



**OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL
DEFENDER**
Eastern District of
California 801 I Street, 3rd
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Sacramento, California 95814-2510

HEATHER E. WILLIAMS
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Position Announcement No. 26-005

Position: Assistant Federal Defender, Capital Habeas Unit
Location: Sacramento, CA
Deadline: Open until filled. Preference given to applications received by
April 10, 2026.

Who We Are

The Federal Public Defender's Office, Eastern District of California Capital Habeas Unit (CHU), based in Sacramento, is home to a dedicated team of attorneys, investigators, paralegals, and assistant paralegals who advocate for indigent prisoners sentenced to death. Our staff has extensive and diverse experience in life, law, and capital habeas litigation. Skilled collaboration, strategic litigation, compassionate representation, and unique approaches to issues affecting our clients are among the values reflected in our CHU.

CHU AFDs have the option for full-time telework. However, for individuals looking to relocate, Sacramento is a city emanating a diverse and hopeful vibe reflective of California at-large. The city is home to an abundance of cultural festivals, arts shows and displays of activism. We have a dynamic LGBTQ+ community whose pride celebrations are embraced city-wide. Sacramento's ever-expanding dining and entertainment scene is within walking and biking distance of our Office, and California's world-class beaches, wineries, and mountain towns are short drives away. Sacramento is a lovely place to work and to live.

The Job

Our CHU represents death-sentenced prisoners in their federal habeas corpus proceedings in California and currently in four other states. We represent clients in all stages of their federal court litigation, including clemency. Writing, research and organizational skills are imperative. Regular responsibilities include: working with clients; digesting large case files and investigative materials; developing litigation strategies; drafting pleadings; conducting evidentiary hearings; presenting oral arguments; working with experts and other witnesses; and supervising teams of investigators, paralegals, assistant paralegals, and case experts. This position may require work on holidays, evenings, and weekends. Frequent travel within California as well as to other states also may be required. Our CHU is full-time telework but with in-office options if the employee prefers or as the cases require.

Requirements: All applicants must be a member in good standing of a state bar within the United States. Applicants should have a **minimum** of five years' experience in habeas corpus litigation or equivalent criminal law experience at the trial or appellate level. Applicants must have an established capacity or clearly demonstrated aptitude for excellence in capital defense, strong

written and oral advocacy skills, work well in teams, and be effective organizers. Applicants will be expected to possess excellent on-line research skills in either Lexis or Westlaw and have solid MS Word skills.

Our Ideal Candidate

Our ideal candidate will have established over their career a commitment to indigent criminal defense with a proven track record of zealous advocacy. Current membership in the California and/or Arizona Bar is strongly preferred. Experience with Adobe Acrobat Professional, MS Excel, and CaseMap is a plus. The Federal Defender strives for staff diversity and plurality, encouraging women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans to apply.

Salary and Benefits

The Office of the Federal Defender operates under authority of the Criminal Justice Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A, to provide legal representation in federal criminal cases and related matters in the federal courts. This is a full-time permanent position. **Salary depends upon the number of years legal experience since graduating law school and ranges match those of Assistant U.S. Attorneys with similar years' experience.** Federal government benefits apply, including retirement; health, life and long-term insurances; a thrift savings program; and flexible spending accounts. Direct deposit of pay required. Federal Defender employees are considered "at-will" and are not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act.

Must be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident in the process of applying for citizenship. <https://www.uscourts.gov/careers/search-judiciary-jobs/citizenship-requirements-employment-judiciary> All final candidates are subject to FBI fingerprints and background investigation, including criminal history. The individual hired to perform the duties for this position may be subject to further background investigations when necessary.

Employees are expected to adhere to the *Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees* ([guide-vol02a-ch03.pdf \(uscourts.gov\)](#)) and *Code of Conduct for Federal Public Defender Employees* ([guide-vol02a-ch04.pdf](#))

How to Apply

Email to cae_hr@fd.org as a **single file** your cover letter, résumé, three references, writing sample, and a completed *Application for Judicial Branch Employment* form (AO78), which may be found at [AO 078 revised 2021-12-15.pdf](#)..

The Office of the Federal Defender is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage all qualified applicants - without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law - to apply. This agency provides reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities.

If you need a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process, please notify the agency. The decision on granting reasonable accommodation will be on a case-by-case basis.