Advisory & Public Policy

Advisory – If you think you would enjoy working with clients to help them comply with the law, consider “attorney advisor” or “counselor” positions. For example, lawyers at the FDA are divided into “counselors” and “litigators.” The counselors work on congressional inquiries, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, rulemaking, and citizen petitions.

Some offices advise and counsel instead of litigate, like the Office of Legal Counsel and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Offices with independent litigating authority include the Department of Labor, Office of the Solicitor and the Securities Exchange Commission, Division of Enforcement.

This chart shows various divisions of the DOJ by substantive legal area of interest. It is helpful for focusing or expanding a search for work in the DOJ that may interest a lawyer or law student.

Finally, the majority of agencies have “coordinate jurisdiction” with the DOJ, meaning that DOJ attorneys initiate all lawsuits and handle any depositions and oral arguments, while the agency attorneys draft the legal papers and provide subject-matter expertise.

This US Government Organization Chart lists (with links to) executive branch agencies.

Public Policy – Individuals who want to work in public policy should look beyond “attorney” positions. Agencies such as the Department of State, the Department of Commerce and the Congressional Research Service do a lot of policy work.

The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program is an excellent entrance to federal policy-making jobs (not attorney jobs). The PMF Program is a 2 year fellowship that places over 700 graduate students (including J.D.s, 3Ls, and LL.M.s) in public policy and management positions with executive agencies. Detailed information about the application process is available at the PMF website.
Deadline: PMF accepts applications annually, and the deadline is usually in October.