

FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
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Vacancy Announcement

Position: Noncapital Habeas Unit Attorney

Location: Los Angeles, CA

Deadline: July 31, 2026

The Federal Public Defender's Office for the Central District of California is accepting applications for a full-time attorney position in its noncapital habeas unit (NCHU), stationed in Los Angeles, California. The NCHU is committed to the pursuit of justice by aggressively advocating for the constitutional rights and inherent dignity of indigent persons unlawfully confined by the states or federal government.

Job Duties: NCHU attorneys primarily represent indigent California state prisoners in federal habeas corpus actions challenging their state judgments, immigrants in federal habeas corpus actions challenging their immigration detention, and petitioners in ancillary matters in state and possibly immigration court. Core job duties include communicating with clients; summarizing trial transcripts; conducting research; directing investigations; working with experts; drafting habeas petitions, motions, and briefs; conducting evidentiary hearings; and delivering appellate arguments. On occasion, NCHU attorneys are also assigned to federal criminal trial cases and capital habeas corpus cases.

Requirements: All applicants must have graduated from an accredited law school and be members in good standing of the California Bar. Preference will be given to applicants with at least three years of experience in state and/or federal criminal law or applicants with 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 have a demonstrated commitment to indigent criminal defense, immigration and refugee advocacy, and/or public interest law; must have superior oral and written communication skills; possess excellent research skills; strong skills in complex fact and legal analysis and creative issue development; and work well in teams.

Salary/Benefits: This is a full-time, at-will position. This position is approved for one year and a day, with a possible extension based on need, budget, or the discretion of the Federal Public Defender. Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience and is subject to direct deposit. After successful completion of a probationary period, eligible employees may elect to telework up to two days per week, subject to certain conditions. 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, two representative writing samples (limited to 15 pages), and three references through our website at <https://fpdcdca.org/careers/current-openings/>. We will accept applications until July 31, 2026; however, interviews will occur on a rolling basis and the open position may be filled before that date. 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.