



**U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

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402 East State Street, Room 2020  
Trenton, NJ 08608

**REPLY TO: NEWARK**

December 29, 2025

**RE: Notice to the Bar regarding the 2026 Criminal Justice Act application process**

The United States District Court for the District of New Jersey will be accepting applications for the Criminal Justice Act Panel of Attorneys and Criminal Justice Act Training Panel of Attorneys. Attached is a copy of the Notice to the Bar.

The Court would appreciate if you would notify any interested and qualified members of the application procedures as stated in the Notice.

Thank you for your assistance.

Very Truly Yours,

Melissa E. Rhoads  
Clerk of Court

## **NOTICE TO THE BAR**

### **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

#### **ANNOUNCEMENT OF VACANCIES ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT PANEL FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT TRAINING PANEL PROGRAM FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

Since 1971, the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey has maintained a list of attorneys to be appointed as counsel for eligible defendants pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act ("CJA"), 18 U.S.C. §3006A. The Court has adopted a CJA Plan, revised as of April 26, 2018 and effective August 22, 2018, which "particularize(s) the requirements of the CJA, the USA Patriot Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005 . . . and Guide, Vol. 7A, in a way that meets the needs of this district." In summary, the CJA Plan has established a Panel Selection and Management Committee which shall meet annually to consider applications for the District's CJA Panel. The District's CJA Panel will consist of attorneys, divided by vicinage, who are members in good standing of the Bar of this District and the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, who maintain a primary, satellite, or shared office in this District and who possess strong litigation skills and demonstrate proficiency with the federal sentencing guidelines, federal sentencing procedures, the Bail Reform Act, the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and the Federal Rules of Evidence. The CJA Committee will select attorneys for the CJA Panel based upon merit and experience.

All current members of the CJA Panel whose terms are expiring are required to reapply for membership on the Panel. Membership on the CJA Panel is ordinarily for a term of three years. Pursuant to the CJA Plan, "Presumptively, a panel member will serve no more than two consecutive terms." See Criminal Justice Act Plan, Sections IX(C)(6)(7).

Attorneys seeking membership on the CJA Panel who need experience to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the Criminal Justice Act Plan, Section IX (3), may pursue membership on the CJA Training Panel. The CJA Training Panel has been established to, “increase diversity and ensure the availability of qualified applicants to the CJA Panel by providing attorneys who do not have the required experience for membership on the CJA Panel with an opportunity to gain the experience necessary to provide high quality representation in federal criminal cases...” See Criminal Justice Act Plan, Section XIII(C).

The Court invites all attorneys interested in becoming members of the CJA Panel to submit an application to Melissa E. Rhoads, Clerk, United States District Court, via e-mail at [njcja@njd.uscourts.gov](mailto:njcja@njd.uscourts.gov); on or before **February 6, 2026**. The application must be in PDF format. The application form and copies of the CJA Plan may be downloaded from the Court’s website at: <http://www.njd.uscourts.gov/panel-information>, located under “CJA Panel Application Form”. No application will be considered unless it is received in PDF format no later than **February 6, 2026**.

The Court, in conjunction with the Office of the Federal Public Defender, the Association of the Federal Bar of the State of New Jersey and the Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys of New Jersey, will arrange annual training programs for new and experienced panel members. It is anticipated that the application and selection process will be completed on or before **March 31, 2026**.

All qualified attorneys are encouraged to apply for membership on the CJA Panel. Any inquiries regarding the CJA Plan or the application process should be directed to Melissa E. Rhoads, Clerk, United States District Court, Martin Luther King, Jr. Building & U.S. Courthouse, 50 Walnut Street, Room 4015, Newark, New Jersey, 07102, telephone number 973-645-6697, or Michelle Bilardo, Court Services Manager, 402 E. State Street, Room 2020, Trenton, NJ 08608, telephone number 609-989-2363, email [njcja@njd.uscourts.gov](mailto:njcja@njd.uscourts.gov).