



PARTNER OFFICE PROFILE

FREDERICKSBURG PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE

FREDERICKSBURG, VA

ONLINE MEDIA:

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**Name of
Office Chief:**
Lauren Whitley

Does your public defender office have any formal community partnerships or special projects? If so, please describe the partnership, program, or project with community stakeholders.

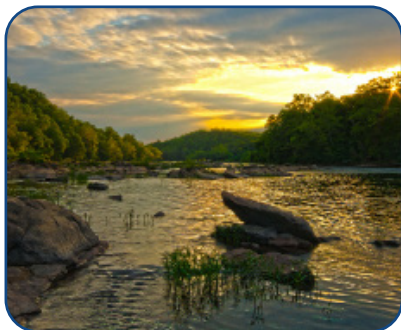
We don't have any formal community special projects currently, but we do plan to take initiative in this area in the future. In the past, our office has participated in local food drives and we've encouraged participation in the Fredericksburg Bar Association.

What are the different units in your public defender office? Please list any unique divisions your office has and a brief description of the work they do.

In our office everyone handles all kinds of cases. We cover four jurisdictions - three counties and a city. We cover the city of Fredericksburg, as well as Stafford county, King George county, and Spotsylvania county in Virginia.

Is there anything that distinguishes the clients in your jurisdiction? (i.e. large Native American population, large Spanish-speaking population, etc.)

Demographically, our clients are primarily white; what our clients struggle the most with is poverty and substance use issues.



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What makes practicing in your jurisdiction uniquely challenging? (i.e. harsh drug laws, etc.)

We are continually working against a paternalistic court system as it relates to substance use. While Virginia has been making great strides in criminal justice reform, there is still a lot of work to be done in Fredericksburg. This makes it an exciting time to be a public defender in our jurisdiction as we are moving towards adopting the values and philosophy of Gideon's Promise. We are pushing back against prosecutors more actively, in some cases for the first time. Our jury-sentencing law has recently changed which has created a power shift and allowed for our public defenders to be better advocates for our clients.

What are some popular attractions for attorneys to visit while in the city?

Fredericksburg is only 2 1/2 hours from the beach, 2 hours to Washington D.C. It boasts a locally vibrant food-scene and downtown. The city sits on top of Rappahannock River and has plenty of natural scenic offerings including hiking and tubing!

Are resources, such as availability of experts and investigative support, accessible to the staff attorneys?

Yes, we have a number of support staff. In our office we have 2 investigators that help with interviewing witnesses, taking pictures of scenes, finding information online, etc. We have a paralegal that helps with filings and discovery review. We have 2 mitigation specialists, one for adult cases and one for juveniles. The mitigation specialists help get us clients' records from schools or treatment facilities, interview sentencing witnesses, and assist us in finding alternatives to incarceration. We also now have a paralegal in our office as well.

Do you have any specific skills that are required or needed in your office (i.e. social work, Spanish speaking, etc.)? *

No, specific skill set is required but Spanish-speaking would be a big plus. We are always interested in increasing the diversity of our staff to better represent our community.

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