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JOB DESCRIPTION: Regional Mitigation Specialist

The Louisiana Center for Children's Rights (LCCR) is seeking a mitigation specialist to serve as critical members of LCCR's *Miller* defense teams. The *Miller* Mitigation Specialists will work as members of defense teams for children and adults convicted as children who face life without parole (LWOP) sentences in pretrial, sentencing and re-sentencing litigation.

This is an opportunity for highly motivated individuals to play an integral role in the development of best practices for defense teams working with children who face LWOP sentences in Louisiana. Strong candidates will have significant investigative and/or mitigation investigation experience; familiarity with comprehensive biopsychosocial histories; substantive knowledge of adolescent development and the jurisprudence surrounding children in the adult justice system; familiarity with mental health issues; a demonstrated commitment to juvenile justice and criminal justice reform; and the ability to communicate effectively with a range of people.

LCCR places a high value on diversity in our workplace. Formerly incarcerated individuals, people of color, women, LGBT persons, and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

Summary of Work

The Louisiana Center for Children's Rights is a statewide, non-profit advocacy organization focused on reform of the juvenile justice system in Louisiana. LCCR is the juvenile public defender for children arrested and prosecuted in New Orleans. Statewide, LCCR works to promote and protect the rights of all children in Louisiana's juvenile and adult justice systems both through the direct representation of children in the adult system and through educating system actors on the developmental differences between children and adults.

Prior to reforms passed in 2017, Louisiana was home to the nation's highest per capita rate of juvenile LWOP sentences. Every year, dozens of Louisiana children are arrested and charged as adults for offenses carrying the possibility of life without parole.

In 2012, the United States Supreme Court handed down *Miller v. Alabama*, which held that mandatory LWOP sentences for children under the age of 18 violate the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment. *Miller* required that courts conduct individualized sentencing hearings that take into account the child's individual character, life circumstances, and other mitigating factors. *Miller* also held that LWOP sentences were only permissible for the rare and uncommon child.

The Louisiana Center for Children's Rights values diversity and is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Women, people of color, LGBT persons, and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

Unfortunately, LWOP for children who face those sentences remains the norm in Louisiana rather than the exception. District Attorneys are seeking to re-impose the sentence in one-third of all cases where children received LWOP prior to *Miller*, and they continue to seek the sentence in numerous new cases across the state.

Through a new contract with the Louisiana Public Defender Board, LCCR will now represent all indigent children and adults convicted as children who face life without parole sentences. LCCR's attorneys and mitigation specialists will provide client-centered, zealous and high quality defense services in all cases under the supervision and guidance of the Legal Director. LCCR's model of representation relies on statewide performance standards as well as the best practices from around the country.

Position Responsibilities

The *Miller* Mitigation Specialist will be responsible for the investigation and development of competent, thorough and quality mitigation in accordance with statewide performance standards, the American Bar Association Guidelines and national best practices.

The Mitigation Specialist's specific responsibilities will include:

Mitigation Investigation

- Develop and prepare comprehensive, competent and reliable biopsychosocial histories for each client;
- Statewide travel required to conduct client interviews;
- Locate and interview potential witnesses with relevant information about the client's life, family, community, medical history and mental health;
- Locate and retrieve records, documents and other evidence pertaining to the client's life, family, community, medical history and mental health;
- Identify and work with experts in consultation and/or as potential witnesses;
- Identify, investigate and develop mitigating evidence;
- Identify, investigate and mitigate potential aggravating factors;
- Investigate the underlying facts of the crime where appropriate;
- Maintain thorough and accurate records;
- Synthesize information from interviews, records and documents for the defense team;
- Work closely with the defense team to develop a unified theory and strategy for each case.

Other Administrative and Program Responsibilities

- 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 interns as appropriate;
- Other projects as directed by the *Miller* Mitigation Supervisor.

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

Reporting Relationships

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The *Miller* Mitigation Specialist will report directly to the *Miller* Mitigation Supervisor. The persons in this position will be expected to work effectively within the defense team and with clients.

Qualifications

- A Bachelor's Degree.
- Ideally a native or long-term resident of Louisiana who currently resides in the greater New Orleans area.
- Prior experience with the investigation and development of defense mitigation, the development and preparation of biopsychosocial histories, and/or social work or mental health experience is preferred but not required.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills, the ability to work well in a team-based, client-centered approach, and the ability to communicate effectively with diverse populations;
Computer skills, including the use of automated investigative tools and technology;
- Strong work ethic, ability to work independently within a team, and willingness to work late hours and/or weekends when circumstances demand it;

Daily use of a car, with a valid driver's license and insurance, and the ability to travel regularly throughout Louisiana.

Salary and Compensation

The salary for this position is commensurate with experience and competitive in the field of public interest. Vacation, parental leave, and health benefits are provided. The position is full-time, and no other compensated work is permitted.

Application Instructions

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

All submissions must be made via email to jobs@lakidsrights.org. Please place "Miller Mitigation Specialist" in the subject line of emailed submissions. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Please do not call with inquiries.

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis so interested applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. The position will remain open until December 31, 2021.

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