



**OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL DEFENDER
CALIFORNIA EASTERN DISTRICT**

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POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT #26-014

ASSISTANT FEDERAL DEFENDER – CAPITAL HABEAS UNIT

The Office of the Federal Defender for the Eastern District of California is accepting applications for a full-time permanent **Assistant Federal Defender** position for the **Capital Habeas Unit**. The Office of the Federal Defender represents indigent persons in federal criminal cases and related court matters under the Criminal Justice Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A.

WHY THIS OFFICE

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.

THE PLACE

The CHU Assistant Federal Defender (AFD) position offers the option for full-time telework from anywhere in the United States. For those interested in relocating, Sacramento offers a diverse and welcoming atmosphere reflective of California as a whole. The city hosts numerous cultural festivals, art events, and vibrant expressions of community activism. Sacramento also has a dynamic LGBTQ+ community, with pride celebrations embraced city-wide. Our office is within walking or biking distance of the city's dining and entertainment scene, and California's renowned beaches, wineries, and mountains are only a short drive away. Sacramento is truly a wonderful place to live and work.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Our CHU represents death-sentenced prisoners in their federal habeas corpus proceedings in California and multiple 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;
- 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 eligible for full-time telework, however there are in-office options if preferred or as the cases or office require.

REQUIREMENTS & QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for the position of Assistant Federal Defender, Capital Habeas Unit, all applicants must be admitted to a state bar within the United States. Applicants must 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 online research skills in either Lexis or Westlaw and have solid MS Word skills. This position requires travel and requires a valid driver's license.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Our ideal candidate will have demonstrated, over the course of their career, a strong commitment to indigent criminal defense and a proven track record of holistic advocacy. Current membership in the California and/or Arizona Bar is strongly preferred. Experience with Adobe Acrobat Professional, MS Excel, and CaseMap are preferred.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Appointment to this position is contingent upon the successful completion of an FBI background check. Federal Defender employees are members of the judicial branch of the government and are considered "at will." This position is in the excepted service and does not carry the tenure rights of the competitive Civil Service. Candidates must be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident in the process of applying for citizenship. Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit)

SALARY & BENEFITS

This is a full-time permanent position with pay based on qualifications and years of legal experience since graduation from law school. Salary ranges match those of Assistant US Attorneys with similar experience. A comprehensive benefits package includes health and life insurance, vision and dental benefits, flexible spending accounts, 13 days of paid annual leave (annual leave accrual increases over time), 13 days of paid sick leave, paid leave for all 12 federal holidays, and participation in the Federal Retirement System and Thrift Savings Plan (with up to 5% government matching contributions).

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

In one PDF document, please submit a letter of interest, résumé, a writing sample, three references, and a completed ***Application for Judicial Branch Employment form (AO78)***, http://www.cae-fpd.org/AO_78.pdf, to:

Heather Williams, Federal Defender
Attn: Human Resources
at the following email: cae_hr@fd.org

Email subject line should read: **2026-14 – Assistant Federal Defender (CHU)**

This position(s) was announced on August 20, 2026, is open until filled, and is subject to the availability of funding. More than one position may be filled with this recruitment. Applicants will be notified before any communication with listed references.

Commitment to Fair Hiring: Our office values fair hiring and an equitable workplace. 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, languages spoken, veteran status, disability, experiences, and religion. We encourage applications from members of the BIPOC community, people who have been affected by the criminal legal system, and people from other underrepresented and historically marginalized groups. If you need a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process, please notify our Personnel Administrator, Lupe Hernandez, at lupe_hernandez@fd.org.