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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 22, 2022

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### **New Public Service Attorney Salary Figures Show Growth Since 2018, But Remain Considerably Below Private Sector Salaries**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — According to new research from NALP, salaries for public service attorneys have risen since 2018, particularly for attorneys working in civil legal services and public interest organizations. The results from the *NALP/PSJD 2022 Public Service Attorney Salary Survey* show that the median entry-level salaries for civil legal services and public interest organizations increased by \$9,500 and \$12,700, respectively, since the last survey was conducted in 2018. As shown in **Table 1** below, that compares to increases of about \$1,000 per year over the 2004-2018 period, although that growth was sometimes stagnant in the period from 2008-2014, depending on the kind of organization. Increases in median public defender salaries were more modest, with entry-level salaries only growing by \$1,400 since 2018. However, the most experienced public defenders with 11 or more years of experience still earn the highest salaries across the 3 organization types.

The *2022 Public Service Attorney Salary Report* is based on a nationwide survey of civil legal services organizations, offices of public defenders, and public interest organizations, and provides salary information for both entry-level and experienced attorneys at these public service organizations as of January 1, 2022. A total of 197 organizations participated in the survey. NALP did not receive enough responses from district attorney/local prosecuting offices to provide nationally representative analyses for this employer type. The figures reflect salaries of attorneys whose positions involve primarily law practice and not organizational management.



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The report, taken in tandem with its law firm companion piece — NALP’s 2021 Associate Salary Survey — highlights well-understood, but nonetheless sobering distinctions between public sector/public interest salaries and law firm salaries. The median first-year salary at a law firm of 50 or fewer attorneys was \$85,000 in 2021, 48% higher than the median salary for an entry-level attorney at a legal services organization (\$57,500). The median first-year salary for firms with 51-100 attorneys was \$127,500 and it was \$190,000 in the largest firms of more than 700 lawyers. These figures were collected prior to several publicly announced salary increases by large firms in the latter part of 2021 and early 2022 — with some entry-level salaries now starting at \$215,000. These \$215,000 starting salaries paid by many large firms in major cities are beyond what even the most experienced attorneys can reasonably expect to earn at a public service organization and are generally about double the size (or more) of the median salaries of public service attorneys with more than 15 years of experience at organizations included within the survey.

**Table 1. Median Salaries for Public Service Attorneys by Type of Organization and Years of Experience, 2004-2022**

Years of Experience	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2018	2022
<b>Civil Legal Services</b>								
Entry-level	\$34,000	\$36,000	\$40,000	\$42,000	\$42,800	\$44,600	\$48,000	\$57,500
5 years	40,000	43,300	48,000	49,400	50,200	51,000	54,800	67,100
11-15 years	51,900	55,000	60,000	62,500	64,900	65,000	69,400	78,500
<b>Public Defenders</b>								
Entry-level	39,000	43,300	47,400	47,500	50,500	50,400	58,300	59,700
5 years	50,000	54,700	60,000	60,300	62,800	63,000	68,000	75,700
11-15 years	65,000	65,500	75,000	76,200	78,600	84,500	96,400	100,500
<b>Public Interest Organizations</b>								
Entry-level	36,700	40,000	41,000	45,000	45,000	46,000	50,300	63,000
5 years	46,300	52,000	53,800	53,600	56,300	59,000	65,000	78,700
11-15 years	64,000	65,000	69,200	70,900	75,000	75,000	80,500	95,000
<b>Total Number of Responses</b>	415	430	658	572	423	362	347	197

Source: NALP’s Public Service Attorney Salary Survey, 2004-2022.

Note: All figures have been rounded to the nearest \$100.



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### **Key Findings:**

- The median entry-level salary for a legal services attorney is \$57,500; with 11-15 years of experience the median is \$78,500. Pay for public defenders is higher, with a median of \$59,700 for entry-level public defenders that increases to \$100,500 for those with 11-15 years of experience. For public interest organizations, the corresponding figures are \$63,200 and \$95,000.
- Within the public interest category, salaries were further analyzed by the kind of organization. Entry-level median salaries in public interest organizations range from \$60,000 at organizations dealing with immigration issues to more than \$70,000 at organizations dealing with women, children, and/or domestic violence issues.
- Regionally, salaries at civil legal services organizations are notably higher in the West, with a median entry-level salary of approximately \$64,600. (States in the Western region as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau are AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, and WY.) Among all specialty public interest organizations combined, salary scales were also highest in the West.
- This year's survey also included new analyses for civil legal services organizations and public defender offices by unionization status. Within civil legal services, median salaries were notably higher across all experience levels for unionized organizations; however, there were no notable differences in salaries by unionization status within public defender offices.



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The full report, including access to an interactive web tool, is available for purchase at [www.nalp.org/bookstore](http://www.nalp.org/bookstore). Survey participants and [PSJD](#) subscriber schools and their students/alumni receive complimentary access to the publication.

### **About NALP**

NALP is an association of more than 2,500 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That's why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and ethical principles for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For more than 50 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of our members and the lawyers and law students they serve. NALP maintains an online archive of press releases at [www.nalp.org/pressreleases](http://www.nalp.org/pressreleases). For additional information, contact NALP at [info@nalp.org](mailto:info@nalp.org) or call (202) 835-1001.