



JUVENILE REGIONAL SERVICES JOB DESCRIPTION: DEFENSE INVESTIGATOR

Juvenile Regional Services, a nonprofit law office that advocates for young people in Louisiana's juvenile justice system, seeks a committed defense investigator to find and develop material that assists in the defense of JRS clients. The work of investigators is carried out mostly in the field – in private homes, in schools, in businesses, and in the street – and requires creativity, perseverance, empathy, responsibility, and excellent communication skills. Strong candidates will have a demonstrated commitment to working with indigent youth and underprivileged communities.

Organizational Overview

Juvenile Regional Services (JRS) is a nonprofit, public-interest law office that advocates for young people in Louisiana's juvenile justice system. In New Orleans, JRS is the juvenile public defender, representing most indigent youth in Orleans Parish Juvenile Court.

JRS practices holistic representation, meeting client needs both in and out of the courtroom. Each JRS client is represented by a team – an attorney, an investigator, a youth advocate, and a social worker. The team works together to help clients succeed in court, at school, and in all other aspects of their lives. Team members represent young people in court; investigate the state's claims, and develop a strong defense; help families navigate the school system to find the right fit for each child; advocate for special education services; connect clients with community-based services like trauma counseling and medication management; and arrange for young people and their families to receive benefits like housing and food stamps. This innovative, wrap-around advocacy changes lives, reduces recidivism, and improves public safety.

JRS believes that every member of the defense team is indispensable, bringing vital skills and viewpoints to the provision of effective advocacy for our clients. JRS offers a work environment that values and develops a positive culture of juvenile defense.

The mission of JRS is to provide high-quality, zealous, holistic, and client-centered advocacy for young people in the juvenile justice system in New Orleans and throughout the state of Louisiana. JRS strives to defend the rights and dignity of youth under the law; to empower youth through advocating for their expressed interests; to reduce the number of youth in confinement; and to promote the juvenile justice system's development and use of effective and genuinely rehabilitative programs. The office's vision is to be a model and a resource for high-quality juvenile defense practice in Louisiana.

Juvenile Regional Services values diversity and is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Women, people of color, people who are LGBT, and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of defense investigators include:

- Working closely with staff attorneys and other defense team members to determine the scope, timing, and direction of defense investigation;
- Identifying, locating and interviewing state and defense witnesses, and taking detailed witness statements;
- Forming and maintaining positive relationships with state and defense witnesses throughout the pretrial stages of a case;
- Building and maintaining strong relationships of trust with clients and clients' support networks;
- Reviewing and analyzing discovery, including police reports and other case documentation;
- Performing background checks;
- Examining and photographing crime scenes;
- Preparing exhibits for trial;
- Testifying in court about defense investigation;
- Locating and collecting records;
- Serving subpoenas;
- Regularly visiting clients at home and in custody;
- Supervising interns, AmeriCorps members, and other non-permanent staff;
- Assisting with client intake processes;
- Consulting with staff attorneys on investigation progress and results;
- Thoroughly documenting all work and all information gathered;
- Collaborating with other JRS staff in strategic planning and implementation, and in realizing the office's mission and vision through refinement of existing projects and new project development; and
- Other projects as directed by JRS' Executive Director.

Investigators must perform all duties in accordance with applicable law, ethical rules, and performance standards promulgated by JRS and by the Louisiana Public Defender Board.

Investigators are directly supervised by the office's managing attorney. Investigators work as members of a defense team, and in each case conduct investigation at the direction of the team's staff attorney and report their findings to that staff attorney.

Investigators will be provided with intensive training in areas including investigative techniques; applicable law; and relevant professional, ethical, and legal rules.

Required Qualifications

- Deep commitment to the defense of indigent youth and to JRS' client-centered ethic, which recognizes that all advocacy must be driven by the expressed interests of clients;
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to develop rapport with a wide range of people;
- Strong work ethic;

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- Creativity and flexibility in solving problems and meeting challenges;
- Strong analytical ability and writing skills;
- Car ownership, or daily use of a car, with a valid driver's license and insurance;
- Willingness to submit to a background check;
- Applicants must be at least 21 years of age.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience working with low-income clients and young people;
- Professional experience at engaging, and building relationships with, strangers – for instance, community organizing or canvassing;
- Experience with techniques, principles, and methods used in criminal defense investigation;
- Familiarity with the geography, history, and people of New Orleans and Louisiana;
- Understanding of relevant law and of the juvenile justice system.

Salary and Compensation

The salary range for this position is \$30,000 to \$36,000 per year, depending on experience. Vacation, parental leave, and health benefits are provided. The position is full-time, and no outside, compensated work is permitted. Depending upon case and client needs, investigators can expect to be called upon to work some nights and weekends.

How to Apply

Applicants must submit: (1) a cover letter; (2) a resume or C.V., including an e-mail address and daytime and evening telephone numbers; and (3) a list of three professional references, including the name, address, telephone number and, if available, e-mail address of each.

The position will remain open until filled with a qualified applicant.

Inquiries and applications should be directed to:

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