

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

AMERICORPS VISTA DEFENDER'S PROGRAM



Jefferson County
Public Defender's
Office



VISTA
Volunteers In Service To America

ABOUT THE JCPD



- In 2011, the Alabama Legislature established Indigent Defense Advisory Boards in each Judicial Circuit in the state. The purpose of those boards is to study and choose the method by which the Circuit will provide representation to people who are entitled to appointed counsel but who cannot afford to pay for private representation.
- During the summer of 2012, the Jefferson County Indigent Defense Advisory Board for the Birmingham Division selected the Public Defender System for 2013 and the Jefferson County Public Defender's Office was established by the Alabama Office of Indigent Defense Services on January 2, 2013.



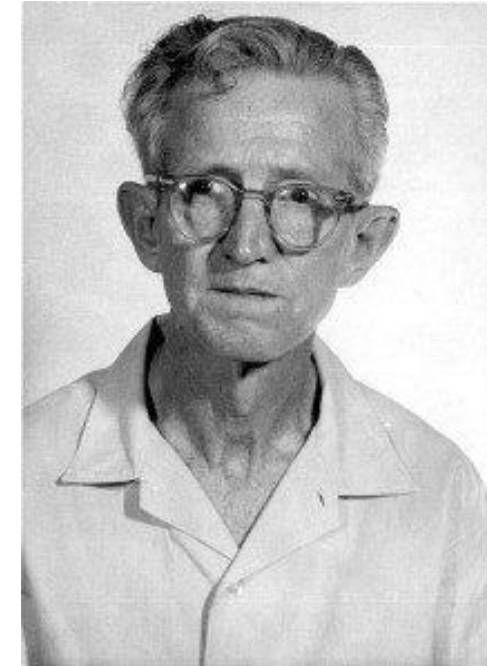
WHO THE JCPD SERVES

- The Jefferson County Public Defender's Office will provide services to clients in the Jefferson County Criminal and Juvenile Courts to people who cannot afford to retain counsel. The judge will determine if a person is eligible based on guidelines outlined below.
- In criminal proceedings, a person is generally entitled to counsel if they are charged with an offense that could result in a period of incarceration. In family court proceedings, children are often appointed counsel to ensure that their interests are protected. In addition, parents whose parental rights are at risk are often entitled to counsel.
- Income requirements are based on the Poverty Level Guidelines established by the Department of Health and Human Services. In general, to be eligible for services the individual's income must be at or below 125% of the Poverty Level Guidelines. Individuals who have income greater than 125% of the Poverty Level but below 200% may also be eligible if the judge makes a written determination that paying for legal representation would result in substantial hardship. Individuals charged with a felony with income above 200% of the Poverty Level may be eligible if the judge makes a written determination that paying for legal representation would result in substantial hardship.

“[R]eason and reflection require us to recognize that in our adversary system of criminal justice, any person haled into court, who is too poor to hire A lawyer, cannot be assured A fair trial unless counsel is provided for him. This seems to us to be an obvious truth.”
[GIDEON V. WAINWRIGHT, 372 U.S. 335, 344, 83 S. CT. 792, 796, 9 L. ED. 2D 799 \(1963\).](#)

“[T]he right to counsel guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment applies at the first appearance before a judicial officer at which a defendant is told of the formal accusation against him and restrictions are imposed on his liberty.”

[ROTHGERY V. GILLESPIE CNTY., TEX., 554 U.S. 191, 194, 128 S. CT. 2578, 2581, 171 L. ED. 2D 366 \(2008\).](#)



Jefferson County Public Defender's Office

950 22nd Street North, Suite 1000, Birmingham, Alabama | 205.588.4220 | AmeriCorpsVISTA@jeffcodefender.org

“Providing the highest quality representation to our clients regardless of their ability to pay.”

ABOUT AMERICORPS VISTA



VISTA
Volunteers In Service To America

- Since 1965, over 220,000 VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) members have served in all 50 states and U.S. Territories. AmeriCorps VISTA members are in tribal, rural, suburban, and urban communities. Poverty can take many forms, which is why VISTA's model is driven directly by communities in need. AmeriCorps VISTA members help others while gaining valuable skills for their career.
- In December 2017, the National Legal Aid and Defender Association urged Public Defender's Offices nationwide to partner with AmeriCorps VISTA to provide services to indigent individuals. The Jefferson County Public Defender's Office was ahead of the curve as we had previously met with The Corporation for National Service (the managing corporation for VISTA) and had a concept project, which the Corporation was interested in funding.
- In preparation for a potential project to launch pending the Office of Indigent Defenses approval, the Jefferson County Public Defender's Office has established an agreement with the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Social Work Department, Samford University, University of Alabama, and The Birmingham School of Law to funnel potential AmeriCorps VISTA candidates to our office.



ABOUT AMERICORPS VISTA DEFENDER'S PROGRAM



- The Jefferson County Public Defender's Office seeks distinguished and dedicated individuals to serve as AmeriCorps VISTA members for a full-time one year of capacity building service in the Birmingham division. All AmeriCorps VISTA Defender Program members work within an interdisciplinary team to provide the highest quality of representation to the clients of the Jefferson County Public Defender's Office, regardless of their ability to pay.
- The Defender VISTA Project is designed to support the Jefferson County Public Defender's Office in its efforts to provide to the clients, families and community members the law office services. The Defender VISTA Project goals are to reduce the recidivism rate and increase the impact of the Public Defender's Office with regard to decreasing the collateral consequences that clients face when entangled with the criminal justice system.

QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

- Preferred Bachelor of Social Work and enrolled in a Master of Social Work Program; or
- Enrolled in Law School with a three year practice card;
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills;
- Strong written advocacy skills;
- Proficient desire and understanding in the value of community service;
- AVISTA must be a US Citizen or legally admitted, permanent resident.



BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

- Law and Social Work students will gain incomparable hands on experience in the field while working on their degree. Experiential learning provides a contextual learning environment that solidifies the skills and practices taught in a classroom. Most jobs now require minimal work experience, which is what you will obtain through the AmeriCorps VISTA program. This program will allow you to be one step ahead of your competing colleagues.
- Students/AmeriCorps VISTA members will receive a living stipend on a monthly basis, health insurance, and an educational scholarship towards tuition, upon the completion of the calendar year of service within the Jefferson County Public Defender's Office.
- In addition, AmeriCorps VISTA offers other benefits such as child care, travel, leave, professional development, leaders program, and career opportunities.



Click [here](#) for a more detailed look into the benefits of becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA member on their website.

STEPS TO APPLY

1

- ✓ Complete the five steps of the AmeriCorps VISTA Application:
 - ✓ **Research.** Visit nationalservice.gov/VISTA and VISTACampus.gov to learn about the VISTA program.
 - ✓ **Create a Profile.** This is where you will enter basic information about yourself and create a profile on my.americorps.gov.
 - ✓ **Complete an Application.** The application asks for detailed information about your education, work and volunteer history, references, etc.
 - ✓ **Find positions and submit your application.** Search my.americorps.gov for positions in various service areas and states.
 - ✓ **Track your application status.**

2

- ✓ Complete the AmeriCorps Defender's Program Application:
 - ✓ Fill out additional application [here](#).
 - ✓ Request one recommendation letter from a current professor to be emailed to americorps@jeffcodefender.org.
 - ✓ Create a Cover Letter which should include a motivational statement for your interest in applying.
 - ✓ Submit your application, resume and cover letter to americorps@jeffcodefender.org.



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THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO LEARN ABOUT THE AMERICORPS VISTA
DEFENDER PROGRAM!

Please email any questions or concerns to AmeriCorpsVISTA@jeffcodefender.org.