

FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
321 EAST 2nd STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-4202
213-894-2854
213-894-0081 FAX

CUAUHTEMOC ORTEGA

Federal Public Defender

AMY M. KARLIN

Chief Deputy

C. PAMELA GÓMEZ

Capital Habeas Chief

LISA LABARRE

Los Angeles Trial Chief

KELLEY MUNOZ

Santa Ana Branch Chief

YOUNG KIM

Riverside Branch Chief

MARGARET A. FARRAND

Appeals Chief

JONATHAN AMINOFF

Non-Capital Habeas Chief

NEHA CHRISTERNA

Collaborative Courts Chief

Vacancy Announcement

Position: Capital Habeas Attorney

Location: Los Angeles or Santa Ana, CA

Deadline: March 22, 2026

The Federal Public Defender's Office for the Central District of California is accepting applications for full-time attorney positions in its Capital Habeas Unit (CHU), stationed in Los Angeles or Santa Ana, California. The CHU advocates for the constitutional rights and inherent dignity of indigent persons sentenced to death. We provide the highest quality representation in post-conviction proceedings through diversity of experience, collaborative and thorough case development, focused litigation strategies, and skilled courtroom advocacy.

Job Duties: CHU attorneys represent death-sentenced inmates from California and other states in their federal habeas corpus proceedings. Attorneys in the CHU are expected to work on all stages of capital habeas cases, from pre-petition investigation through Supreme Court proceedings and clemency. General areas of responsibility include summarizing trial transcripts, drafting habeas corpus petitions, supervising teams of investigators and paralegals, directing investigation, working with experts, conducting evidentiary hearings, drafting briefs, presenting oral arguments, and drafting clemency petitions. In addition to representing capital inmates in their habeas proceedings, CHU attorneys represent noncapital habeas petitioners and federal criminal defendants.

Requirements: All applicants must have graduated from an accredited law school and be members in good standing of the California Bar or must be willing to sit for the next California Bar exam, if they are a member in good standing of another Bar. Preference will be given to applicants with at least three years of experience in state and/or federal criminal law, complex civil litigation, death penalty litigation, or habeas corpus litigation, or applicants with state or federal judicial clerkship experience.

Varying hours including nights, weekends, and holidays may be required. A background investigation is required as a condition of employment. In line with current federal appropriations law, applicants must be United States citizens or permanent residents seeking citizenship as described

here: <https://www.uscourts.gov/careers/search-judiciary-jobs/citizenship-requirements-employment-judiciary>.

Selection Criteria: Candidates must possess a commitment to the defense of death sentenced individuals; must have superior oral and written communication skills; and work well in teams.

Salary/Benefits: This is a full-time, at-will position. Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience and is subject to direct deposit. Benefits include health and life insurance, retirement, and a Thrift Savings Plan. After successful completion of a probationary period, eligible employees may elect to telework up to two days per week, subject to certain conditions. For more information on benefits, see <http://www.uscourts.gov/careers/benefits>.

How to Apply: Apply by submitting a letter of interest, résumé, two representative writing samples (limited to 15 pages each), and three references through our website at <https://fpdcdca.org/careers/current-openings/>. We will accept applications until March 22, 2026, or until filled. Interviews will occur on a rolling basis and the open position may be filled before that date. Priority will be given to early applicants. The Federal Public Defender's Office may fill current and future positions from this vacancy announcement. Please, no phone calls.

The Federal Public Defender's Office for the Central District of California 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.