



FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

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Federal Public Defender
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INVESTIGATOR - CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT Position Announcement 26-001

The Federal Public Defender for the Southern District of Ohio is accepting applications for the position of **Investigator in our Capital Habeas Unit**, to be stationed in our Columbus office.

Our Capital Habeas Unit represents clients in federal habeas proceedings who have been convicted and sentenced to death. We represent clients starting with their federal habeas petition through every subsequent stage in the proceedings. This includes appeals, clemency, and necessary additional state court litigation. Our mission is to provide our clients with legal services of the highest quality. We zealously and ethically represent the human worth, dignity, and interest of our clients with courage, devotion, and uncompromised advocacy and professionalism.

JOB REQUIREMENTS

The Investigator will be a part of a team of attorneys, paralegals, and investigators representing clients on death row in federal post-conviction proceedings. The Investigator will be responsible for developing and refining investigation plans and overseeing both fact and mitigation investigations for the cases to which they are assigned. Investigators engage in ongoing communication with the case team, soliciting feedback and adapting the plan as necessary based on results of the investigation and needs of the case. Day to day duties include, but are not limited to, locating and interviewing witnesses and documenting those witness contacts, reading discovery to identify potential investigation, building lasting relationships with clients and their families, locating and supervising expert witnesses, serving subpoenas, drafting reports and social histories, reviewing and summarizing case records, visiting crime scenes, and locating and retrieving documents and other evidence.

This position requires frequent overnight out-of-state travel. It also requires significant local travel. Our cases are subject to strict deadlines set by the court; thus, some evening and weekend work is required.

We hold ourselves to exceptionally high standards and expect the same of every member of our team. Employees are expected to demonstrate the highest levels of professionalism, compassion, clear communication, client-centered judgment, and collaborative teamwork. We value continuous learning and expect employees to actively seek improvement in their skills and knowledge. Team members must be willing to acknowledge mistakes and areas for growth and take personal responsibility for developing proficiency in all skill areas relevant to capital habeas defense. Employees are required to demonstrate good judgement and always maintain a professional appearance and demeanor.

QUALIFICATIONS

The most important qualifications for this position are a strong passion for helping those in need, the ability to form connections with our clients, with their families, and with witnesses, and the ability to thrive in a team environment.

Karen Savir *Cincinnati Trial Chief* • Stacey MacDonald *Columbus Trial Chief* • Art Mullins *Dayton Trial Chief*
Kevin Schad *Appellate Chief* • Natalie Olmstead *CHU Chief* • Adam Rusnak *Assistant CHU Chief*

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A successful candidate will have strong written, oral, and interpersonal communication skills. They will be motivated, creative, resourceful, and able to work with different types of people and personalities with tact, discretion, and compassion. They will also have the ability to work well with others in a team-based approach. Fluency in a foreign language and/or experience with different cultures is a plus.

We are seeking candidates with experience investigating crimes, alternative suspects, social histories, intellectual disabilities, and/or mental illness. The ideal candidate will have experience locating people, interviewing people, and drafting reports, as well as experience conducting both fact investigation interviews and mitigation investigation interviews. Experience in post-conviction or capital investigation is a plus. Criminal defense experience is helpful but not required. ***If you do not have criminal defense experience, please explain why you are now interested in working in criminal defense.***

Additionally, applicants for this particular position should have the following:

- Initiative, drive, and the ability to take on a project within their area of expertise without waiting for instruction or a specific assignment.
- Comfort working with clients and their families in both jail and community settings.
- Knowledge and experience with trauma-informed interviewing.
- Ability to learn and understand the legal process and the current status of assigned cases.
- A working knowledge of legal terminology and court procedures.
- The ability to establish and maintain rapport and good working relationships.
- The ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Excellent interpersonal skills.
- A demonstrated work history of dependability and responsibility, and the ability to be a team player.
- The ability to work in a high-demand, high-volume law office.
- Advanced skills in Microsoft Office (especially Outlook, Teams, Word, and Excel), and Adobe.
- Advanced proficiency in internet research.
- A valid driver's license and a reliable vehicle, as local travel will be necessary.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Applicants must have at least an Associate's degree. Degrees in Social Work and Criminal Justice are advantageous, but we are open to applicants from a variety of different disciplines. Significant investigation/mitigation experience could be substituted for a degree where appropriate.

ABOUT US

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Southern District of Ohio provides the highest quality legal representation in criminal cases to persons who cannot afford to hire a private attorney. Through our Trial and Appellate Units, we represent people who have been accused of federal criminal offenses from the onset of their case, through the trial and appellate phases. Through our Capital Habeas Unit, we represent people sentenced to death in Ohio and around the country, through federal habeas and all subsequent proceedings.

We utilize teams with interdisciplinary skill sets that ensure compassionate and comprehensive representation. We are attorneys, paralegals, investigators, office administrators, and information technology specialists who prioritize centering our representation around our clients and their needs.

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Our office values people with a wide range of experience and perspectives, and works to foster 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 varied backgrounds and experiences. We seek team members who share that belief and commitment. We embrace the unique contributions our employees can bring to the office because of their backgrounds, social identities, and lived experiences. We are interested in applicants' talent, intelligence, dedication, and persistence, and desire to see that all people are treated fairly and respectfully – no matter the allegation or circumstance.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

The starting annual salary for this position will be between \$77,922 and \$114,767 per year, depending on experience. Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit). The position offers federal employment benefits, including paid vacation, paid sick time, paid holidays, health insurance, life insurance, retirement plan, and participation in the Thrift Savings Plan (similar to a 401k). Some telework is available, consistent with office policy, court obligations, and position duties.

HOW TO APPLY

Qualified applicants should submit a cover letter, a resume and three professional references, in PDF format, to OHS_employment@fd.org, by Monday, March 9, 2026. Please combine the application into a single PDF. The cover letter **must** explain why you are interested in representing people on death row and how your professional and/or life experiences qualify you to succeed in this position. Applicants can choose to also submit a writing sample as part of the application. In your application, please feel free to note which pronouns you use.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

All application information is subject to verification. Appointment to the position is contingent upon a background investigation including an FBI fingerprint check. Employees of the Federal Defender are members of the judicial branch of government; they are considered 'at will' and can be terminated with or without cause.

The Federal Public Defender for the Southern District of Ohio is an equal opportunity employer. We are an inclusive office and seek applications from a diverse group of qualified individuals. We provide reasonable accommodations for applicants with disabilities.