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lakidsrights.org

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE TEAM STAFF ATTORNEY

The Louisiana Center for Children's Rights (LCCR) seeks a staff attorney for its Children's Defense Team, which provides holistic legal representation for children in delinquency and status offender proceedings as the juvenile public defender in New Orleans. Staff attorneys coordinate teams of investigators, social workers, and case managers to help New Orleans' young people achieve their legal and life goals. Strong candidates will have a deep and demonstrated commitment to the defense of indigent youth; excellent communications, analytical, and problem-solving skills; proven ability to work collaboratively with a team of colleagues; and a strong work ethic.

The position is based in New Orleans. Currently, however, due to Covid-19 much of the work we do is remote. Most court hearings are held via Zoom, but adjudications are in-person.

Organizational Overview

The Louisiana Center for Children's Rights (LCCR) is a non-profit law office that fights to keep children out of the justice system so they can thrive in their homes and communities. We both represent individual children in their court cases and address the systemic issues that trap mainly poor, Black youth in the justice system.

Juvenile Defense: As the juvenile public defender in New Orleans, our Children's Defense Team represents over 90% of children in the city who come into contact with the juvenile justice system. We provide each child with a holistic team – a lawyer, social worker, investigator, and youth advocate – to address both the causes and consequences of an arrest.

Juvenile Life Without Parole: We represent the majority of Louisianans who are facing or serving life without parole sentences for crimes they committed as children, which the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled unconstitutional in all but the rarest cases. We know that children can and do change for the better, so we fight for their second chance.

State and Local Advocacy: We advocate for policies that reduce the number of children in the justice system and provide better alternatives to arrest and incarceration. For the kids who do enter the system, we support policies that keep them safe, protect their rights, and get them home as soon as possible.

Position Responsibilities

The staff attorney's primary responsibility is to provide high-quality, zealous, client-directed legal representation to children in all stages of delinquency and status offender proceedings in Orleans Parish Juvenile Court.

Specifically, the staff attorney's responsibilities include:

Zealous, Client-Centered Representation

- Advocate zealously for the expressed interests of clients and allow their expressed interest to guide advocacy on the client's behalf;
- Represent clients in line with the rules of professional responsibility, especially ethical standards related to confidentiality, diligence, and communication;
- Build strong relationships of trust with clients, visiting and communicating with clients regularly, 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;
- Communicate with clients in a respectful manner and treat them with dignity and respect;
- Work respectfully and collaboratively with client families to achieve client goals;
- Buy-in and support for the organization's mission to ensure that children receive the support they need in their communities.

Litigation

- Represent children continuously throughout 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, including a working theory of the case, from the very beginning of representation, planning carefully and preparing thoroughly for every proceeding;
- Coordinate 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;
- Pursue creative and innovative litigation strategies on behalf of clients to consistently push forward the practice at the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court;
- Participate in office trainings and other trainings to continue enhancing litigation skill set;
- Negotiate with state representatives and advocate with judges for favorable outcomes.

Holistic Advocacy

- Coordinate a team of advocates – including an investigator, a case manager, and a social worker – to implement holistic and comprehensive advocacy plans designed to help clients achieve their legal and life goals;
- Bring a collaborative spirit to the work and hold regular meetings with the client advocacy team;
- Communicate regularly, respectfully, and effectively with team members, providing direction where appropriate while recognizing that every team member has a vital role to play in effective advocacy for 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

- Complete necessary administrative tasks for the efficient management and operation of the organization.

Required Qualifications

- A commitment to advancing racial justice and reducing the harm the justice system does to Black children.
- Previous juvenile defense experience and/or experience working with children.
- 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 LCCR's mission, vision, goals, and values;
- At least two years of professional 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 and willingness to travel and to work late hours and/or weekends when circumstances demand it;
- A J.D. with current good standing to practice law in Louisiana.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience as a practicing public defender;
- Knowledge of substantive and procedural juvenile and criminal law and trial practice skills;
- Expertise in special education law, adolescent psychology, and other areas of knowledge important for effective advocacy on behalf of youth in juvenile court;
- Familiarity with the geography, history, and people of New Orleans and Louisiana

Salary and Compensation

The position offers a salary of \$45,000-\$69,000 depending on years of experience and based on an established pay scale. LCCR offers employee benefits that include generous paid time off and health insurance. The position is full-time, and no other compensated work is permitted.

To Apply

Please provide a resume, three professional references, and a cover letter explaining your interest in the position to jobs@lakidsrights.org. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis and the position will remain open until filled.

LCCR values diversity and is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. People of color, women, LGBT persons, people with disabilities, and those directly impacted by the justice system are encouraged to apply for all positions.