

**FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
Western District of Washington**

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Interim Federal Defender*

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**POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT
Social Worker/Mitigation Specialist – Seattle/Tacoma, Washington**

Position No. 26-03

Announced: February 9, 2026

Closes: Open until filled. Priority given to applications received by March 9, 2026.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Washington (FPD) is accepting applications for a full-time criminal defense mitigation specialist (MS) with a duty station in either the Seattle or the Tacoma office. The MS will work on cases assigned out of both offices.

The FPD represents people charged with federal crimes who cannot afford to hire an attorney or are entitled to one. The Court appoints our attorneys to represent accused persons before charges are filed, upon arrest, for the appeals process, and through federal habeas corpus review. We provide a vigorous defense at all stages of our clients' cases. MS candidates should demonstrate a strong background in social work practice and be dedicated to defending those accused of committing crimes even when the evidence against them appears strong. The MS will offer a holistic approach to legal representation and will advocate for humane sentences by developing mitigation evidence to present judges fully developed views of our clients and their lives, not merely their charges. Candidates should be self-motivated, resourceful, creative, and client-centered, and should demonstrate a commitment to social justice, the promotion of equity, and anti-oppressive practices. This position is supervised by the Chief Investigator.

Responsibilities: The program consists of three main practice areas:

- 1. Client-level practice:** The MS department provides intensive clinical case management services and advocacy for clients at all stages of their criminal cases by conducting biopsychosocial assessments and referrals to housing, mental health and substance use treatment, employment, and medical services. The MS conducts crisis assessment and intervention, offers emotional support to clients, proposes alternatives to incarceration, and helps develop release plans. The MS develops sentence mitigation by conducting extensive interviews of clients, families, and other life-history witnesses. The MS also gathers and evaluates behavioral health, medical, and social service records. The MS composes comprehensive social history reports, family impact statements, reentry and treatment plans, research memos, and diagnostic screenings, and guides retention of behavioral health experts. The MS provides social work support to clients in our alternative courts. The MS also provides advocacy and support to clients during court hearings.
- 2. Office-level practice:** The MS department is available to colleagues to provide individual case consultation and psychoeducation. The MS plans and delivers continuing education to colleagues and attorneys on the Criminal Justice Act panel. The MS department selects, trains, and supervises social work graduate students.

3. **Community-level practice:** The MS department liaises with the Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services, Federal Defender offices nation-wide, and local agencies serving criminal legal system-involved clients. The MS department maintains partnerships with local service providers.

Selection Criteria: Preference will be given to candidates with a minimum of two years of post-graduate practice experience and/or those with a clinical license such as a LICSW. Experience with forensic social work, the criminal legal system, mental health and addiction treatment, intellectual and developmental disability, or treatment of trauma is desired. The candidate should also demonstrate cultural humility. Candidates should have strong oral and written advocacy and communication skills and be comfortable working independently and on teams. The candidate should be comfortable providing court testimony. This position requires occasional travel.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Knowledge of federal court procedures
- Experience drafting mitigation reports
- Familiarity with Western Washington and community resources
- Ability to speak, read, and write in Spanish

Requirements: A Master of Social Work (MSW) degree or a graduate degree in a related field, such as psychology or counseling, is required. The candidate must possess a valid driver's license and be able to drive (including long distances).

Applicants must meet the [employment eligibility requirements](#) of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. As a condition of employment, candidates must be fingerprinted and successfully complete a background check. A prior criminal conviction is not necessarily disqualifying.

Salary and Benefits: This position has a starting salary range of \$83,935 to \$141,367 (Grade 11, Step 1 to Grade 14, Step 1) and full performance salary range of \$109,122 to \$183,782 (Grade 11, Step 10 to Grade 14, Step 10) based on the Judicial Salary Plan effective January 12, 2026. Salary will be based on professional experience. Benefits include health and life insurance plus 11 paid federal holidays, 13 days of paid sick leave, and 13 days of paid vacation leave annually. (The rate of vacation accrual increases with years of service.) The position is eligible for the [Federal Employees Retirement System](#) and the [Thrift Savings Plan](#), which matches up to 5% of employee contributions. Salary is paid biweekly and only by direct deposit. Partial telework is available for this position.

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 embrace the unique contributions our employees can bring to the FPD because of their backgrounds, social identities, and lived experiences. We believe representation is better when members of the defense team have diverse backgrounds and experiences. We seek colleagues who share this belief and commitment. We are interested in applicants' talent, intelligence, dedication, persistence, and desire to see that all people are treated fairly and respectfully—no matter the

allegation or circumstance.

The FPD seeks applications from a diverse group of qualified individuals in terms of race, ethnicity, nation of origin, culture, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual identity, education, opinions, age, languages spoken, veteran status, disability, religion, and socio-economic circumstance. We especially encourage applications from people who have been affected by the criminal legal system and people from underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.

How to Apply: Qualified persons may apply by emailing a letter of interest, résumé, and two professional references (including names, email addresses, and telephone numbers) as a single PDF document to wawpersonnel@fd.org. Please include the position title “Mitigation Specialist” in the email subject line.

Only applicants granted interviews will be contacted. Initial interviews may be conducted in person or via video conference. No telephone inquiries please.

This position is subject to available funds.