

PUBLIC INTEREST CAREER GUIDE

The University of Georgia School of Law

Career Development Office
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A note about using the Public Interest Career Guide:

This guide is meant to provide a basic overview and starting point for law students seeking a career in public service. Because that definition is vast, and because timelines and resources can shift, it is essential that job seekers consult their career counselors, professors and mentors and stay in touch with information and updated guidance.

Additionally, judicial clerkships (both state and federal) are excellent entry points to long-term public service careers, and are valued credentials for almost every type of public interest job. Because the hiring process for judicial clerkships is itself extensive, it is only touched on within this Guide. Job seekers are encouraged to explore judicial clerkships with the Career Development clerkship advisor.

EXPLORING PUBLIC INTEREST CAREERS AT GEORGIA LAW

Getting Started

Public interest law practice typically includes:

- Federal, state and local government agencies;
- Military;
- Prosecutor and public defender offices;
- Legal aid and civil legal services;
- Non-profits and non-governmental organizations (NGO's);
- Advocacy organizations.

Broader definitions may also include judicial clerkships and judicial internships.

It is important that students interested in public interest practice begin planning early and stay alert for opportunities. Employers may hire as budget opportunities allow, so interview options can surface at unpredictable times. Additionally, employers may want to be aware of committed students in advance of actual position needs, in order that they can hire quickly when jobs become available. Strategic and authentic outreach is key to both credential building and job success.

The Professional Development web pages on Government and Public Interest have information to help students understand the landscape of public interest employers. The pages provide links to employer guides and professional organizations, in order that students can both explore the profession and connect with practitioners: <http://www.law.uga.edu/government-public-interest>

Public interest employers are likely to access hiring programs throughout the year, interacting with the Career Development Office in a variety of ways:

- Georgia Law job announcements on Symplicity;
- On-campus interviews in both fall and spring;
- the Equal Justice Works Career Fair and Conference (October in Washington, D.C.);
- the Judicial Clerkship Job Fair (January in Athens, GA);
- the Georgia Public Sector Job Fair (February in Atlanta, GA);
- Off-campus interview programs year-round throughout the U.S.

Note that registration deadlines for interview programs can be six weeks prior to the interviews, so it is important to pay attention to e-mail notices. On-campus interviews are usually larger offices, or those closer to the University of Georgia. Off-campus interviews and the targeted public interest interview programs attract a wider array of public sector employers.

It is important to realize that at some of the targeted public sector interview programs, employers will participate in screened interviews or in walk-up "table talk" interviews. Both of these are considered viable hiring activities by the employers. Students should incorporate the accessible table talk interviews into their public interest job search strategies, and attend Professional Development interview trainings as well as meet with their individual Career Counselors to prepare for using table talk interviews to their best advantage.

The Career Development Office pays subscription fees for students to access a number of top resources for public interest jobs and career information, including:

- PSJD:
- Government Honors & Internship Guide:
- Public Policy Handbook
- Opportunities in Public Affairs:

- Environmental Career Opportunities:
- International Career Employment Weekly:
- Worldwide Job Alert:
- Judicial Clerkship Guide:

A full list of subscription resources for law students and their passwords can be found in the Symplicity Professional Development Library: <https://law-uga-csm.symplicity.com/>

Public Interest Resource Quicklist

Georgia Law Website:

Government and Public Interest Law Careers homepage:

<http://www.law.uga.edu/government-public-interest>

Includes info on public defense, prosecution, legal services, state, local, Federal government

Public Sector Jobs Database (PSJD):

National "Go To" Site for Law Students:

<http://www.psjd.org>

Jobs, Resource Center, Fellowship Funding Source Directory

Equal Justice Works:

<http://www.equaljusticeworks.org>

Career Fair/Conference Information, Loan Repayment Information

Government Honors & Internship Guide / Public Policy Jobs Guide

<http://arizonahandbooks.com/u/ugalaw>

Password 2015-2016: lawdawg

Federal and state Jobs for Law Students, organized by class year and deadlines

Symplicity

<https://law-uga-csm.symplicity.com/>

Job listings, On-Campus Interviews, Library of articles and videos, Counseling appointment calendar/scheduling

Federal Jobs

<http://www.usajobs.gov>

Includes all Federal positions and advice for applying

Public Interest Resume, Cover Letter and Interviewing Tips

The Career Development Office has excellent resume and cover letter advice, examples and templates available: <http://www.law.uga.edu/creating-job-search-documents>.

Since public interest employers are evaluating students' interest in their work and clients as a main part of the hiring process, one of the easiest ways to fail in the job search process is to send a general application that does not demonstrate a commitment or connection. It is essential to customize every application letter and fine tune the resume. Some of the items often found on public interest resumes include:

- Sections highlighting Volunteer Activities
- Full descriptions of externships, clinical and *pro bono* experiences
- Details about non-legal jobs that serve relevant populations or demonstrate a commitment to

public service career goals

Public interest and government employers are generally less concerned about the length of resumes and more concerned with gaining information that helps them assess motivation and commitment to their mission and work.

In addition to the specific workshops and resources on this, the career advisors will help. Students are advised to review public sector job applications with their counselors prior to submitting them.

Interviewing preparation is essential. Students should learn all they can about the organization, its funding and mission, and its clients. The mistake most often made in interviewing is assuming that public sector employers will have the same priorities as private firms.

While academic success is always valued, many public service employers look for other factors: dedication to client needs, demonstrated commitment, key coursework or experience relevant to the organization's goals. A student unable to discuss these may lose the job to one lower in the class who can.

Public interest employers may discuss substantive legal issues within interviews, as they relate to the organization's work; public defenders and prosecutors often give hypotheticals.

Additionally, since public service employers are not profit-driven, students need to become informed about starting salary differences between the public and private sector job markets:

<http://www.nalp.org/salariescompensation>

Professional Development Workshops

Annually the School of Law offers a range of public interest career informational events throughout the academic year. These cover essential information, including:

- Federal and other government hiring;
- Civil legal service careers;
- Careers in prosecution and criminal defense;
- Public interest summer jobs;
- Fellowship and grant funding and application development;
- Orientations to public interest interview programs;
- Student loan repayment information sessions.

Additionally, there are panels presented both by Professional Development and by student groups discussing practice specialties and topics relevant to developing issues in public interest law. The best way to keep track of informational programming and activities is to check the law school's events calendar: <http://www.law.uga.edu/event-calendar>. All of these events are opportunities to learn about hiring patterns and to make networking connections.

Student Organizations

While almost all of Georgia Law's student organizations provide opportunities for community service and *pro bono* work, there are several whose missions directly relate to public interest law, either based upon their practice specialty focus, or because they focus on public interest law work, such as the Public Interest Law Council (PILC), Equal Justice Foundation, and Working in the Public Interest (WIPI). A full list of chartered law student organizations is available:

- <http://www.law.uga.edu/georgia-law-student-organizations>

Getting involved helps students to build both their credibility and connections.

Financial Support for a Public Interest Career

Pursuing a career in the public sector can take careful financial planning, since some summer jobs are unpaid, and since starting salaries may be lower than some private sector salaries (although benefits may be strong).

Students should fully educate themselves to plan well. Currently, through the College Cost Reduction Act, there is support for those pursuing non-profit careers, including forgiveness for balances remaining after ten years, and payments based upon income. Learn more by attending professional development workshops and at <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org>.

For summer and post-graduate opportunities, fellowships are available to support students in unpaid jobs. Information can be found:

- <http://www.psjd.org>
- <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org>
- <http://www.law.uga.edu/global-internship-program-2>
- <http://www.law.uga.edu/equal-justice-foundation>

The law school has a loan repayment assistance program that awards annual grants to selected alumni working in the public interest. For information on the Downs' Loan Repayment Assistance Program, see <http://www.law.uga.edu/downs-loan-repayment-program>.

Additionally, students can obtain academic credit for unpaid public interest work through the law school's experiential learning programs.

Experiential Learning Opportunities

The University of Georgia School of Law has a rich history of experiential learning opportunities, supporting credentials valued by public interest employers for more than 40 years. These opportunities include:

- Criminal Defense Clinic
- Prosecutorial Clinic
- Capital Assistance Project
- Appellate Litigation Clinic
- Business Law Clinic
- Civil Externships
- UGA Fanning Institute's Community Economic Development Clinic
- Corporate Counsel Externship
- Environmental Practicum
- Family Violence Clinic
- Mediation Practicum
- Medical-Legal Partnership Clinic
- Public Interest Practicum
- D.C. Semester in Practice

Through these programs, students can get academic credit and hands-on experience simultaneously. For full information about Experiential Learning Opportunities, read the information on the School of Law website: <http://www.law.uga.edu/academics> and attend one of the town hall information sessions held each semester.

Joint Degree Programs

The law school has five joint degree programs, and some of these create attractive credentials for public service careers:

- J.D./M.S.W. - Masters in Social Work expands credentials for service organizations;
- J.D./M.P.A. - Masters in Public Administration opens opportunities within government and other public service;
- J.D./M.H.P. - Masters in Historic Preservation qualifies graduates for environmental and other sustainability options.

The other two joint degrees currently offered are the J.D./M.B.A. and the J.D./M.S. in Sport Management and Policy.

Georgia Law students also may enroll concurrently in courses in other departments at the University, and should consult the law school registrar for information about doing this.

General Public Interest Career Timeline

This general guide provides information on public interest career activities to anticipate. Some dates may shift with outside organization schedules or particular employer activities. Keep in mind that it is never too late or too early to work on career building or job hunting.

	1L	2L	3L	G
AUG	Join student organizations to begin building your public interest credentials and connections	Attend information session on Federal Hiring, and apply for 2L summer Federal internships	Finalize Federal Honors applications and submit them	Pile on experience and connections while awaiting bar results, through project work, volunteer work, bar and other participation
		Continue tracking interview programs and job announcements	Finalize grant applications for fellowships and begin submitting them	
		Be sure to track summer internship opportunities through the Government Honors and Internship Guide (the “Arizona” guide), usajobs.gov and other sources. Application deadlines are August through May, so set a regular schedule to check these and keep a basic application ready		
		Attend information sessions on D.C. Semester program and on navigating the Washington, DC job market		
SEPT	Explore Equal Justice Works Conference & Career Fair information and register to attend if feasible	Register for and apply for interviews with Equal Justice Works Career Fair and Conference	Register for and apply for interviews with Equal Justice Works Career Fair and Conference	Continue working connections and experience building - stay in touch with CDO for help
	Learn about DC Externship Program	Attend loan repayment info session, and schedule individual consultation if desired	Learn about DC Externship Program	Continue to apply for immediately available positions

	Attend information session on loan repayment	Continue regular tracking of summer deadlines in Government Honors & Internship guide	Attend loan repayment info session, and schedule individual consultation if desired	
		Check on- and off-campus interviews for legal services, early hiring public defenders or prosecutors	Continue regular tracking of deadlines in Government Honors & Internship guide	
			Check on- and off-campus interviews for legal services, early hiring public defenders or prosecutors	
OCT	Attend Career Development trainings to learn about Symplicity job search management database	Attend Equal Justice Works Conference, be strategic with table talk to add opportunities	Attend Equal Justice Works Conference, be strategic with table talk to add opportunities	Bar results for most jurisdictions released by end of month: update potential employers with newly licensed status
	Attend sessions to learn about resumes and cover letters	Attend clinic town hall meeting to gain information on spring offerings	Attend career information sessions on prosecution, indigent defense and civil legal services, as well as those on specific practice specialties	
	After October 15, meet individually with your career advisor	Attend Georgia Association of Law & Politics Symposium	Attend clinic town hall meeting to gain information on spring offerings	
	Attend session on 1L summer jobs in the public sector	Share information with 1Ls about how you got your summer public interest experience and what you did	Attend Georgia Association of Law & Politics Symposium	

	<p>Go to Washington, DC for the Equal Justice Works Conference & Career Fair, the nation's largest gathering for law students interested in public sector work and legal employers. 1Ls are eligible to participate in all aspects except pre-selected interviews.</p>	<p>Attend career information sessions on prosecution, indigent defense and civil legal services, as well as those on specific practice specialties</p>		
	<p>Create individual account in PSJD - national database of public sector employers, jobs and career advice</p>			
	<p>Watch for information from PILC - and register for Alternative Spring Break</p>			
	<p>Attend Georgia Association of Law & Politics Symposium</p>			
NOV	<p>Attend training on networking and business etiquette</p>	<p>Apply for summer internship interviews with state court judges at Judicial Clerkship Job Fair (January in Athens)</p>	<p>Line up networking visits for winter break</p>	<p>Get sworn in. Apply for licensed attorney jobs.</p>
	<p>Apply for summer internship interviews with state court judges at Judicial Clerkship Job Fair (January in Athens)</p>	<p>Investigate international public interest possibilities within Global Internship Program</p>	<p>Apply for post-graduate clerkship interviews with state court judges at Judicial Clerkship Job Fair (January in Athens)</p>	
	<p>Investigate public interest possibilities within Global Internship Program</p>			

DEC	Begin applying for summer jobs with national organizations and utilize winter break to volunteer and network with potential future employers	Begin to conceive post-grad project based fellowship ideas. Use winter break to discuss and explore these with potential host sites and to engage in networking visits with potential summer and post-grad employers.	Enjoy visiting practitioners for volunteer work, credential & relationship building	Update CDO on employment status, especially on how you found your job (helpful for future public interest job seekers).
JAN	Register for interviews at the Georgia Public Sector Career Fair, on-campus and other interview programs: public service employers may participate in any type of events depending on what is most convenient to them	Apply for Georgia Public Sector Career Fair interviews	Apply for Georgia Public Sector Career Fair interviews	
	If selected, interview at the Judicial Clerkship Job Fair	If selected, interview at the Judicial Clerkship Job Fair	If selected, interview at the Judicial Clerkship Job Fair	
			Watch Symplicity throughout the semester for public sector job postings and OCIs	
FEB	Participate in Mock Interviews to polish your interviewing skills	Attend Georgia Public Sector Career Fair interviews and table talk	Attend Georgia Public Sector Career Fair interviews and table talk	
	Georgia Public Sector Career Fair in Atlanta, providing both pre-selected and walk up interviews with more than 70 non-profit and government employers	Continue to identify potential hosts for post-graduate fellowship prospects, converse with prospects at the Career Fair	Attend Red Clay Conference if interested in environmental law	
	Attend Red Clay Conference if interested in environmental law	Attend Red Clay Conference if interested in environmental law		
MAR	Alternative Spring Break: PILC Public Service	Alternative Spring Break: PILC Public Service	Alternative Spring Break: PILC Public Service	

	Attend Town Hall meeting to learn about Experiential / Clinic opportunities for summer and next academic year	Attend Town Hall meeting to learn about Experiential / Clinic opportunities for summer and next academic year	Attend Working in the Public Interest conference and Equal Justice Foundation fundraiser	
	Learn about DC Externship Program	Learn about DC Externship Program	Apply for immediate openings - Symplicity, PSJD, usajobs, other sites	
	Attend Working in the Public Interest conference and Equal Justice Foundation fundraiser	Attend Working in the Public Interest conference and Equal Justice Foundation fundraiser	Check with Career Development for post-graduate fellowship funding, bridge-to-practice, faculty research and other support to enhance your public sector job search	
	Apply for Equal Justice Foundation and other summer funding for unpaid positions (if needed)	Apply for Equal Justice Foundation and other summer funding for unpaid positions (if needed)		
APR	Still time to secure summer employment, study, clinical or volunteer opportunity - all valuable for public service law skill and credibility development	Still time to secure summer employment, study, clinical or volunteer opportunity - all valuable for public service law skill and credibility development	Keep a close eye on immediate job announcements (Symplicity, PSJD, usajobs, other sites)	
	Watch for pre-registrations for upcoming 2L interview events - targeting specific geographic regions, diversity groups, practice specialties and more - public interest employers are likely to interview at any of these	Watch for pre-registrations for upcoming 3L interview events - targeting specific geographic regions, diversity groups, practice specialties and more - public interest employers are likely to interview at any of these		
	Consider ascending to leadership roles with student organizations to enhance your public interest credentials	Consider ascending to leadership roles with student organizations to enhance your public interest credentials		

MAY	Journal write-on competition: an excellent credential for more competitive public service employment			
JUNE	Regardless of employment, look for resume building <i>pro bono</i> and networking activities with Bar Associations or other groups	Begin to prepare Federal Honors (post-graduate legal) applications, as soon as grades/ranks are received	Continue to work with Career Development if you are still seeking, which is not uncommon for many public service jobs hiring close to licensure	
	Revise resume and other job search documents after receipt of grades/rank and journal selections	Identify potential host(s) for post-graduate project fellowships, contact them to begin work on grant proposals		
JULY	Create targeted writing sample - especially helpful if seeking issue-oriented jobs	Review Federal (and some state) hiring information in the Government Honors & Internship Guide, continue to develop specific applications	Continue to apply for immediately available positions	
	Watch - and begin to apply for and attend - interview programs for 2L summer jobs. Public sector employers can show up within any of these - be vigilant!	Identify potential funding sources for post-graduate fellowship work, begin to write specific applications (in collaboration with hosts)		