



JUVENILE REGIONAL SERVICES JOB DESCRIPTION: STAFF ATTORNEY

Juvenile Regional Services seeks a staff attorney to represent indigent youth in delinquency and Families in Need of Services proceedings in Orleans Parish Juvenile Court. Staff attorneys advocate zealously for youth as part of a multidisciplinary, holistic defense team. Strong candidates will have a deep commitment to the defense of indigent youth; excellent communication and problem-solving skills; strong analytical ability; and a powerful work ethic.

Organizational Overview

Juvenile Regional Services is an independent, nonprofit law office with a mission to change the lives of youth in Louisiana's juvenile justice system through high-quality, zealous, holistic, client-centered advocacy. We envision a world where every child is safe, healthy, and well-educated, and a truly rehabilitative juvenile justice system that respects the rights and dignity of every young person.

In New Orleans, JRS is the juvenile public defender, representing youth in more than 1000 delinquency and status offender cases every year. JRS has a holistic defense practice, meeting client needs both in and out of the courtroom. Each JRS client is represented by a multidisciplinary team – an attorney, an investigator, a youth advocate, and a social worker – whose members work together to help clients succeed in court, at school, and in all other aspects of their lives.

Statewide, JRS is a leader in providing resources and support to juvenile defenders and in advocating for systemic juvenile justice reform. JRS strives to defend the rights and dignity of young people; to empower clients through advocating for their expressed interests; to reduce the number of young people in confinement; and to promote the juvenile justice system's development and use of effective and rehabilitative programs.

JRS believes that the representation of youth is a specialized field requiring unique expertise and distinct skills. We practice continuous – or “vertical” – representation, with the same team of advocates representing each client throughout. We stay with our clients: Even after disposition of a case, JRS' advocates continue to work for client success on probation, early release from secure custody, and vindication on appeal. We are client-centered, advocating for the expressed interests and goals of each client. We are also community-oriented, deeply engaged in the life and health of the community of which we are a part. The office is encouraging of long-term, sustainable careers in juvenile defense. JRS values continuous training and professional development, close supervision, and accountability of staff and management alike.

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

Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of a staff attorney at JRS is to provide high-quality, zealous, client-centered legal representation for indigent youth in all stages of delinquency and Families in Need of Services proceedings, from initial appointment through post-disposition.

More specifically, a staff attorney's responsibilities include:

- *Zealous, Client-Centered Representation*
 - Advocate zealously for the expressed interests of clients;
 - Build strong relationships of trust with clients, visiting and communicating with clients regularly – including post-disposition clients held in secure custody – keeping clients informed of case developments, consulting with clients on questions of strategy, and counseling clients fully to allow them to make informed decisions about their cases;
 - Work respectfully and collaboratively with client families to achieve client goals.
- *Case Litigation*
 - Represent clients at every stage of juvenile delinquency and Families in Need of Services proceedings, advocating for client interests and goals in court appearances ranging from continued custody hearings through adjudication and revocation hearings;
 - Develop comprehensive case strategies, planning carefully and preparing thoroughly for every hearing;
 - Direct and conduct thorough fact investigation in every case;
 - Litigate legal and factual issues alike with skill and tenacity, maintaining a robust motions practice, seeking relief from appellate courts and taking advantage of expert assistance wherever appropriate;
 - Negotiate with state representatives and advocate with judges for favorable pleas and dispositions.
- *Holistic Advocacy*
 - Coordinate a team of advocates – including an investigator, youth advocate, and social worker – to develop and implement a holistic and comprehensive service plans that account for clients' legal needs alongside needs like education, mental health, and housing;
 - Communicate regularly and effectively with team members, providing direction while recognizing that every team member has a vital role to play in providing effective holistic representation to clients;
 - Whenever appropriate, advocate and litigate on behalf of clients in forums outside of the courtroom, including in expulsion hearings and special education litigation.
- *Administration and Projects*
 - Prioritize responsibilities and use resources effectively and efficiently;
 - Carefully keep electronic and paper records, case files, calendars, activity logs, case lists, and timesheets, and perform other administrative tasks as directed;
 - Supervise law clerks as appropriate;

- Collaborate 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;
- Join with other staff, and take the lead when appropriate, on systemic reform efforts;
- Assist in project evaluation and assessment;
- Other projects as directed by JRS' Executive Director.

The Staff Attorney will report to the Managing Director.

Staff attorneys, like all JRS staff, must practice law according to the highest standards of ethics and professional responsibility, and must comply with the Louisiana Rules of Professional Conduct, all regulations promulgated by the Louisiana Public Defender Board, and JRS' internal practice standards and protocols.

Staff attorneys will be provided with initial training and orientation and with ongoing professional development opportunities.

Required Qualifications

- Deep and demonstrated commitment to the defense of indigent youth as a specialized practice; to zealous, holistic, team-based, and client-centered defense; and to JRS' mission, vision, goals, and values;
- Experience working as an attorney representing indigent and underserved populations;
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to write persuasively and clearly and the ability to communicate effectively with diverse populations;
- Demonstrated ability both to collaborate closely with colleagues and also to work independently when necessary;
- Creativity and flexibility in solving problems and meeting challenges;
- Strong work ethic;
- Current good standing to practice law in Louisiana;
- Willingness to submit to a background check.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience as a public defender, and in particular as an attorney representing youth in delinquency and status offender proceedings;
- Knowledge of substantive and procedural criminal law and trial practice skills;
- Familiarity with the geography, history, and people of New Orleans and Louisiana;
- Experience working with teammates – and, in particular, social workers and investigators – in a multi-disciplinary defense practice;
- Expertise in special education law, adolescent psychology, and other areas of knowledge important for effective advocacy on behalf of youth in juvenile court.

Salary and Compensation

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

The position offers a competitive public defender salary, commensurate with experience. Health benefits, vacation, parental leave, and bar dues are provided. The position is full-time. No outside, compensated work is permitted.

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; (3) a writing sample; and (4) a list of three professional references, including the name, address, telephone number and, if available, e-mail address of each.

Applications should be sent to:

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Emailed applications are preferred. Please do not call with inquiries.