

The Post-Clerkship Job Search

Many judicial clerks wonder at which point during their clerkship they should begin looking for their next job. There are no hard and fast rules, but the average attorney job search takes six to nine months. The earliest hiring deadlines will be for the Department of Justice, NALP member law firms, and federal clerkships. These organizations typically request applications in late July through September for positions beginning 12 months later. Small and medium law firms, district attorney and public defender offices, and other employers will typically hire later in the year and are more likely to hire on an “as needed” basis. Clerks should begin sending targeted applications to these employers within the six to nine month time period prior to the end of their clerkship.

Second Clerkships

Some clerks may wish to pursue a second clerkship. In most cases, this would be a student currently in a state court clerkship who desires a federal clerkship, or a federal district court clerk who desires a circuit court clerkship. Law school alumni are not held to the same date restrictions that 3L students must follow when applying to federal clerkships. If a clerk wishes to apply for a second clerkship with a federal judge, he/she should consider applying before the rush of 3L applications – *i.e.*, sometime in August for clerkships beginning in the fall of next year. Some clerks may also seek positions as permanent clerks after completing their one- or two-year term.

Department of Justice

The Department of Justice hires entry-level attorneys only through the Attorney General’s Honors Attorney program. Judicial clerks apply on the same timetable as graduating 3Ls, usually from mid-July to September 1. For more information, visit www.usdoj.gov/oarm/arm/hp/hp.htm

Law Firms

Large law firms who are NALP members hire on a very early timetable, usually beginning in August or September for positions beginning one year from then. Clerks may compete with graduating 3Ls for entry-level associate positions with these firms, and they may also apply for lateral openings that will arise throughout the year. “Lateral” attorneys are those with one or more years of legal experience. In large firms these positions typically are with a specific practice group.

Non-NALP firms have a more flexible hiring timeline. State court clerks are particularly desirable to law firms that go before the court frequently. Clerks may find that unadvertised positions will be available to them with these firms.

Resources

- Clerks may register to review job listings posted directly by employers on our Career Portal. To obtain an alumni password, send an e-mail to dslcareers@psu.edu. Alumni are also welcome to use the resource room and may also make an appointment with a CSO counselor.
- Clerks should consider consulting their judges for job advice. A judicial clerkship is perhaps the only job where it is expected and even encouraged that an employee will be looking for his/her next job while still employed. Most judges want to help their clerks succeed, and they are generally very familiar with the legal community in their area.