

FEDERAL DEFENDERS OF SAN DIEGO, INC.

THE COMMUNITY DEFENDER ORGANIZATION FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Position: Non-Capital Mitigation Specialist

Location: San Diego, CA

Application Deadline: July 24, 2026

Posted: July 7, 2026

Office Website: www.fdsdi.com

Salary Range: 9/1 \$70,507 to 14/10 \$186,785

Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc. (FDSDI) is seeking a full-time Non-Capital Mitigation Specialist to join our defense team. FDSDI is the Community Defender Organization for the Southern District of California, serving San Diego and Imperial Counties, and operates under the authority of 18 U.S.C. § 3006A(g)(2)(B) to provide federal criminal defense services by court appointment to individuals who are unable to afford counsel.

The Non-Capital Mitigation Specialist is a vital member of our defense team. You'll work collaboratively with attorneys, investigators, paralegals, and other legal professionals to investigate, develop, and present mitigation evidence on behalf of our clients. Your work will identify and document the biopsychosocial factors most relevant to the client story and offense conduct. Occasional travel, including overnight travel and travel in Mexico, may be required based on case needs. While this role primarily will be assigned to non-capital cases, assistance with capital casework may be requested.

This role is an opportunity to meaningfully impact our clients' lives. In addition to the investigation and development of mitigation, you'll carry out various case management tasks to aid in the assessment and referral of clients to community-based resources. You will help clients access substance use and mental health treatment, housing, educational, and vocational programs as a crucial component of our office's advocacy.

We're looking for someone who is compassionate and resourceful, who possesses strong organizational skills, excellent interviewing and counseling skills, and strong communication skills. You'll bring professionalism, cultural sensitivity, sound judgment, and the ability to build trusting relationships with clients, families, service providers, and community partners while handling highly sensitive and confidential information. This position demands a high quality of written work.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Under the supervision of the Supervisory Mitigation Specialist, the Non-Capital Mitigation Specialist will:

- Investigate, analyze, develop, and present mitigation evidence in support of clients throughout all stages of a criminal case.
- Conduct culturally sensitive interviews with clients, family members, life history witnesses, service providers, and other individuals relevant to case development.
- Collect, review, analyze, and summarize records, including educational, medical, mental health, military, employment, social services, carceral, and other records relevant to mitigation investigations.
- Develop and maintain collaborative relationships with clients and their families, attorneys, pretrial and probation officers, treatment providers, and community organizations.
- Assist attorneys in identifying mitigation themes, preparing equities and sentencing materials, and supporting court proceedings.

- Conduct needs assessments and refer clients to treatment, housing, educational, vocational, and community-based services.
- Effectively identifies the need for specialized mental health evaluations, refines referral questions, assists with selection of experts, and strategizes how to most effectively leverage expert findings.
- Maintain current knowledge of social science research and best practices related to mitigation investigation, mental health, substance use, neurodevelopmental disorders, trauma, the impact of incarceration, and conditions of confinement.
- Travel as necessary to conduct investigations, interviews, and client visits.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Qualifications:

- A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
- Strong interviewing, analytical, and investigative skills.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Strong organizational skills, attention to detail, and the ability to manage multiple priorities and meet deadlines.
- The ability to work independently while collaborating effectively as part of a multidisciplinary defense team.
- The ability to exercise sound judgment, maintain confidentiality, and work professionally with individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- A demonstrated commitment to serving indigent, underserved, marginalized, and diverse communities.
- A valid California driver's license, reliable transportation, and the ability to travel as required, including possible travel to Mexico.
- The ability to work a flexible schedule based on operational and case needs.

Preferred Qualifications:

- A master's degree in social work or related field.
- A degree in social work, counseling, psychology, sociology, criminal justice, law, or a closely related discipline.
- Experience conducting mitigation investigations, forensic social work, criminal defense investigations, case management, or related work.
- Experience interviewing vulnerable populations and developing comprehensive psychosocial histories.
- Clinical work experience, especially with clients with severe mental illness, substance use disorders, or intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Knowledge of trauma-informed practices, behavioral health, substance use disorders, and community resources.
- Experience collaborating with attorneys, investigators, experts, and multidisciplinary teams.
- The ability to fluently speak, read, and write Spanish.

Salary and Benefits:

Salary will be commensurate with experience. The starting salary range is: JSP 9/1 (\$70,507) to JSP 14/10 (\$186,785). The position does include employee benefits including health and life insurance as well as a 401k plan. Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit). This position is at will and is subject to the availability of funds. Employment is subject to a satisfactory background investigation. This position offers one day of telework per pay period. Full-time telework is not available.

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 our Personnel Administrator at Kym_Bryant@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. In our hiring, we seek individuals who share this belief and commitment. We embrace the unique contributions our employees can bring to the office because of their backgrounds, social identities, and lived experiences.

How to Apply:

Interested applicants are invited to apply by submitting a single pdf document that includes a cover letter, resume, and three references via email to the attention of:

Daniel Potter-Engelskirger, Supervisory Mitigation Specialist
hiring@fdsdi.com

Subject: Non-Capital Mitigation Specialist Position – San Diego

Hiring Timeline:

We value transparency in our hiring process and want applicants to know what to expect. Below are the key dates:

- **Application Deadline:** July 24, 2026 (priority consideration given to applications received by this date; applications will remain open until filled)
- **Interviews:** Conducted on a rolling basis
- **Anticipated Start Date:** The start date is flexible based on candidate availability. We anticipate onboarding the selected candidate as soon as practicable, and no later than September 7, 2026.