



Federal Defender Services of Idaho (FDSI) is accepting applications for the full-time position of Mitigation Specialist in our Boise trial unit. FDSI operates under the authority of the Criminal Justice Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A, to provide defense services to indigent persons in federal criminal cases and related matters in the federal courts.

We have trial units in Boise and Pocatello and a capital habeas unit in Boise. The Boise trial unit is currently staffed by nine attorneys, two mitigation specialists, one investigator, two paralegals, an interpreter/paralegal, and support staff. FDSI is not an agency of the federal government, and our staff members are not federal employees. We are a not-for-profit Community Defender Organization. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3006A(g)(2)(B).

JOB DESCRIPTION

The Trial Mitigation Specialist helps the attorneys in this office tell their clients' stories and advocate for thoughtful, community-based corrections. Under the supervision of trial attorneys, the Mitigation Specialist will handle all aspects of mitigation investigation and reentry work. Core tasks include:

- Records collection—gathering police, medical, school, and other records to corroborate and elaborate on our clients' stories;
- Fact investigation—interviewing mitigation witnesses, obtaining declarations, and otherwise working in the field to particularize and vivify our clients' lived experiences;
- Client trust-building—developing strong, supportive relationships with our clients and their families, virtually all of whom are impoverished and struggling with addiction and mental health crises;
- Social histories—drawing on records, fact investigation, and our clients' own stories to prepare detailed social histories and humanizing narratives of our clients' lives; and
- Reentry work—preparing strong release plans and developing relationships with mental health, housing, vocational rehabilitation, and other programs in the community to plug our clients into the best network to maximize their chances of success in the community.

Strong organizational and communication skills, the ability to balance independent work and membership in a team, and enduring compassion for marginalized and at-risk populations are critical to this job.

QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

The ideal candidate for this position is a skillful, independent, yet team-oriented mitigation specialist. A highly organized and proactive self-starter, they can balance complex, long-term mitigation efforts with the urgent and unpredictable demands of a busy public defense office. They are strong writers and communicators, effective collaborators, and especially adept at building trust with marginalized clients, including individuals experiencing mental illness or substance use disorders. Above all, they are committed to justice for indigent criminal defendants and dedicated to the rigorous, detail-driven, and often challenging work required to achieve meaningful outcomes.

The person hired for this position will be expected to develop a strong working knowledge of Idaho's criminal justice, social services, and mental health systems. Daily responsibilities will include conducting exhaustive, independent investigations into all aspects of a client's background, character, personal history, record, and the circumstances of the offense, with an eye toward identifying mitigating factors that may support a reduced sentence. The mitigation specialist will work closely with clients and their families, build rapport and trust, document interviews and meetings, and translate those narratives into clear, persuasive written advocacy for the Court. The role also requires meticulous file management, ensuring complete, accurate, and well-organized records that can effectively support successor counsel.

REQUIREMENTS

A Master's degree in Social Work (MSW) is strongly preferred for this position. At minimum, candidates must have a bachelor's degree and at least three years of experience in mitigation investigation or a closely related field. Degrees in social work, psychology, sociology, law, or criminal justice, paired with meaningful experience developing mitigation evidence, are also desirable.

Applicants must have a driver's license, car, and car insurance. This position requires considerable resourcefulness, creativity, and initiative; ability to analyze and evaluate facts, evidence and related information; tact and discretion. Applicants must be flexible, able to work as part of a team, and capable of providing results with quick turnaround when necessary. This position requires local and interstate travel. Employees of this program may not engage in other full-time employment or litigation assistance for hire.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

- Selected candidate must pass a background check
- Employees are "at-will" and are not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act
- This position is eligible for overtime pay
- Employment is provisional pending satisfactory completion of a year probationary period
- Employees may not engage in other full-time employment without written consent from the Executive Director

SALARY AND BENEFITS

Salary will be commensurate with experience. Salary range: Judicial Pay Scale (JSP) 11-14, \$74,678-\$125,776, health coverage, and retirement plan.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Position open until filled, but priority will be given to applications received by February 28, 2026.

TO APPLY

Submit an electronic PDF resume including cover letter and three references at:
<https://jobs.gusto.com/postings/federal-defender-services-of-idaho-inc-mitigation-specialist-1500decb-7580-49d5-b38e-43b80cf46436>

FDSI is an equal opportunity employer committed to inclusive hiring and dedicated to diversity and inclusion in its work and with its staff.

Position subject to available funding