

**Position Announcement 26-34**  
**RESEARCH AND WRITING SPECIALIST – CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT**

Office of the Federal Public Defender  
Western District of Texas (Austin)

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**THE FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER** for the Western District of Texas is now accepting applications for the position of Research and Writing Specialist for the Capital Habeas Unit (CHU) in Austin, Texas. The CHU represents indigent, death-sentenced Texas prisoners in federal habeas corpus proceedings in the four United States District Courts in Texas, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, and the United States Supreme Court.

**Requirements.** The research and writing specialist position is an attorney position. Applicants must be: (1) a graduate of an accredited law school; (2) eligible to be licensed to practice in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas; and (3) admitted to practice in good standing before the highest court of a state. If not licensed in Texas at the time of hiring, the Research and Writing Specialist must become licensed in Texas within one year of employment. Appointment is subject to a satisfactory background investigation, including but not limited to an FBI name and fingerprint check.

**Duties.** A Research and Writing Specialist has the following duties: (1) advanced legal research and writing related to pleading and litigating claims for federal habeas corpus relief; (2) review and analysis of records and other collaborative work with attorneys, mitigation specialists, investigators, and experts; (3) close and regular contact with clients; and (4) field work, including gathering records and conducting investigations. A Research and Writing Specialist is required to stay up to date on the latest developments in habeas corpus and criminal procedure, and issues in forensic science and mental health that are relevant to the CHU's cases. The Research and Writing Specialist is not an Assistant Federal Public Defender and does not ordinarily sign pleadings or make court appearances but is otherwise responsible for attorney duties. This position will sometimes require work on holidays, evenings, and weekends. Frequent and extended travel may also be required.

**Selection Criteria.** The successful applicant will have strong legal research and word-processing skills, the ability to analyze complex legal issues, and clear and concise writing. The successful applicant will have an established capacity or clearly demonstrated aptitude for excellence in criminal defense practice. Applicants also must possess the ability to communicate effectively with clients, witnesses, colleagues, and court and agency personnel. This includes developing cultural competencies. Applicants must be able to work effectively in a team-based practice. They should have strong interpersonal skills, the ability to work independently and to set priorities to meet critical deadlines. Appellate writing experience or experience in handling capital cases or non-capital habeas cases preferred but not required. Fluency in Spanish is desirable but not required.

**Salary and Benefits.** The starting salary of a Research and Writing Specialist will be commensurate with the experience and qualifications of the applicant, within a range of \$76,777 (JSP-11, Step 1) to \$152,103 (JSP-15, Step 1) per annum. The position is in the excepted service and does not carry the tenure rights of the competitive Civil Service. This position offers federal government employment benefits, including participation in health and life insurance, retirement, and the Thrift Savings Plan. Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit).

**How to Apply.** Qualified persons may apply by forwarding a letter of interest addressed to the Federal Public Defender, Maureen Scott Franco (mentioning announcement 26-34), a résumé, references, and representative writing sample. Send the completed application **in a single PDF document named with applicant's "last name, first name-Announcement 26-34 CHU RAWS"** by email to [TXW\\_Employment@fd.org](mailto:TXW_Employment@fd.org). Electronic submissions sent directly to the Defender will not be considered. For applicants with disabilities, this organization provides reasonable accommodation, which is decided on a case-by-case basis. To request reasonable accommodation for any part of the application or interview process, contact Administrative Officer Angela Kessel at (210) 981-2085. More than one position may be filled from this announcement. Position announced May 7, 2026, subject to the availability of funds; open until filled.

*The Federal Public Defender is an equal-opportunity employer.*