

Job Announcement

Executive Director, Federal Defenders of New York

Background

Federal Defenders of New York, Inc. (FDNY) is a not-for-profit organization incorporated in 2005 and governed by its Board of Directors. It is funded by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. FDNY is the successor to the Federal Defender Division of the Legal Aid Society of New York. FDNY represents people who cannot otherwise afford counsel in criminal matters in the Southern District of New York (comprising Manhattan, Bronx, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Orange, Dutchess, and Sullivan counties), the Eastern District of New York (comprising Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Nassau, and Suffolk counties), and Appeals for the Second Circuit.

FDNY's mission is straightforward: to provide the highest quality service, both legal and non-legal, for our clients in their federal criminal cases. We take a broad view of our work. We listen to our clients, pay close attention to their individual needs, and work closely with them to address their needs.

Position

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director of the Federal Defenders of New York (FDNY) plays a pivotal role in upholding the mission and vision of the organization. As the driving force behind the FDNY, the Executive Director is entrusted with multifaceted responsibilities ranging from strategic organizational leadership to day-to-day management, and from stakeholder engagement to legislative advocacy. The individual in this role must harness a deep understanding of the legal landscape, paired with an innate ability to navigate the complexities of both internal operations and external interactions. With a commitment to continuous improvement and a passion for justice, the Executive Director is positioned not only to lead but to inspire and shape the future direction of the FDNY. The following is a detailed outline of the specific duties and responsibilities associated with this position.

Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership & Vision

- Supervise and oversee the administrative work, ensuring development and compliance with office policies and procedures.
- Administer the budget, collaborate with the Administrative Office (AO) of the United States Courts, and communicate with the Defender Services Office (the unit of the AO that distributes and manages FDNY's budget) regarding budget management and staffing decisions.
- Assure compliance with federal grant conditions and New York law.
- Directly supervise attorneys and staff in their roles, including strategy discussions, ethics issues, and client representation.
- Provide direct representation of clients in federal criminal cases.
- Lead the hiring process for attorneys, investigators, social workers, and key administrative roles, emphasizing diversity and inclusion.
- Allocate resources judiciously, considering the dynamic needs of the office.
- Address human resource matters, including disciplinary actions and potential litigations.
- Handle union matters, contract negotiations, and address arising issues.
- Facilitate effective communication throughout the office, ensuring clarity and transparency on various matters.
- Champion ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

Local Representation & Advocacy

- Oversee the management of the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Panel, including selecting attorneys, addressing arising issues, and training programs.
- Engage with Southern District of New York, Eastern District of New York, and Second Circuit Judges through various formal and informal interactions, serving on committees and addressing concerns.
- Liaise regularly with the United States Attorney's Offices to discuss policies, procedures, and case-specific issues.
- Collaborate with the Administrative Office of the US Courts on budgeting, audits, and reporting.
- Serve on the Magistrate Judge Selection Committee for reappointments and new appointments.
- Represent the Federal Defenders of New York at speaking engagements, media inquiries, and discussions about the organization's work.

National & Legislative Engagement

- Participate in national defender committees, providing insights and driving strategic objectives.
- Engage in national training programs, sharing knowledge and ensuring continuous learning.
- Interact with private defense organizations, such as National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL), Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and similar organizations to drive aligned policy initiatives.
- Produce writings on pertinent topics related to Federal Defenders of New York's work, including op-eds, journals, and law reviews.

Essential Qualifications

Education & Experience

- Minimum of 10+ years of experience as a criminal defense lawyer.
- Demonstrated proficiency in federal criminal defense and knowledge of federal criminal appellate and post-conviction practice.
- Licensed to practice law in at least one of the fifty states or the District of Columbia, with preference given to members of the New York Bar or those eligible for admission within one year of appointment as Executive Director.
- Strong familiarity with the federal defense organization regulatory environment.
- Exceptional communication, public speaking, and media relations skills.
- Solid relationship-building capabilities, with the aptitude to collaborate effectively with internal and external stakeholders.
- Prior supervisory or management experience desirable, but not required, preferably within a public defender organization or its equivalent.
- Ability to supervise attorneys and other staff, fostering an effective and supportive work environment.
- Deep commitment to leading by example, with a genuine passion for federal defense work and a steadfast dedication to the mission of defender services.
- Recognizes and values the significance of diversity within a public defender office and criminal law practice and has experience collaborating with individuals from diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

Compensation

Total Compensation: Approximately \$184,000 per year. The following benefits are included in total compensation:

- Generous medical, dental, and vision benefits
- Up to five weeks paid vacation
- Life & long-term disability insurance
- Employer contributions to 403(b) retirement plan
- Annual holiday schedule, with 11 paid holidays annually

Work Environment

FDNY employees are expected to work on site, not from home, four days a week. At times, there may be significant reasons why they may need to work from home (e.g., a compelling deadline). These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with a focus on balancing the needs of the employee and FDNY, while giving consideration to fairness and consistency across the organization.

Equal Employment Opportunity Statement

Federal Defenders of NY is an Equal Opportunity Employer that does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, age, sex or gender (including pregnancy, childbirth and pregnancy-related conditions), gender identity or expression (including transgender status), sexual orientation, marital status, military service and veteran status, physical or mental disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws and ordinances. Federal Defenders of NY's management team is dedicated to this policy with respect to recruitment, hiring, placement, promotion, transfer, training, compensation, benefits, employee activities, access to facilities and programs, and general treatment during employment.

Federal Defenders of NY will endeavor to make a reasonable accommodation of an otherwise qualified applicant related to an individual's physical or mental disability; sincerely held religious beliefs and practices; and/or any other reason required by applicable law, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship upon the organization's business operations.

Any applicant who needs accommodation(s) in order to apply for the job should contact FDNY to request accommodation(s). The individual should specify what accommodation is needed to apply for the job and submit supporting documentation explaining the basis for the requested accommodation, to the extent permitted and in accordance with applicable law. The organization then will review and analyze the request, including engaging in an interactive process with the applicant, to identify if such an accommodation can be made. The organization will evaluate requested accommodations, and as appropriate, identify other possible accommodations, if any. The individual will be notified of the organization's decision regarding the request within a reasonable period. FDNY treats all medical information submitted as part of the accommodation process in a confidential manner.

Executive Director, Federal Defenders of New York
Salary: approximately \$184,000
Location: New York, NY

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the hiring process and timeline?

The Board of Directors for the Federal Defenders of New York hires the Executive Director. Applicants should send a resume and cover letter, addressed to the Board, to FDNYEDSearch@gmail.com. Applicants will be notified whether they will be selected for an interview, or advanced to the next round, within 4 weeks of their application or their most recent interview.¹

What is the interview format?

Candidates under consideration may undergo several rounds of interviews, with initial interviews conducted by Zoom. Finalist interviews will be conducted in person; all finalists will be notified as soon as possible to support travel arrangements. Interviews will be conducted by a range of constituencies, including but not limited to members of the search committee, comprised of members of the Board of Directors, as well as additional stakeholders from across the organization.

Who should I contact with questions?

Bobbi Sternheim, a member of the Board of Directors, can be reached for questions at bcsternheim@mac.com.

How can I request accommodations?

Please contact Bobbi Sternheim to request an accommodation.

¹ This is the tentative hiring timeline and timelines may occasionally change or need to be modified. If this happens, FDNY will update candidates.