

Guide for Law Schools on Federal Attorney Recruiting and Hiring



Partnering with the U.S. Federal Government to Launch the Next Generation of Civil Service Attorneys

A welcome from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Dear Dean and Career Services Officer,

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is leading a coordinated, nationwide effort to strengthen and modernize federal attorney recruitment across agencies and geographic locations. As part of this initiative, OPM will support and host outreach programs, convene multi-agency hiring events focused on attorney recruitment, and develop practical guidance for applicants and law school career offices. We launched the [Attorney Talent Network](#) on USAJOBS.gov to help us connect talented attorneys from across the country with meaningful opportunities to serve. By making it easier for legal professionals to engage with federal recruiters, we are strengthening the federal workforce and advancing our mission of public service.

Federal attorneys play a vital role in upholding the Constitution and advancing the rule of law. They serve in a wide range of practice areas—including constitutional law, national security, administrative law, immigration, labor relations, procurement, and other policy areas affecting the American public. These positions offer meaningful public service, sophisticated legal experience, and strong preparation for leadership roles in government, private practice, and industry.

This Guide outlines federal attorney hiring pathways and provides actionable steps your institution can take to help students pursue federal legal careers. It includes practical tools and resources to ensure your students are informed, prepared, and competitive applicants.

Thank you for your leadership in preparing the next generation of attorneys. We look forward to partnering with you to connect your students with impactful careers in federal service.

Sincerely,

Scott Kupor

Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

I. Why Federal Attorney Careers Matter

Public service, real impact, career-defining experience

Federal legal positions are among the most competitive and mission-driven in the legal profession. From the beginning of their careers, federal attorneys are entrusted with significant responsibilities and substantive mission-critical work. These positions offer professional visibility, meaningful experience in public service, competitive [compensation and benefits](#), and the opportunity to make a lasting impact in the lives of the American people. Some of the work may include:

- Litigate high-impact cases in Federal courts.
- Advise senior leadership and policymakers on legal strategy, regulatory decisions, and policy creation and implementation.
- Negotiate complex national and international agreements.
- Investigate and prosecute serious criminal activities.
- Develop and implement legal and regulatory frameworks affecting millions of Americans.

A career as a federal attorney provides the opportunity to serve the public interest while developing expertise at the highest levels of government practice.

II. Overview of Federal Attorney Hiring Paths

Most Federal agencies hire attorneys using these hiring paths:

1. Honors Programs (Entry-Level)

- Typically target third-year law students (3Ls), recent graduates, and judicial law clerks.
- Generally, agencies hire at the GS-11 or GS-12 level (or agency equivalent).
- Most agency programs operate on an annual cycle, with applications opening in late summer or early fall on USAJOBS.gov.

2. Legal Internships and Externships

- Available during first-year law student (1L) and second-year law student (2L) summers and academic terms.
- Provide critical experience for future Honors Programs eligibility.
- Often serve as feeder pipelines into entry-level attorney roles.

3. Attorney Hiring

- Agencies also hire experienced attorneys with specialized subject matter expertise.

III. Typical Federal Attorney Recruitment Timeline

Agencies independently manage the recruitment and hiring of attorneys. Law schools may strengthen student competitiveness by incorporating typical Honors Program recruitment timelines into their materials and career programming. A typical recruitment cycle for entry-level is the following:

Period	Activity
Spring–Summer	Outreach to rising 2Ls and 3Ls
Late Summer/Early Fall	Honors Program announcements open on USAJOBS.gov
Fall	Application review and interviews
Winter	Selections and tentative offers
Following Fall	Entry on duty

IV. Strategic Actions to Prepare Students for Federal Attorney Positions

Cultivate Interest. Build and Channel the Desire. Connect Students to Resources.

Your partnership is critical to prepare the next generation of federal attorneys. Through this collaboration, OPM may:

- Share coordinated hiring event details
- Offer outreach materials to the school point of contact (POC)
- Facilitate connections with participating agencies

The following practical actions may help your career services and planning offices highlight federal service as a compelling career, enhance student competitiveness, and connect students with federal career opportunities.

1. Designate a Federal Careers Liaison

OPM encourages law schools to designate a primary POC to coordinate federal attorney recruitment. This liaison may:

- Receive and share information and opportunities about legal internships, externships and full-time positions in the federal government with students and recent graduates.
- Facilitate communication between interested students and OPM or federal agencies.
- Coordinate with OPM on the outreach calendar for information sessions, outreach and federal hiring events.

To designate a federal career liaison, please email the individual's name, title, and contact information to outreach@opm.gov.

2. Promote Federal Attorneys' Hiring Paths

Encourage students, beginning in their first year of law school (1L), to explore federal hiring paths, including:

- Agency Honors Attorney Programs
- Summer legal internships and externships
- Other job opportunities for law students and recent graduates posted on USAJOBS.gov

3. Host Federal Attorney Information Sessions

OPM and partner agencies are eager to host federal legal career information sessions for law students. Some of the activities include:

- Virtual or in-person recruitment briefings
- Panels featuring federal attorneys
- Workshops on résumé requirements (i.e., two pages or less) and the federal hiring process
- Application strategy sessions for Honors Programs
- Informal meet-and-greet sessions with current federal attorneys

Schools are encouraged to integrate these types of events into their recruiting calendars. OPM welcomes the opportunity to tailor an event that meets the needs and interests of your students. Contact us at outreach@opm.gov.

4. Encourage Targeted Skill Development

Practical experience and mission-aligned coursework significantly strengthen applications and enhance performance in interviews.

Competitive candidates typically demonstrate:

- Strong academic performance
- Law review or journal participation
- Moot court or other litigation experience

- Coursework aligned with federal practice areas (e.g., administrative law, national security law, federal procurement, tax law, regulatory law)

Career services offices play a critical role in advising students on how to pursue these experiences and select electives that align with agency-specific missions and federal careers. Early and intentional preparation can meaningfully improve student competitiveness for federal attorney positions.

5. Promote Geographic Flexibility

Federal attorney positions are located nationwide. In many cases, working in a regional office offers entry-level attorneys with broader exposure and opportunities to make significant contributions to agency mission accomplishment.

6. Leverage Attorney Talent Network

The [Attorney Talent Network](#) allows students to receive emails about job opportunities and event notifications. Joining the network increases the student's visibility to federal recruiters. Students can follow these steps:

- Create a USAJOBS account
- Upload a 1 to 2-page résumé
- Make the résumé searchable
- Opt into the Attorney Recruiting Talent Network

V. Resources and Links

Learn more and act.

The following resources are available to get your students started on the path to serving as a federal attorney.

OPM Attorney Talent Network



Join the talent network and let federal recruiters find you. Enter your contact information, create your USAJOBS account, upload your 1 to 2-page résumé, and click the option to 'make it searchable.' You'll also receive regular emails with opportunities and upcoming events.

OPM Attorney Recruiting Website

Visit talent.opm.gov/attorney to learn more about federal attorney hiring, see open internships and vacancies government-wide, and sign up for the Attorney Recruiting Talent Network. Search for jobs, read job descriptions, and find the opportunity that's right for you.

Department of Justice Attorney Vacancies

Visit justice.gov/legal-careers/attorneys-vacancies to view attorney and legal internship opportunities at Department of Justice. Filter by division/agency, by practice area, or by location. Learn about the application process for each and submit your application today.

OPM Attorney Recruiting Contact

For questions and/or event requests, please email outreach@opm.gov



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