

**FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER  
MIDDLE and WESTERN DISTRICTS OF LOUISIANA  
LAFAYETTE OFFICE  
102 Versailles Boulevard, Suite 816  
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Shreveport Office Supervisory AFPD

**POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT  
Research and Writing Specialist**

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Middle and Western Districts of Louisiana is accepting applications for the full-time position of Research and Writing Specialist to serve the Middle and Western Districts of Louisiana. The Office of the Federal Public Defender operates under the authority of the Criminal Justice Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A, to provide court-appointed defense services in federal criminal and habeas cases to individuals unable to afford counsel.

**Requirements.** A Research and Writing Specialist (R&W) is an attorney position. Applicants must be: (1) a graduate of an accredited law school and admitted to practice and in good standing before the highest court of a State; (2) licensed to practice in the U.S. District Courts for the Middle and Western Districts of Louisiana and the U.S. Fifth Circuit by the time of entrance on duty; and (3) licensed to practice law in the State of Louisiana, or must become so licensed at the earliest opportunity after entrance on duty. Appointment is subject to a satisfactory FBI fingerprint check.

**Duties.** The focus of this position is to assist in the representation of Federal Public Defender Office (FPDO) clients in capital federal habeas cases arising under 28 U.S.C. Sections 2254 and 2255, as well as in federal direct death prosecutions. This assistance will include the research and drafting of: capital habeas petitions, motions related to capital habeas and direct death litigation in the district courts, and capital habeas and direct death appellate briefing. The R&W attorney in this position will also assist death penalty mitigation investigation and development, including regularly communicating with clients and client family and working closely with investigative, mitigation, mental health and other experts and members of the defense team and engaging in supervision of field work supporting fact and mitigation investigation and records collection. In addition to the primary death penalty work, the R&W attorney in this position may be required to assist, as needed, in the legal research and drafting of appellate briefing in non-capital appeals and in the legal research and briefing in non-capital habeas cases. The R&W attorney also will assist in the ongoing analysis of capital habeas and direct death legal and statutory developments and will assist in the liaison with Criminal Justice Act panel attorneys representing capital petitioners in the district. The position requires significant travel, including to visit clients who may be housed within and outside Louisiana, including at Death Row at Louisiana State Prison at Angola, Federal Death Row in Terre Haute, Indiana and the Federal Maximum Security Prison (ADMAX) in Florence, Colorado, and requires that the applicant have a valid drivers license. A R&W attorney may sign pleadings and make court appearances only under the exceptional circumstances as set forth in applicable FPD and judicial policy.

**Selection Criteria.** It is preferred that the applicant have at least 7 years of experience in capital defense work, with an emphasis on capital habeas corpus experience in the federal courts. Given the duties of the position, the applicant must also have the ability to analyze complex legal records and issues; perform

detailed and complex legal research; and draft motions, memoranda, briefs, appeals and petitions for writs of certiorari. Additionally, the applicant must have a clearly demonstrated aptitude for excellence in capital criminal defense practice and advocacy; a demonstrated commitment to the representation of indigent accused persons; a reputation for personal and professional integrity; strong legal research, word processing/computer, legal analysis and writing skills; an established capacity to communicate effectively with clients, family members, experts of all kinds, witnesses, colleagues, office staff and court personnel; an established capacity to complete assignments timely; and an established capacity to work both independently and collaboratively.

**Salary, Benefits and Other Conditions of Employment.** The position is a full-time position with federal benefits and salary commensurate with experience and qualifications. The position ranges in grade from JSP-9 (at least two years of specialized experience, plus three years of general experience), with a starting salary of \$51,332 per annum at the JSP-9, Step 1 level, to JSP-15 (at least 7 years of specialized experience, plus three years of general experience), with a starting salary of \$123,041 per annum at the JSP-15, Step 1 level. Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit). Benefits include health and basic life insurance, retirement, which vests upon five years of creditable civilian service, and a Thrift Savings Plan, which the employee is automatically enrolled in. Employees of the Federal Public Defender Office are members of the federal judicial branch of government and are considered “at will” and not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act. This position does not allow for the private practice of law.

**Location.** The position serves the Middle and Western Districts of Louisiana and, thus, may be designated as based in any one of the three FPD offices (Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Shreveport) in the districts. The FPD may authorize remote work/telework for a highly qualified candidate, provided that routine travel will be required to a designated FPD office to attend regularly scheduled office and case-related meetings.

**How to Apply.** Qualified persons must apply by forwarding a letter of interest, resume, and references to Rebecca L. Hudsmith, Federal Public Defender, at [Rebecca.Hudsmith@fd.org](mailto:Rebecca.Hudsmith@fd.org). The position will remain open until filled, or the announcement is closed, and is contingent on the availability of federal funding. Multiple vacancies may be filled through this announcement. Applications received by **July 15, 2024**, will receive priority consideration. Only those granted an interview will be contacted.

*The Office of the Federal Public Defender is an equal opportunity employer.*