

FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
Districts of South Dakota and North Dakota

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Notice of Available Position
MITIGATION SPECIALIST (Pierre or Rapid City)

Overview: The Federal Public Defender for the Districts of South Dakota and North Dakota seeks a Mitigation Specialist to join our branch office in **Pierre or Rapid City**, South Dakota. Our office provides high-quality client-centered representation to individuals charged with federal crimes who cannot afford to hire counsel under the Criminal Justice Act. Mitigation Specialists are essential members of the defense team and play a critical role in developing comprehensive, culturally competent life-history investigations that inform case strategy, support client advocacy, and humanize clients throughout all phases of litigation, including pretrial, trial and sentencing.

Why Our Office: We are a collegial, mission-driven office dedicated to excellence in indigent defense. Our practice involves serious and complex federal cases that require intensive investigation, deep empathy, and the ability to work closely within an interdisciplinary team of attorneys, investigators, and support staff. Mitigation Specialists in our office exercise significant independence and professional judgment while collaborating closely with attorneys to design and carry out mitigation strategies. We value professionalism, discretion, and teamwork, and we place a high premium on integrity and respect—for our clients, their families, and each other.

Position Description: Mitigation Specialists work closely with attorneys to develop and present comprehensive mitigation evidence in federal cases. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting thorough, independent, and culturally competent investigations into all aspects of a client's life history, background, and circumstances.
- Gathering, reviewing, verifying, and synthesizing records including medical and mental-health records, educational and employment records, military and institutional records, social-services and housing records, and community records relevant to social history.
- Interviewing clients, family members, friends, educators, employers, military personnel, healthcare providers, religious leaders, and other life-history witnesses.
- Developing trusted, professional relationships with clients and their support networks.
- Identifying and analyzing trauma, mental-health conditions, substance-use histories, systemic inequities, cultural factors, and environmental influences relevant to mitigation.
- Preparing detailed social-history reports, chronologies, witness summaries, genealogies, and other written work product.
- Identifying and consulting with expert witnesses, including psychologists, psychiatrists, medical specialists, social-work experts, and other professional consultants.
- Assisting attorneys in hearings and sentencing proceedings by preparing written, video, or other forms of mitigation presentation.

- Developing re-entry and release plans, including treatment, housing, financial assistance, and community-support resources as needed.
- Maintaining up-to-date knowledge of research and trends relating to substance use, trauma, mental health, and the impact of incarceration.
- Maintaining accurate, organized case files and documentation in accordance with professional standards and office procedures.
- Performing additional tasks as needed to support the defense team.

Travel Requirement: This position requires frequent travel between the Rapid City and Pierre branch offices and throughout the Districts of South Dakota and North Dakota, including visits to jails, prisons, and client communities. Regardless of which duty station the successful applicant is hosted in the work they will be performing will be derived equally from both branch locations.

Required Qualifications: Above all, we seek applicants with a demonstrated commitment to indigent defense and a trauma-informed culturally competent practice. The successful applicant must be able to work effectively in a collaborative team-oriented environment. Other minimum qualifications include:

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution; degrees in social work, psychology, sociology, anthropology, criminal justice, or related fields preferred.
- At least three years of specialized experience developing or investigating mitigation evidence, or equivalent social-service experience involving clients facing mental-health, substance-use, or trauma-related challenges.
- Strong interviewing, writing, analytical, and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to work independently, manage multiple projects, and collaborate effectively as part of a defense team.
- Ability to understand and maintain strict confidentiality, including attorney-client privilege.
- Strong computer proficiency (Adobe, Word, Outlook, electronic-records tools).
- Valid driver's license.
- United States citizenship or authorization to work in the United States.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Master's degree in social work or related field.
- Experience working with Native American communities and/or in rural, underserved areas.

About Pierre: Pierre, the state capital, is a welcoming community along the Missouri River known for its scenic beauty, historic character, and easy pace of life. Outdoor opportunities abound, including fishing, boating, hiking, and hunting. Pierre combines cultural amenities with small-town accessibility, making it an appealing location for individuals seeking a supportive community and an excellent place to live, work, and raise a family.

About Rapid City: Rapid City is the population center of western South Dakota, located where the Black Hills meet the open prairie. The region features world-class access to national parks, forests, and outdoor recreation including hiking, biking, fishing, and skiing. With affordable housing, short commutes, strong schools, and a growing arts and food scene, Rapid City offers an exceptional quality of life for professionals and families seeking both meaningful work and natural beauty.

Salary and Benefits: Salary range is commensurate with experience and qualifications within the Judicial Salary Plan at JSP-11 to JSP-14, currently \$74,678 -163,514. This is a full-time position with federal benefits, including health and life insurance, retirement, and participation in the Thrift Savings Plan. Salary is paid bi-weekly by direct deposit. Final hiring is subject to funding availability and a favorable background investigation.

How to Apply: Apply by emailing a single PDF containing a letter of interest, résumé, three references, and a recent writing sample to SDX_Jobs@fd.org. Please include: “Mitigation Specialist Announcement 26-07” in the subject line. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled.

More than one position may be filled from this advertisement.

The Federal Public Defender for the Districts of South Dakota and North Dakota is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply.