



Office of the
FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
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JOSEPH F. DEBELDER
Federal Public Defender
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CHU Chief

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

RESEARCH & WRITING SPECIALIST – CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT

Posted: January 30, 2026

Closing Date: Applications accepted will be considered on a rolling basis.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Florida is accepting applications for multiple Research & Writing Specialist positions in the Capital Habeas Unit, located in Tallahassee, Florida. The CHU represents indigent, death-sentenced prisoners in federal habeas corpus proceedings.

Job Description: CHU Attorneys provide advanced legal research, writing, and case development advocacy. Attorneys typically work on large teams within the CHU as well as collaborate with lawyers and investigators in the Capital Collateral Regional Counsel, CHUs in other districts, and non-profit organizations engaged in capital litigation in Florida. The duties of our attorneys include analyzing the latest developments in habeas corpus and criminal law and applying this knowledge to case strategies; drafting petitions, motions, memoranda of law, and appellate briefs; analyzing transcripts and other records; maintaining client contact; assisting with case investigation by digesting records and interviewing witnesses; and working with expert witnesses. Attorneys are also involved in special projects that may include mentoring student interns; monitoring national trends on topics such as lethal injection; and tracking cases proceeding before the United States Supreme Court. CHU attorneys also collaborate with the Trial Unit in some noncapital cases.



Our Office: We value serving our clients through skilled collaboration, compassionate advocacy, and creativity. We seek individuals with resiliency, initiative, and enthusiasm. In recruiting employees, the Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Florida hopes to reach applicants of all manner of backgrounds and perspectives. In selecting employees, the Office will not consider the applicant's race, sex, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, or political affiliation. Selection decisions will be based solely on job-related merit.



Tallahassee: Our office is based in [Tallahassee](#), the capital of Florida, and home to the Florida State University Seminoles and the Florida A&M University Rattlers. The Capital City has something for everyone, whether it be the annual North Florida Fair, nature trails, breweries, state parks, museums, college football, and more. We're home to two of the largest literary and Shakespeare festivals in the south, as well as the historic [Railroad Square District](#), a WWII-era industrial warehouse park turned art district. Railroad Square Art District hosts the First Friday Monthly Festival, an opportunity for Tallahasseeans to explore art galleries, thrift, vintage, book and antique stores, and indulge in live music and food. And the Capital City is just a short drive away from several beaches including St. George Island, which was recently awarded [“Best Beach in the U.S.”](#)

You'll find that the Capital City affords a small town feel within a vibrant city.

Requirements: Applicants must be a United States citizen or eligible to work in the United States. Applicants must possess excellent legal research and writing skills and a strong work ethic. Bar admission and good standing in a state bar, including the District of Columbia, are required. Additionally, membership in, or eligibility to be admitted to, the FLND Bar is required. The willingness to engage in overnight travel and work long and non-traditional hours is required, as is a valid driver's license. We will consider applications from current 3Ls and recent graduates who have passed a Bar examination. Preference will be given to applicants with experience in one of the following areas: capital litigation, federal habeas corpus litigation, state postconviction proceedings, appellate practice and procedure, criminal defense, or complex federal civil or criminal litigation. A background in mental health and/or social work is also helpful but not required. Maturity, good judgment, and the ability to treat others with respect in times of high stress are necessary for this position. Empathy and dedication to the cause of our clients are essential traits.

Salary and Benefits: Positions are subject to approval of funding. Salary is commensurate with experience and qualifications. This position comes with federal employee benefits, including health and life insurance and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) pension, Social Security, and a Thrift Savings Plan. We observe Federal holidays and provide generous annual and personal leave. Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit).

Application Process: To apply for a Research & Writing Specialist position, applicants should email a cover letter, resume, writing sample, and three references **in .pdf format** to FLN_Resumes@fd.org, and a copy to john_abatecola@fd.org. Please address the cover letter to Linda McDermott, CHU Chief. The email subject should be as follows: CHU Research & Writing Specialist Application.

Employment is conditioned upon a favorable background check.

The Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Florida is an equal opportunity employer.