

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. 2026-5

Position: Investigator – Trial Unit – Nashville, Tennessee
Application Deadline: Open until filled, preference given to those applying by March 3, 2026.

The Federal Public Defender for the Middle District of Tennessee is accepting applications for a full-time Investigator in the Trial Unit. 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 fearless advocates who are devoted to indigent defense, upholding the Constitution, and ensuring that every client's story is told with dignity and compassion. Within the office, we relate to each other guided by a philosophy of inspiration, connection, and empowerment.

The successful applicant will do more than gather facts; they will investigate the human story behind the case. Our investigators dig deep to find mitigating characteristics and circumstances that may have influenced the client's conduct. This information forms the basis of the narrative we present to the court, explaining the full picture of the client we represent. We seek a candidate with a desire to learn about mitigation and investigation in the criminal defense setting, who is a team player and a proven self-starter.

Job Description and Duties:

The ability to communicate well with clients and work with a diverse team of investigators, attorneys, paralegals, and support staff is paramount. **Spanish language fluency is strongly preferred.**

Every investigator in our unit:

- Reviews and analyzes discovery and other case documentation. Assists in determining the scope, timing, and direction of the investigation. Initiates new areas of investigation to uncover necessary information.
- Locates potential witnesses and conducts interviews. Evaluates witness statements and discusses their relevant value with the attorney. Writes interview reports summarizing the information learned.

- Provides information to experts, coordinates evaluations, and clarifies the focus and specifics of the issues to be addressed. Assists the experts as needed. Maintains a filing and reference system for mitigation and mental health literature, including biographies and areas of expertise of available experts.
- Locates, reviews, and retrieves tangible evidence, personal property, and other relevant material and/or objects.
- Creates photographs, videos, and/or recordings of evidence at the direction of the attorney. Where appropriate, prepares a mitigation report or video for submission to the court. Assists the attorney in developing demonstrative evidence for use at hearings or trial.
- Gathers and maintains all records relevant to the case. Verifies information obtained to establish the accuracy and authenticity of facts and evidence.
- Assists the attorney at hearings and trials by evaluating testimony, coordinating witnesses, and managing documents.
- Serves subpoenas and notifies defense witnesses of court appearances.
- Utilizes computer software for word processing, databases, and graphics. Uses Cellebrite or other software to review cell-phone extractions. Learns how to effectively use additional technologies as needed.
- Researches and develops possible alternative sentencing and release plans.
- Performs all other duties as assigned.

Special Working Conditions:

Work outside normal business hours and on weekends is occasionally required. Travel for investigation, jail visits, training or conferences is required. This individual must also occasionally lift and/or move up to 25 pounds and may spend extended periods of time driving or riding in a car. Physical demands for this position include those required for the individual to successfully perform the essential functions of this job.

Requirements and Qualifications:

The successful applicant will be a high school graduate with a background in investigation, social work, mitigation, journalism, or related field. Comprehensive knowledge of fact and mitigation investigation principles, methods, and techniques is preferred, as is the ability to identify and evaluate pertinent facts. A general understanding of criminal law and federal criminal procedure is helpful, but not necessary.

The applicant should possess the ability to write clearly and to present complex and interrelated concepts and ideas. The applicant should also have excellent interpersonal skills, good judgment, strong technical skills, and the ability to prioritize work independently and cooperatively. Personal integrity and a commitment to the indigent accused are essential. The candidate must have computer skills and social media literacy, familiarity with Windows operating systems, and be proficient with Microsoft Office applications and Adobe Acrobat. Familiarity with digital

forensic review tools such as Cellebrite and Magnet Axiom is preferred. A valid driver's license, reliable transportation, and applicable insurance are 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 2026 funding.

Salary and Benefits:

The position is full-time with federal benefits and salary commensurate with experience and qualifications. Salary is payable only by direct deposit. Salary range is from JSP Grade 11 (\$74,678) to JSP Grade 14 (\$155,128), 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. The position does not carry the tenure rights of the competitive Civil Service. For information regarding benefits, see www.uscourts.gov/careers/benefits. Final offer of employment is subject to an FBI background check.

Application Process:

To apply, combine the following documents in a *single* Adobe PDF and email to TNM_HR@fd.org with the subject line "**Investigator Trial Unit- 2026-5.**" Please submit:

- 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.

Applications submitted by fax or mail will not be considered. Preference given to applications received by **March 3, 2026**. Applications will be reviewed as received. We reserve the right to end the posting early. No phone calls, please. More than one position may be filled from this posting.

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.