

**FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER**  
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
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**CUAUHTEMOC ORTEGA**

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*Santa Ana Branch Chief*

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*Riverside Branch Chief*

**MARGARET A. FARRAND**

*Appeals Chief*

**JONATHAN AMINOFF**

*Non-Capital Habeas Chief*

**NEHA CHRISTERNA**

*Collaborative Courts Chief*

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## Vacancy Announcement

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**Position:** Legal Assistant (Capital Habeas Unit)

**Location:** Los Angeles, CA

**Deadline:** March 22, 2026

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The Federal Public Defender's Office for the Central District of California is accepting applications for a full-time legal assistant position in its Capital Habeas Unit (CHU) stationed in Los Angeles, 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:** Legal assistants provide a full range of executive-level secretarial and clerical support services to attorneys on trial, appellate, and habeas cases. General areas of responsibility include filing of court documents electronically and manually; preparing and editing draft pleadings, reports, and correspondence; maintaining attorneys' calendars; accurately maintaining up-to-date case files and facility clearances; composing correspondence; screening public and client telephone calls; and processing mail, as needed. The legal assistant will be assigned to three or four attorneys and will be required to assist with overflow coverage when needed.

**Requirements:** All applicants must have graduated from an accredited school with a bachelor's degree or at least one-year specialized experience performing progressively responsible duties as a legal assistant. Extensive relevant experience may substitute a bachelor's degree. Candidates must demonstrate a high level of computer literacy, including expertise with Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat programs. Experience with legal practice-related programs such as evidence review platforms, document management systems, and document indexing tools is also highly preferred. The ideal candidate will also have comprehensive knowledge of legal secretarial principles, practices, methods, and techniques; an understanding of state, district and circuit court rules, protocols, policies, and precedents; and knowledge of legal terminology and Blue Book citation format. The ability to speak, read, and write in Spanish is preferred, but not required. Legal assistants must be available to work during regular business hours, and when necessary, during evenings, weekends, and holidays.

A background investigation is required as a condition of employment. In line with current 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:** Successful applicants demonstrate an interest in social justice, civil rights, or indigent defense; must have excellent oral and written communication and interpersonal skills; have strong organizational, analytical, and technical skills; an ability to organize work and set priorities to meet critical deadlines; capable of learning new technological tools, when needed; be able to work independently and take initiative; 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. For more information on benefits, see <http://www.uscourts.gov/careers/benefits>.

**How to Apply:** Apply by submitting a letter of interest, résumé, 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.*