

OFFICE OF THE
FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

Chief Federal Defender
Dumaka Shabazz

164 Rosa L. Parks Blvd. Nashville, TN 37203 615-736-5047

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT No. 2026-07

Position: Research & Writing Attorney – Capital Habeas Unit – Nashville, Tennessee
Application Deadline: Open until filled, preference given to those applying by
August 1, 2026.

The Federal Public Defender for the Middle District of Tennessee is accepting applications for a full-time Research & Writing Attorney in the Capital Habeas Unit (CHU). The Office of the Federal Public Defender operates under authority of the Criminal Justice Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A, to provide representation in federal criminal matters in the federal courts.

Our attorneys and staff are dedicated advocates for people who cannot afford representation. We are deeply committed to indigent defense, constitutional rights, and telling every client's story with dignity and care. Within our office, we are guided by a philosophy of inspiration, connection, and empowerment. The CHU provides client-centered representation to individuals sentenced to death in federal habeas corpus and related proceedings, with most clients located in Tennessee.

We are filling one vacancy and are looking for an applicant who can begin work on October 1, 2026, or as soon as practicable thereafter. This is an in-office position located in downtown Nashville, Tennessee.

Job Description:

A Research and Writing Specialist is an attorney position. That attorney will provide advanced research and writing support to Assistant Federal Public Defenders on habeas cases. Specifically, the individual will research legal issues and assist in drafting positions, motions, and pre-hearing briefs. They will assist other attorneys with discovery matters and with responses to dispositive motions.

The Federal Public Defender's Office is committed to improving diversity in the legal profession. It is critical to our clients' representation that the office be comprised of individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The nature of our work necessitates our investment in recruiting colleagues who demonstrate experience with knowledge of, and sensitivity to the needs of culturally diverse and oppressed populations. We seek candidates with a demonstrated

commitment to working with marginalized communities and with clients from a range of backgrounds.

Skilled collaboration, strategic litigation, and compassionate representation are among the values we aim to foster in our office. Because no single person can do this work alone, you will work with experienced lawyers, investigators, paralegals, and legal assistants.

Requirements and Qualifications:

To qualify a person must be a graduate from an accredited law school and eligible for admission to the federal bar and the bar of the State of Tennessee. A general understanding of criminal law and federal criminal procedure is necessary. The applicant should possess the ability to write clearly and present complex and interrelated concepts and ideas. The applicant should have excellent interpersonal skills, good judgment, strong technical skills, the ability to prioritize, and the ability to work both independently and cooperatively. Applicants must be proficient with Microsoft Office applications. Some travel will be required.

Conditions of Employment:

The selected candidate will be subject to a comprehensive background check or investigation, including an F.B.I. name and fingerprint check, and subsequent favorable suitability determination for employment. Employees of the Federal Public Defender's Office are in the excepted service, are considered "at-will" employees, serve at the pleasure of the Defender, and are not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act. In line with current appropriations law, applicants must be citizens of the United States or permanent residents seeking citizenship as described here: <https://www.uscourts.gov/careers/search-judiciary-jobs/citizenship-requirements-employment-judiciary>. The position is contingent on confirmation of fiscal year 2027 funding.

Salary and Benefits:

The position is full-time with federal benefits and salary commensurate with experience and qualifications and comparable to that of Assistant U.S. Attorneys with similar qualifications and experience. Salary is payable only by direct deposit. Salary range is from JSP Grade 12 (\$89,508) to JSP Grade 15 (\$187,399) depending on experience. Benefits include health and life insurance, retirement, and the Thrift Savings Plan. For information regarding benefits, see www.uscourts.gov/careers/benefits. Final offer of employment is subject to an F.B.I. background check.

Application Process:

Applications submitted by fax or mail will not be considered. To apply, combine the following documents in a **single** Adobe PDF and email to TNM_HR@fd.org with the subject line “**R&W CHU 2026-07.**”

- a brief cover letter explaining your interest in the position and your qualifications;
- a resume;
- three references including contact information; and
- a representative writing sample.

Preference given to applications received by August 1, 2026. Applications will be reviewed as received. We reserve the right to end the posting early. No phone calls, please.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Middle District of Tennessee is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All applicants, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or age, are encouraged to apply.