

## Interview Questions

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**1. *What are your responsibilities at the Attorney General's Office?***

As Deputy Director, I help manage the Human Resources Division of the Office of the Attorney General, a state agency with approximately 4,100 employees. I have a wide variety of duties, including providing employment relations counseling to the agency; working on agency policies and procedures; and assisting with particular charges or employment lawsuits against the agency. As Ethics Advisor, I provide general ethics counseling to the agency.

**2. *Please describe your organizational structure (e.g., what department are you in, who do you report to, etc.).***

The Office of the Attorney General is a state agency with offices throughout the State. It is made up of many divisions that handle all sorts of legal work for the State, including child support enforcement, consumer protection, eminent domain, civil litigation, and criminal law enforcement. I report to the director of the Human Resources Division. We work closely with the Agency's Executive Management. In my capacity as Ethics Advisor, I directly advise agency employees and management on ethics issues.

**3. *What do you find most challenging in your position?***

Having practiced as a litigator for over ten years, I find it both challenging and very interesting to take what I've learned and create solutions to avoid litigation, such as providing advice to diffuse a potentially explosive employment problem or creating policies that will reduce litigation.

**4. *It is sometimes said that attorneys who make the transition from a law firm to a government position may struggle when they are required to manage people because firms do not train lawyers to be good managers. Do you agree with this? Do you have any advice for improving management skill development?***

Managing employees is not easy, and managing employees is something not generally taught in law school! Interestingly, picking a jury, preparing a witness, and cross-examining a witness are examples of "managing people." Regardless of what you are doing, you have to learn to listen to what others are really saying and then respond appropriately. It will help you as a lawyer or manager.

5. ***Do you enjoy managing people?***

I do because I enjoy listening to what people have to say. As a litigator, I did not understand how some litigators did not enjoy jury selection or witness preparation. Now as a manager, I listen to my employees. As an employment and ethics advisor, I make time to really listen to employees in order to provide solutions to problems. Working as an employment-law litigator prior to taking on a management role helped me see how employee-management relationships can lead to bad results.

6. ***What do you most enjoy about your position?***

I enjoy listening to somebody who needs help with a particular situation and coming up with solutions: that's the essence of being an advisor. For example, if I advise a supervisor regarding an employment relations problem, and the problem gets resolved, I feel very satisfied. It's a great feeling to help improve a working relationship – and possibly prevent a lawsuit.

7. ***What do you wish you had known earlier in your career?***

It's fine not to have a specific career plan. Practicing law is like going on a sailing expedition. You don't know where the winds will take you, where you might stop along the way, how long you might stop at any one place, etc. Enjoy the trip.

8. ***Is there anything in particular you think a young attorney should consider before moving to a government position?***

New attorneys should not go in with fixed plans to stay for just a year or for their entire career. Plans may change. It's fine to stay in government for a short time or for a long time.

9. ***In general, what can an attorney expect compensation-wise in an entry-level governmental position? Is the compensation comparable to compensation with a large firm?***

Frankly, compensation will be significantly less than in a large firm. Nevertheless, money is not everything. There may be opportunities for entry-level government attorneys that offset this fact. For example, government attorneys tend to have more direct control over their cases and the ability early on to "first chair" a trial or a contested hearing.

**10. *What opportunities does a young attorney have for career development or advancement within your organization?***

With more control over one's cases, there are ample opportunities to hone skills in areas such as writing, trial advocacy, and leadership. Some young lawyers use those skills to move on to the private sector or to other government agencies. Others stay and eventually move up to leadership and management positions within the agency.

**11. *Sometimes lawyers within firms express a desire to go in-house or to a government position because of the perception of better work-life balance. How is your work-life balance?***

There is probably a better work-life balance in government. Without the pressure to bill, evenings and weekends are for the most part available to spend with family and friends and on extracurricular activities. That said, there are certainly situations in which a trial or other matter will require occasional work in the evenings and on weekends.

**12. *Has the change in the economy affected your job? And if so, how?***

Overall, there is less hiring in government given the budget shortfalls. Nevertheless, government agencies are finding ways to be creative and accomplish more with less staff.

**13. *What advice would you give young attorneys about seeking out a position with a governmental agency or organization, either in a legal or non-legal position?***

New attorneys should do their homework and learn about the particular agencies in which they are interested. Not all agencies are the same. Some do very diverse work. Our agency, for example, does criminal and civil; trial and appellate; plaintiff and defense. Many lawyers fail to look at agency websites or talk to other lawyers to learn about prospective employers.