

# Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania

## CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT

### ASSISTANT FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER

Posted: March 1, 2024

Closes: Open until filled

Position Announcement # 2024-05

The Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania is accepting applications for the position of **Assistant Federal Public Defender** in its Capital Habeas Unit (CHU). The CHU represents death-sentenced prisoners in federal habeas corpus proceedings in the United States District Court, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and the United States Supreme Court. This is a full-time position located in Pittsburgh. Once hired, the applicant will have the option to work from home two days per week at the discretion of the Defender.

**Job Description.** The successful applicant must be team-oriented and possess a strong writing ability, a demonstrated commitment to poverty law or indigent criminal defense, and litigation experience in at least one of the following areas: criminal defense, especially in capital cases; habeas corpus litigation; or complex federal court civil litigation. Capital post-conviction experience is preferred. A background in any area of mental health and/or social work is also helpful. This position requires travel.

The responsibilities of an Assistant Federal Public Defender in the CHU include:

- working collaboratively with a team of other lawyers, investigators, and paralegals;
- serving as a team leader or co-counsel on cases in various stages of litigation;
- building long-term rapport with clients, including clients with severe mental illnesses and intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- directing fact and mitigation investigation;

- identifying and developing legal claims;
- bringing a creative and committed approach to research and writing in order to address the historical significance of capital punishment and its ongoing relationship to race and slavery;
- advocating in court hearings and oral arguments; and
- helping develop creative narratives and video productions for clemency.

The successful applicant must also be a graduate from an accredited law school and a member in good standing of a state bar and have an established capacity or clearly demonstrated aptitude for excellence in criminal defense practice, a commitment to the representation of indigent accused persons, and a reputation for personal and professional integrity. Applicants must also possess the ability to communicate effectively with clients, witnesses, colleagues, staff, court and agency personnel as part of their employment. The ability to manage a substantial caseload, travel and work flexible hours are essential for the position, as are effective organizational skills and the ability to work in a team environment. Federal Public Defender attorneys may not engage in the private practice of law. The successful candidate will be subject to a general background check and IRS tax check procedure as a condition of employment.

**Salary and Benefits.** This is a full-time position. Salary is based on federal pay schedules and is commensurate with experience. Benefits include health, supplemental dental/vision benefits, and life insurance, as well as 11 paid federal holidays, 13 days of paid sick leave, and 13 days of paid vacation leave annually. (The rate of paid vacation leave increases to 20 days after three years and 26 days after 15 years.) FPD staff can opt to participate in pre-tax Health, Dependent Care, and Commuter Reimbursement programs. The position is covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), including the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), which matches up to 5% of employee contributions, up to a cap. Salary is paid every other week and is subject to mandatory direct deposit.

**Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.** Our office values diversity, is committed to equity and inclusion, and aspires to create a culture of mutual respect, collaboration, openness, and humility that honors the people we represent. We believe representation is better when members

of the defense team have diverse backgrounds and experiences. We seek a lawyer who shares this belief and commitment. We embrace the unique contributions our employees can bring to the FPD because of their backgrounds, social identities, and lived experiences. We are interested in applicants' talent, intelligence, dedication, and persistence, and desire to see that all people are treated fairly and respectfully. The FPD seeks applications from a diverse group of qualified individuals in terms of race, ethnicity, nation of origin, culture, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual identity, education, opinions, age, languages spoken, veteran status, disability, religion, and socioeconomic circumstance. We especially encourage applications from members of the BIPOC community, people affected by the criminal legal system, and people from other underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.

**Application Information.** Qualified persons should submit a letter of interest, a current and detailed resume and a writing sample in **one** Adobe Acrobat document to Lisa Freeland, Federal Public Defender, via email to: [paw\\_employment@fd.org](mailto:paw_employment@fd.org), **using the subject line "2024-05."**

This Office is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

One or more positions may be filled from this announcement.  
Only those applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.

**No telephone calls please.**