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WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

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INVESTIGATOR / MITIGATION SPECIALIST (FEDERAL CAPITAL CASE)

Position: Investigator / Mitigation Specialist

Location: Remote (U.S.)

Application Deadline: Oct. 15, 2026 (or until filled)

Posted: October 2, 2026

Full-Time Salary Range: \$77,211 - \$169,060

Office Website: <https://paw.fd.org/>

The Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania is accepting applications for the position of **Investigator/Mitigation Specialist** to join the defense team in a federal capital case. **This position is fully remote, and candidates may reside anywhere in the United States. It is open to full-time or part-time work.** This is a term appointment expected to last for the duration of the capital case.

The Investigator/Mitigation Specialist is a core member of the capital defense team and works under the direction of learned counsel to conduct the fact and mitigation investigation required in a federal death-penalty prosecution. The Investigator/Mitigation Specialist develops a comprehensive, multigenerational social history of the client; locates and interviews family members, lay witnesses, and fact witnesses; identifies, collects, and analyzes records from every institution that has touched the client's life; identifies and works with mental health and other experts; reviews discovery and develops theories of defense and mitigation; visits crime scenes; assists in preparation for pretrial litigation, trial, and the penalty phase; and testifies in court when required. The successful candidate will be expected to perform this work consistent with the ABA Guidelines for the Appointment and Performance of Defense Counsel in Death Penalty Cases and the Supplementary Guidelines for the Mitigation Function of Defense Teams in Death Penalty Cases. The Investigator/Mitigation Specialist must be able to establish trusting relationships with the client and the client's family, maintain good working relationships with individuals and agencies (including detention facilities), provide clear oral and written reports, and use technology including case-management software, cameras, and other equipment. **A strong preference will be given to candidates with prior federal capital trial experience and demonstrated expertise in both fact and mitigation investigation.** Proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese is preferred but not required.

About Us:

The Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Pennsylvania provides legal representation to persons financially unable to retain counsel in federal criminal and

related proceedings. We handle federal trials, direct appeals to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, petitions for writ of certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court, habeas corpus petitions, and related proceedings on behalf of our clients. Representation includes counsel and investigative, expert and other services, as necessary to meet the demands of the case and the needs of the client.

Our office includes the Federal Public Defender and attorneys known as Assistant Federal Public Defenders. In addition to our attorneys, we have a group of talented administrative staff, paralegals, investigators, social workers, and information technology experts.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Investigator/Mitigation Specialist:

- Conducts a thorough, independent, and multigenerational social history investigation of the client, including in-person interviews with the client, family members, and other lay witnesses, in order to identify and document mitigating evidence for the penalty phase and for use in plea negotiation.
- Identifies, requests, obtains, organizes, and analyzes all records relevant to the client's life history, including medical, mental health, educational, employment, military, social services, juvenile, correctional, and court records. Prepares releases, subpoenas, and records requests, and tracks their status.
- Reviews and analyzes discovery and other case documentation. Assists counsel in determining the scope, timing, and direction of both the guilt-phase and penalty-phase investigation. Initiates new areas of investigation.
- Locates and interviews prosecution, defense, and expert witnesses; evaluates witnesses and discusses their relevance and credibility with counsel. Prepares detailed memoranda of interviews.
- Identifies appropriate mental health, medical, and other experts; provides experts with records and social history information; coordinates evaluations; and clarifies the focus of the issues to be addressed by each expert.
- Prepares written social history summaries, chronologies, genograms, and other mitigation work product, and assists counsel in developing the mitigation theory and the presentation of penalty-phase evidence.
- Assists counsel in preparing the mitigation submission to the Department of Justice Capital Case Section and in preparing for pretrial litigation, jury selection, trial, and any sentencing proceeding.
- Locates, views, and retrieves tangible evidence and other relevant material; photographs, measures, and documents scenes and evidence as needed; verifies information obtained to establish the accuracy and authenticity of facts and evidence.
- Assists counsel at hearings and trial by evaluating testimony, coordinating witnesses and documents, serving subpoenas, and notifying defense witnesses of court appearances. Testifies in court when required.

- Maintains confidential, well-organized case files using case-management, database, and document-review software, and assists in developing demonstrative evidence for use in court.
- Maintains regular, reliable communication with the defense team while working remotely, including participation in scheduled team meetings and timely written reporting of investigative findings.

Attributes of the Ideal Candidate:

- Has substantial experience conducting fact and mitigation investigations in capital cases, ideally including at least one federal capital trial.
- Is comfortable working both independently in a remote setting and collaboratively as part of a multidisciplinary defense team.
- Thinks strategically and proactively, especially when resources and time are limited.
- Brings cultural humility, strong interpersonal skills, patience, and the ability to build trust with clients and families who have experienced trauma, poverty, mental illness, addiction, and involvement with the criminal legal system.
- Exercises sound professional judgment and strict discretion with highly sensitive and confidential information.
- Believes deeply in the work of public defense and in the dignity of every client.

Qualifications:

An applicant must be a high school graduate or equivalent; a bachelor's or graduate degree in social work, psychology, sociology, criminal justice, or a related field is preferred but not required. Prior experience developing and analyzing mitigation evidence in capital proceedings is strongly preferred, as is experience with trauma-informed interviewing, social history development, and records analysis. A variety of experience, including in non-legal fields and/or social work, paralegal, or legal assistant training, would be helpful. The ability to read, write, and speak fluently in the Spanish or Portuguese language is preferred but not required.

This position requires considerable initiative, resourcefulness, creativity, and drive; excellent writing skills; computer proficiency; the ability to communicate and work well with others; and a commitment to obtaining justice for indigent persons. The successful applicant can analyze and evaluate facts, evidence, and related information, and can manage a demanding caseload-driven schedule independently from a remote location. Because this is a remote position, applicants must have a suitable, private workspace and reliable high-speed internet access; the office will provide necessary computer equipment and secure access to office systems.

This position requires regular travel for team meetings, client visits, and court proceedings, and to wherever the client's family members, witnesses, and records are located. Applicants must have a valid driver's license. Travel expenses are reimbursed in accordance with federal judiciary travel regulations.

The Investigator/Mitigation Specialist is an essential part of providing equal justice to individuals facing the ultimate penalty who are unable to afford counsel. The ideal candidate brings strong initiative, sound judgment, discretion, and a deep commitment to client-centered advocacy.

Benefits:

This position may be filled on a full-time or part-time basis. Full-time employees receive a comprehensive benefits package that includes the following; part-time employees working a regular schedule of at least 16 hours per week are generally eligible for the same benefits on a prorated basis:

- Generous Health/Vision/Dental/Life Insurance Coverage
- Dependent and Long-term Care Insurance Programs
- Flexible Spending Accounts
- Earned paid time off, including paid sick leave
- 11 Paid Federal Holidays
- Up to 12 weeks of Paid Parental Leave
- Mandatory participation in the Federal Employees Retirement System
- Optional participation in the Thrift Savings Plan retirement account with up to 5% agency matching contributions
- Eligibility for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)
- Employee Assistance Program (confidential counseling and assistance)
- Credit for prior federal service

Accessibility:

We are committed to an inclusive and accessible application process. If you need an accommodation due to a disability during any stage of the application or interview process, please contact Joe Pisciotta at Joseph_Pisciotta@FD.org. If hired, we are dedicated to providing reasonable accommodations to support your success and ensure equal access to opportunities in the workplace.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion:

Our office values diversity, is committed to equity and inclusion, and aspires to create a culture of mutual respect, collaboration, openness, and humility that honors the people we represent. We believe representation is better when members of the defense team have diverse backgrounds and experiences. We seek an individual who shares this belief and commitment. We embrace the unique contributions our employees can bring to the Federal Public Defender because of their backgrounds, social identities, and lived experiences. We are interested in applicants' talent, intelligence, dedication, persistence, and desire to see that all people are treated fairly and respectfully. The Federal Public Defender seeks applications from a diverse group of qualified individuals in terms of race, ethnicity, nation of origin, culture, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual identity, education, opinions, age, languages spoken, veteran status, disability,

religion, and socioeconomic circumstance. We especially encourage applications from members of the BIPOC community, people affected by the criminal legal system, and people from other underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.

Application Process:

Interested applicants are invited to apply by submitting a single pdf document that includes a cover letter, resume, and a writing sample (preferably a redacted social history summary, interview memorandum, or other mitigation work product) via email to the attention of: Elisa A. Long, Federal Public Defender, paw_employment@fd.org, Subject: **2026-15**. Please indicate in your cover letter whether you are seeking full-time or part-time work and describe your prior capital and mitigation experience.

One or more positions may be filled from this posting. Hiring for this position is dependent on the availability of funds. The selected candidate will be subject to a background check. This office is an equal opportunity employer.