

# Legal Career Opportunities



**CYRUS R. VANCE, JR.**  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY





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WHO WE ARE

The New York County District Attorney's Office is responsible for investigating and prosecuting crime in the borough of Manhattan. For over four decades, the office has been considered a model for public prosecutors' offices throughout the nation. It is known for its vigorous prosecution combined with concern for the rights of those being prosecuted. Its prosecutions are guided by the belief that the prosecutor's function is to do justice and to serve the public.

The New York Times calls District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau *"the paramount prosecutor in the nation."*

*"The job of a prosecutor is not to obtain convictions like notches on a gun. The prosecutor's job is to protect the public and administer the laws."*

District Attorney  
Robert M. Morgenthau

*"As I have seen time and again during three decades spent in law enforcement, if a prosecutor does not have political independence, political pressure will deter or delay his action when it is needed most."*

District Attorney  
Robert M. Morgenthau

WHO WE ARE

Since the election of Thomas E. Dewey as District Attorney in 1937, the office has been operated on an entirely nonpolitical basis. Former District Attorney Frank S. Hogan, who served with distinction for over three decades, stated "You can't play politics with people's lives". Former District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, who served for 35 years with great success, ensured that prosecutorial decisions were scrupulously insulated from political pressures. In 2010, Cyrus R. Vance succeeded Mr. Morgenthau as the District Attorney and has vowed to carry on this tradition of political independence.

Over a million and half people live here and over a million visitors and commuters swell their ranks daily. We serve an extraordinarily diverse community composed of persons from a wide variety of racial and ethnic groups and a broad range of economic backgrounds. Manhattan is the world center for the financial services, banking and commercial industries, as well as the media. It is also emerging as a center for a significant number of computer and graphics companies. Finally, it is an international tourist destination because of its importance as a cultural and entertainment center.

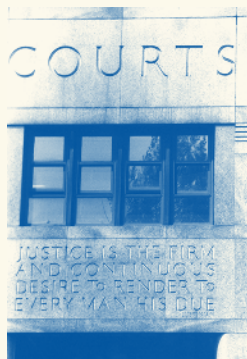
Manhattan has long been a mecca for creative and talented people and our office is no exception. We have been able to recruit top law students and young lawyers to the office because of our national reputation for effective and ethical prosecution and the unparalleled opportunities for challenging and sophisticated work under the guidance of some of the finest litigators in the country. Under District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance's leadership, our office contrives to be the premier public prosecutor's office in the country.

There are over 500 attorneys in the office assigned to different divisions. The assignments include:

Last year, assistant district attorneys in the Trial Division prosecuted close to 130,000 cases.

*“The best part of the job, and this is why we all came here, is to make a difference, do justice, and to help people out.”*

First Year Assistant District Attorney



### Trial Division

The Trial Division, the largest division in the office, has principal responsibility for prosecuting misdemeanor and felony street crime cases. New assistant district attorneys begin by handling misdemeanor prosecutions including a wide variety of cases such as larcenies, simple assaults, possession of drugs, as well as domestic violence cases. As assistants gain experience, they are assigned felony cases. Senior assistants in the Trial Division also handle homicide cases as well as other types of more complex investigations and high-profile cases. Some felony assistants choose to specialize in certain types of crimes by joining some of the smaller units and bureaus including the Sex Crimes Unit, Asian Gang Unit, Firearms Trafficking Unit, Public Assistance Fraud Unit, Family Violence and Child Abuse Bureau, Special Litigation Bureau, Homicide Investigations Unit, and Identity Theft Unit.

### Appeals Bureau

The Appeals Bureau handles all of the office’s appellate work. Assistant district attorneys in the bureau are assigned their own appellate cases immediately to brief and argue before the state appellate courts. Senior attorneys are assigned to edit the briefs of more junior members and prepare the assistants for oral argument.

Because of the Manhattan location and the large number of appeals, bureau members play a prominent role in precedent-setting litigation that shapes the body of criminal law in New York.

*“There is probably no prosecutorial jurisdiction in the country whose investigative capacity rivals the Manhattan DA’s...his office has closed down dozens of major drug rings and has broken the Mob’s hold on the trucking industry in the Garment District and on several of the building-trades locals, big ambitious cases that, like the carting case, one might expect would be brought by federal prosecutors.”*

New Yorker Magazine

In 2009, members of the bureau represented the appellant or respondent in about *one third* of the criminal appeals heard by the New York Court of Appeals. Appeals assistants shape the law by selecting and pursuing appeals in which the state is the appellant and by drafting proposed legislative amendments.

In addition, assistant district attorneys in the bureau handle office-related civil litigation in both the federal and state courts, including habeas corpus proceedings and civil rights actions.

### Investigation Division

The Investigation Division is staffed by more than eighty experienced assistant district attorneys who work with investigators, analysts, and accountants on the investigation and prosecution of sophisticated white collar cases, public and private corruption cases, and rackets cases. In general, assistants assigned to the division are recruited from other divisions in the office and have significant trial or appellate experience.

Typically the most junior attorneys in the division are assigned to the Special Prosecutions Bureau where they conduct short-term investigations including, for example, employee embezzlement, insurance fraud, or housing fraud. Assistant district attorneys who are assigned to the Frauds Bureau specialize in investigating complex economic crimes like securities fraud, large scale embezzlements, commercial frauds, computer crimes, and municipal frauds. The Investigation Division Central prosecutes cases involving international money laundering by banks and financial institutions as well as mortgage fraud and other complex financial frauds.

*“In recent years, my office has brought wide-ranging indictments involving the carting industry, the management of co-ops and condominiums, the interior construction trades, the securities industry, and many more. I am committed to prosecuting crime in the “suites” as well as crime in the streets.”*

District Attorney  
Robert M. Morgenthau

**Prosecutions and investigative activity by assistant district attorneys in the Special Narcotics Prosecutor’s Office lead to the seizure of illegal drugs valued in excess of \$67 million.**

The Money Laundering and Tax Crimes Unit prosecutes tax fraud and the Asset Forfeiture Unit brings civil actions to recover assets which are proceeds of criminal activities. Assistants assigned to the Rackets Bureau, the Official Corruption Unit, and the Construction Industry Strike Force/Labor Racketeering Unit, investigate and prosecute organized crime cases, corruption cases involving public officials and police officers, labor racketeering, and corruption in the real estate and construction industry.

Our office has long been a leader in sophisticated long-term investigations. Among our investigative strategies is to develop cases that will have the most significant impact on the welfare of the community.

#### **Special Narcotics Prosecutor’s Office**

The Special Narcotics Prosecutor is appointed by New York City’s five District Attorneys and has city-wide jurisdiction over felony drug prosecutions. The majority of its staff is composed of New York County assistant district attorneys. Manhattan is the center for narcotics trafficking in the north-eastern United States. Besides prosecuting street-level narcotics dealers, assistants devote substantial time and resources developing cases against those dealers who supply the lower level dealers. A smaller group of experienced assistants, the Special Investigations Bureau, work with local and federal law enforcement officers to develop cases against major traffickers, using the most sophisticated techniques and legal strategies.

*“What I get the most satisfaction out of is hiring a lot of talented people and watching them develop.”*

District Attorney  
Robert M. Morgenthau



New assistant district attorneys commit themselves to serving the office for three years. Most stay well beyond their commitment. Traditionally, the new class joins the office several weeks after taking the bar examination. After completing a seven-week orientation and training program, assistants begin work in their bureaus. Typically, new assistants will begin in either the Trial Division, Appeals Bureau, or in the Special Narcotics Prosecutor’s Office.

The District Attorney makes decisions about staff assignments in accordance with the office’s needs taking into account individual preferences. Some assistants spend their entire career in the division where they were initially assigned. Others assistants serve in more than one division during their tenure in the office.

Assistant district attorneys are given substantial responsibility early in their careers. In the first few months, assistants are assigned their own cases to investigate and prosecute. Unlike many other prosecutors’ offices, we prosecute cases vertically meaning that one assistant handles a case from its inception to final disposition.

*“Robert M. Morgenthau is absolutely, positively not influenced by politics.”*

Head of leading investigative firm and former ADA

**The successful applicant will complete four rounds of interviews:**

- 1 First interview.**
- 2 Panel interview with three Hiring Board members.**
- 3 Executive interview with Director of Legal Hiring, Deputy Administrative ADA Michael T. Dougherty.**
- 4 Interview with District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau.**



Each year more than 2,000 law school graduates and admitted attorneys apply for positions as assistant district attorneys. There are typically 40-50 openings each year for legal staff positions. Most of the staff is hired directly out of law school. Some of the staff join the office after clerking or practicing law elsewhere.

At the beginning of the law school year, the office interviews at nearly forty law schools and job fairs. Applicants who do not obtain one of the interviewing appointments at their law school are encouraged to request an in-house interview. We also conduct in-house interviews for law students attending law schools that we do not visit and for lateral applicants.

Applicants are required to submit a *resume*, *official law school transcript*, *writing sample*, and a *list of professional references* at the first interview. Assistant District Attorneys are required to be United States citizens upon commencement of their employment. A three-year commitment and New York State residency are also required.

The deadline for applicants seeking positions with the Class of 2011 is November 1, 2010. We interview law clerks and laterals all year round.

Applicants fit no particular profile and the office considers academic performance as only one indicator of an applicant's potential. Equally important are qualities of personal character; the office seeks applicants with integrity, judgment, and maturity. Prior leadership experience and a demonstrated commitment to public service are valued qualities. Assistant district attorneys are selected solely on the basis of merit without regard to political affiliation.

Given the diverse nature of our community, the ability to work with persons of different backgrounds is critical. In addition, the office seeks to have a legal staff that reflects the diversity of the community that we serve. To that end, we actively recruit minority applicants. The office is firmly committed to a policy against discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or veteran's status.

**We do not accept resumes by fax or via e-mail. To apply for an in-house interview, please send a cover letter, resume, and law school transcript to:**  
**Robin R. Edwards,**  
**Administrator of the**  
**Legal Hiring Unit**  
**New York County**  
**District Attorney's Office**  
**One Hogan Place**  
**New York, NY 10013**

**Our Legal Hiring staff is available to answer any question you might have about the application process. Please contact them at 212-335-9361 or see our website [www.manhattanda.org](http://www.manhattanda.org).**

## SALARY AND BENEFITS

*“As an assistant district attorney I had an opportunity to examine the facts dispassionately, exercise judgment, and make decisions. These skills are exactly what I do now. In terms of substance, fulfillment, and the opportunity for professional growth, it was one of the best jobs of my life.”*

Criminal Court Judge

*“As an assistant district attorney you are given a lot of responsibility. You have to be able to parse out the facts, and constantly make difficult decisions. This develops good leadership skills, and these qualities are admired in the corporate world.”*

Corporate Secretary and legal counsel at a major corporation and former ADA

The starting salary for assistant district attorneys joining the office during 2010-11 is expected to be \$57,000 for law school graduates not yet admitted to the practice of law, and \$57,500 for newly admitted attorneys. The salary is higher for those applicants who have practiced elsewhere before joining the staff. Periodic raises have typically been granted, as the budget will allow.

Assistant district attorneys are eligible to participate in pension and health insurance programs and receive five weeks vacation plus military leave annually. Additionally, our benefits include paid childcare leave for all attorneys.



*“As an assistant district attorney I developed the skills to search for the truth, and methodology to do in-depth fact finding. These skills are hard to come by in the private sector and invaluable as well.”*

Vice President at major financial institution

## TRAINING

Before joining their respective bureaus, new assistant district attorneys participate in a seven-week orientation program where they learn the fundamentals of New York criminal law and procedure. They will receive training on how to interview witnesses, evaluate cases, make bail and plea bargaining decisions, and in addition, participate in mock litigation. After assuming their bureau responsibilities, they continue to meet regularly for additional training.

Each spring, the office conducts a two-week trial advocacy program for the benefit of its junior assistant district attorneys. Some of the most prominent trial attorneys and judges in New York State participate in the program as teachers. Before being assigned felony cases, assistants attend grand jury and Supreme Court practice training programs. More senior assistants participate in training programs designed to meet the specific needs of their current assignment.

The office has been designated a Continuing Legal Education provider. Assistants may therefore meet all of their CLE requirements by participating in the training programs run by the office.

In 2009, the office established a formal mentoring program designed to provide newly appointed assistants with guidance and assistance from more experienced assistants in the office. The office has a cadre of highly experienced trial, appellate, and investigative attorneys who are strongly committed to mentoring the junior attorneys in the office.



*“Tough law enforcement is certainly needed but it is not the whole answer to the crime problem. I know from first-hand experience the benefits from recreational and educational programs which help young people go on to lead useful and productive lives.”*

District Attorney  
Robert M. Morgenthau

Assistant district attorneys work closely with our Community Affairs Unit in a series of educational initiatives sponsored by the office. The program, called Legal Bound, is designed to introduce elementary, junior high, and high school students, as well as school professionals and concerned citizens, to the criminal justice system.

Legal staff, volunteering their time, give classroom presentations, coach mock trials, lecture about legal career opportunities, conduct tours of the office and the courts, and act as mentors to young people. Many assistant district attorneys have chosen to take part in these activities and have found it to be rewarding.

*“The summer intern program was the most fulfilling internship of my law school career. I believe that it has shaped the direction my career is traveling and has made me a more well-rounded legal professional.”*

Summer Law Intern

**First and second year law school students who are interested in applying for a summer intern position should send a cover letter, resume, and law school transcript to:**  
**Robin R. Edwards,**  
**Administrator of the Legal Hiring Unit**  
**New York County District Attorney’s Office**  
**One Hogan Place**  
**New York, New York**  
**10013**

The Summer Intern Program is an opportunity for first and second year law students to gain experience in trial and appellate litigation in the public sector.

The Summer Intern Program, which begins in early June and runs for ten weeks, allows law students to work closely with assistant district attorneys. Depending upon assignment, summer interns help prepare cases for grand jury presentations, hearings, and trials. They also research and write appellate briefs and trial memorandum, and often second-seat an assistant district attorney on trial. The office also conducts a weekly lecture and field trip series to expose law students to various aspects of the criminal justice system. Not only do interns get first-hand exposure to the work of the office, they are afforded the opportunity to apply early for permanent positions.

Interns receive a stipend of \$500 per week. In the past, interns have arranged for work-study funding and public interest fellowships to offset expenses.

The deadline for applicants seeking positions in the 2011 Summer Intern Program is December 31, 2010. Most interviews will be conducted January through March at our office. Applicants are asked to bring to the interview a *writing sample*, a list of *three professional or academic references* with telephone numbers and an *official transcript*. Offers are made on a rolling basis. Most decisions are made by the end of March.

As with permanent staff, the office is committed to a policy against discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, and marital or veteran status.

*“As an assistant district attorney I gained significant trial experience. In the private sector this is a rare and valued skill.”*

Associate at large New York law firm

*“I can think of no better place to develop your judgment and your skills or to meet people of enormous talent and character. I am constantly reminded how much the Manhattan DA’s Office provided me in great experience, and even more importantly, life-long friends.”*

Executive director and legal counsel at major pharmaceutical company

During their years in the office, assistant district attorneys gain wide experience in investigative, trial, appellate, and administrative work. This experience is widely recognized as providing a solid foundation for a career in public service or the private sector. A roster of the office’s alumni reads like a “who’s who” of outstanding trial lawyers and prominent public officials, including federal judges, several Justices of the Appellate Division and numerous state trial court judges, as well as District Attorneys, federal, state, and city agency heads, elected officials, and eminent litigators in private practice. In addition, former assistant district attorneys are represented in corporate legal departments, accounting firms, financial institutions, and investigative firms.

Alumni often remark upon the great opportunities for professional growth, unusual responsibility, and constant challenge they had during their tenure in the office. Assistant district attorneys feel a sense of commitment to their work and camaraderie with each other that is rarely found in any job or profession.

To apply for an in-house interview, please send a cover letter, resume, and law school transcript to:  
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One Hogan Place  
New York, NY 10013

Our Legal Hiring staff is available to answer any question you might have about the application process. Please contact them at 212-335-9361 or see our website [www.manhattanda.org](http://www.manhattanda.org).

*“The most important aspect of public service is integrity – a commitment to do the right thing. This principle is the single most important lesson that I took from my time as an assistant district attorney.”*

Executive official at government agency

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