



LAW STUDENT OPPORTUNITY

Rural Defender Summer Internship

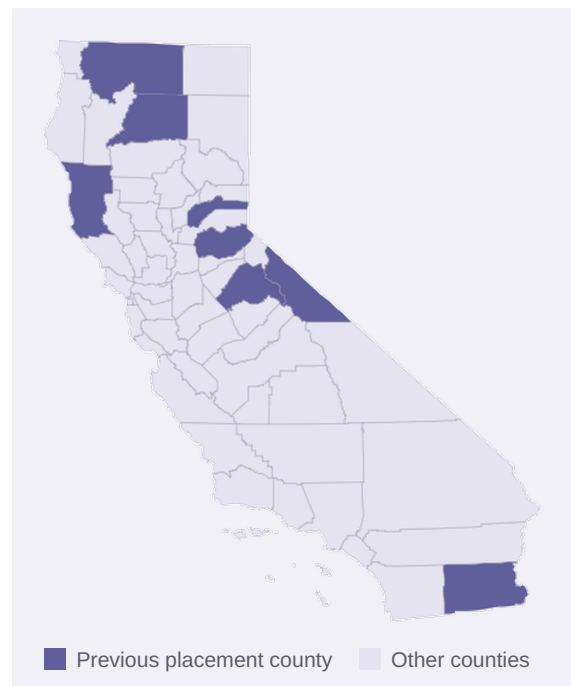
The Rural Defender Summer Internship (RDSI) program places law students in small and rural public defender offices throughout California, with orientation, training, and support provided by the Office of the State Public Defender (OSPD). Students in the RDSI program gain valuable public defense experience, often engaging in courtroom advocacy and legal work unavailable in other programs. At the same time, RDSI interns are helping provide effective, zealous representation to public defense clients in counties with some of the state's highest incarceration rates [See [The Geography of Mass Incarceration in California](#); [California: The State of Incarceration](#)] and lowest concentration of attorneys [See [California's 58 Public Defense Systems](#), pg. 10].

WHERE INTERNS SERVE

Previous RDSI placements include the Public Defender/Alternate Defender offices in:

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| ◆ El Dorado | ◆ Nevada |
| ◆ Imperial | ◆ Shasta |
| ◆ Mendocino | ◆ Siskiyou |
| ◆ Mono | ◆ Tuolumne |

RDSI interns not only shadow public defenders, they directly interview clients, conduct legal research, prepare motions, and when appropriate, litigate in court under the supervision of qualified supervising attorneys.



TRAINING & SUPPORT

OSPD provides a two-day virtual orientation covering key topics in public defense, ongoing support over the course of the internship, and summerlong access to virtual trainings on topics such as holistic defense, building client trust, criminal procedure, cross-examination, and more. OSPD has a limited number of stipends available for RDSI participants whose law schools do not provide summer public interest funding.

IN THEIR WORDS

Past RDSI interns shared the following about their experiences:

"Absolutely amazing hands-on experience. I received more opportunities to go on the record than any of my 1L peers and nearly all of my 2L friends. I had a wonderful time with my co-intern and with my co-workers at the office. Could not recommend the experience highly enough for certified 1Ls."

Jack C.

UCLA Law · Placement county: Tuolumne

"Many of my friends were slightly confused about why I was leaving friends and easy beach access for a rural community in the Sierras where I knew no one. However, the decision to choose the Rural Defender Program over other opportunities made perfect sense to me...I handled dozens of arraignments, four preliminary hearings, drafted motions, argued a restitution hearing, and even completed my first court trial."

Luke W.

Loyola Law · Placement county: Tuolumne



"I really enjoyed my summer and wish I could have stayed longer. The office was extremely helpful, supportive, and experienced. I was able to do in-custody arraignments, various motions, and preliminary hearings."

Esme C.

UC Law SF · Placement county: Imperial

HOW TO APPLY

OSPD will begin accepting applications for the 2027 RDSI program on **October 1, 2026**. To apply, send your cover letter and resume to capacitybuilding@ospd.ca.gov.