljusticeworks.org/)
  - Fellowships - see [equaljusticeworks.org/](http://equaljusticeworks.org/)
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## Summer and Post-Grad Job Search Resources

- PSLawNet.org
- Idealist.org
- University of South Carolina School of Law Career Services

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<sup>1</sup> See generally <http://www.pslawnet.org/nonprofitpublicinterestcareers>

<sup>2</sup> See generally <http://www.pslawnet.org/nonprofitpublicinterestcareers>

<sup>3</sup> See generally <http://www.pslawnet.org/prosecutor-publicdefendercareers>

<sup>4</sup> See generally <http://www.pslawnet.org/nonprofitpublicinterestcareers>

<sup>5</sup> See generally <http://www.pslawnet.org/nonprofitpublicinterestcareers>