FEDERAL DEFENDER SERVICES
OF EASTERN TENNESSEE, INCORPORATED

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Position Announcement – Mitigation Specialist/Investigator
(Two Positions)

Who We Are

Federal Defender Services of Eastern Tennessee, Inc. (FDSET) stands on the front lines every day to keep people out of prison and halt state executions. Guided by our core values of compassion, courage, competency, creativity, and collaboration, we provide client-centered representation to those who need it most. Our clients are indigent defendants charged with federal offenses ranging from drug crimes to complex white-collar conspiracies, as well as individuals sentenced to death. Through holistic lawyering, we safeguard our clients' constitutional rights while championing their dignity, humanity, and future at every stage of their case. We actively embrace diversity, cultivate inclusion, and foster a workplace grounded in fairness, flexibility, and shared purpose. We are united by a deep commitment to standing beside our clients in their most critical moments.

FDSET is a nonprofit community defender organization funded by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, with offices in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Greeneville. Each location has a trial unit, and our Knoxville office is also home to our Capital Habeas Unit—where we handle some of the most complex and high-stakes litigation in the federal system.

The Place

Nestled in the heart of the South, East Tennessee is a place where breathtaking landscapes meet vibrant community life. Framed by the rolling foothills of the Smoky Mountains and laced with miles of rivers and lakes, the region offers postcard-worthy views in every direction. Here, even the largest cities maintain a warm, small-town charm—yet surprise visitors with a dynamic culinary and cultural scene. Savor farm-to-table fare, soulful Southern classics, slow-smoked barbecue, and authentic international cuisine, all perfectly paired with locally crafted beers. Stroll through lively farmers markets, celebrate at year-round festivals, and enjoy performances in venues such as the historic Bijou Theatre or Niswonger Performing Arts Center, which feature Broadway productions, concerts, opera, ballet, and more. Explore award-winning history, science, and children's museums or cheer on your favorite team—from the Tennessee Volunteers to professional hockey, baseball, roller derby, and even the Bassmaster Elite Series.

With a mild climate that still showcases the beauty of all four seasons, East Tennessee invites outdoor adventure year-round. Spend the day at Dollywood, take in sweeping mountaintop views at Anakeesta, marvel at marine life at the Tennessee Aquarium, or experience beloved traditions like the Greene County Fair and the National Storytelling Festival. With more than 60 state and national parks, including the iconic Great Smoky Mountains National Park, adventure is always just minutes away. And if you're bringing a four-legged friend, you'll feel right at home. The area proudly embraces a pet-friendly spirit, with cozy cat cafés, playful goat yoga sessions, ample public water bowls, and wide-open spaces where your pup, horse, cows, and so on, can roam free. In East Tennessee, life moves at the perfect pace.

The Job

We are hiring one full-time mitigation specialist/ investigator in our Knoxville office and one full-time mitigation specialist/investigator in our Greeneville office.

Duties

The mitigation specialist/investigator works collaboratively with paralegals, investigators, and attorneys to contribute to case strategy under the supervision of the trial unit supervisor and chief investigator. The mitigation specialist/investigator is responsible for identifying, locating, and interviewing a variety of witnesses; developing written reports; and identifying, collecting, and reviewing a vast array of records. The mitigation specialist/investigator determines experts that might be consulted; facilitates the client's entry into necessary and available inpatient and outpatient treatment programs, housing, and vocational training programs; develops and maintains a list of service providers in various fields; develops and maintains a list of inpatient and outpatient treatment facilities, short-term low income/homeless housing, and vocational training and educational programs; establishes and maintains relationships with the staff at identified facilities and at the Federal Bureau of Prisons; prepares sentencing presentations in writing or through video; and maintains sufficient knowledge of current research and trends in areas such as substance abuse, mental health, and the effects of incarceration.

Requirements

Candidates must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in social work or a related field such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, or criminal justice. An advanced or graduate degree in social work or related field is preferred. Candidates must have at least three years of experience conducting fact and/or mitigation investigations, preferably in the criminal justice arena. Applicants must possess substantial investigative skills to assist in a team approach to planning and developing litigation strategies and in investigating, analyzing, and developing evidence. Candidates should possess excellent interpersonal skills, the ability to establish and maintain good working relationships, and the ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing and as a witness in court proceedings. Spanish language proficiency is strongly desired.

Applicants must have a valid driver's license and insurance and own a vehicle for business purposes. A working knowledge of Word, Outlook, Excel, and Adobe Acrobat is required. A working knowledge of Accurint is preferred.

Salary & Benefits

Salary is commensurate with years of experience and qualifications in accordance with the Defender Organization Classification System and the Federal Judicial Salary Plan (JSP). The current salary range is JSP 11/1 at $74,678 to JSP 14/10 at $163,514 annually.

FDSET offers a generous benefits package, which includes paid vacation and sick leave, 11+ paid annual holidays, medical, dental, vision, life/AD&D, long-term disability, and 401K retirement. FDSET provides medical (employee-only plans), dental, vision, basic life/AD&D, and long-term disability at no monthly premium cost to employees. A partial remote work week is available to employees after an initial probationary period.

How To Apply

Qualified individuals may apply by sending ALL the following documents in a *combined PDF file* to **Sharon_Buckingham@fd.org** by **Friday, March 20, 2026**.

(1) Cover Letter
(2) Resume
(3) Three References

An email confirming receipt of the application materials will be sent to all applicants. Only those selected for interviews will receive further communication.

FDSET VALUES A DIVERSE WORKFORCE AND IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER