The Federal Community Defender Office (FCDO) for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania is seeking candidates with litigation experience and excellent analytic, research, and writing skills to fill the position of Research & Writing Specialist. The position will focus principally on cases in which the government is seeking, or may seek, the death penalty. Our office is located in Philadelphia’s vibrant Center City district, in newly renovated office space in the historic Curtis Center in Philadelphia, close to the federal courthouse and across from Independence Mall, the Liberty Bell and Washington Square Park.

The Trial Unit represents indigent defendants in federal cases from inception through appeal and witnesses in grand jury proceedings. The Unit has an active capital case practice. The FCDO uses a collaborative, team-based approach for capital cases, and those who are assigned work closely with one another and with members of the Office’s other practice groups (including the Trial, Appeals, and Capital Habeas Units) to provide the highest level of legal representation to its clients.

The Research and Writing Specialist is an attorney who provides advanced legal research and writing services to staff attorneys working on capital trial and appellate cases. The Specialist remains current with developments in criminal law and procedure; writes pre-trial and post-trial motions, briefs, possible petitions for certiorari, and legal memoranda; analyzes discovery materials; examines, analyzes, and researches complex legal records and issues in preparation for trial; performs legal research; and generally consults with and assists attorney staff with all aspects of case development and trial preparation. As the Specialist position supports the position of Assistant Federal Defender and is not intended to serve as a substitute or replacement for an Assistant Federal Defender position, the Specialist does not sign pleadings, ordinarily does not make court appearances and is not attorney of record.
Candidates for this position must possess a law degree and be a member of a state Bar. Eligibility for admission to the Pennsylvania Bar or willingness to sit for the next bar exam is required. Admission and good standing before the federal bar is required. Candidates ideally will have at least two years of litigation experience and/or experience with litigation practices through a judicial clerkship. Candidates must possess a solid understanding of criminal law, criminal procedures, and evidence; have outstanding legal research and writing skills; be able to analyze complex legal issues; and be proficient with computer assisted legal research. Experience in federal criminal practice, with a demonstrated working knowledge of federal criminal law, sentencing, and procedure, is preferred. Familiarity with Eighth Amendment jurisprudence and capital case practice is preferred. Candidates also must be able to work collaboratively within a team setting and communicate effectively with clients, colleagues, staff, government, and court personnel. Candidates must have a commitment to the representation of the indigent. Experience with Word is required; familiarity with CaseMap, Trial Director and PowerPoint, or a willingness to learn such trial technology, is required. An ability and willingness to travel as needed is essential. Fluency in the Spanish language is highly desirable.

Although the position will focus principally on capital trial cases, occasional assignment to assist with non-capital Trial Unit matters should be anticipated. Salary will be based upon experience consistent with federal guidelines and regulations. Kindly note that the filling of this position will be subject to the funding restrictions and approval of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter, resume, and writing sample to Tracey Baez via e-mail at EmploymentPAE@fd.org, or by regular mail to Suite 540 West, The Curtis Center, 601 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106. Candidates will be interviewed on an ongoing basis, and the position will remain open, until filled.

The Federal Community Defender Office is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All interested and qualified applicants are encouraged to apply.