

Public Defender Association Senior Attorney

Summary

The Public Defender Association is looking for a Senior Attorney to direct the Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD) Legal Services program, provide legal representation to LEAD clients, advocate for criminal legal system reform through the Racial Disparity Project (RDP), and support the operation of PDA's legal services. PDA seeks an attorney motivated to help those most frequently disadvantaged by existing criminal legal and social service systems, including those with disabilities and people of color.

The Senior Attorney will direct and oversee LEAD Legal Services, which provides legal assistance to LEAD clients in a widely-varied legal practice, ranging from criminal defense to family law. In supporting the operation of PDA's legal services, the Senior Attorney will assist in developing policies and systems related to case management, attorney supervision, legal service delivery, and Rules of Professional Conduct (RPC) compliance. The Senior Attorney will also maintain a caseload of LEAD Legal Services and Racial Disparity Project clients. Through RDP, the Senior Attorney will assist with impact and appellate litigation, policy advocacy, and King County inquest representation.

Organization Description

PDA advocates for criminal legal system reform and develops alternatives that shift from a punishment paradigm to a system that supports individual and community health. Grounding reform in a public health and safety framework, PDA develops new strategies and implements models that improve on conventional responses to crime and public order issues. In collaboration with community and government partners, PDA uses policy advocacy, organizing, litigation, and public education to achieve its goals. PDA is comprised of several projects: Civil Survival, Collective Justice, JustCARE, King County Eviction Mitigation Program, LEAD, LEAD National Support Bureau, Racial Disparity Project, and VOCAL-WA.

Job Description

The Senior Attorney will direct and supervise the LEAD Legal Services program. LEAD Legal Services provides wide-ranging legal services to clients in the LEAD program. Where possible, LEAD Legal refers clients to existing legal service providers (public defenders, legal aid attorneys, etc.), and strives to focus its limited resources on areas where legal aid is not well-positioned to assist LEAD clients. Common practice areas include family law, legal financial obligation remission, and warrant quash assistance. However, the legal practice is defined by its varied scope, rather than a single focus area. Due to the varied scope, the Senior Attorney will be required to connect clients to existing legal aid providers and learn new areas of law to provide supervision and direct representation.

The Senior Attorney will have three primary responsibilities to LEAD Legal Services. First, the Senior Attorney will manage the program. In doing so, the attorney will help determine how to provide legal services (full representation, drop-in hours for LEAD clients, etc.) and how to coordinate with existing legal service providers to ensure that LEAD clients, who often have difficulty maintaining consistent attorney communication, are well served. Additionally, the Attorney will work closely with LEAD case managers to help them identify clients' legal needs and integrate legal knowledge into their social service advocacy. Second, the Senior Attorney will be responsible for supervising two Staff Attorneys and one paralegal. Finally, the Senior Attorney will carry a partial caseload of LEAD Legal clients.

In addition to supporting LEAD Legal Services, the Senior Attorney will engage in legal advocacy through the Racial Disparity Project. RDP uses policy advocacy, impact litigation, and legal representation to address racial disparities in the criminal legal system. Examples of current RDP project include assisting several families with loved ones killed by the police or in jail to investigate their loved ones' deaths, litigating a class action lawsuit seeking the refund of legal financial obligations under the WA Supreme Court's *State v. Blake* decision, and representing an individual seeking resentencing under S.B. 6164. In the Senior Attorney's first year of employment, they will co-counsel a police shooting inquest in King County.

Finally, the Senior Attorney will support PDA's broader legal services, which includes the Racial Disparity Project and reentry legal advocacy through the Civil Survival Project. In this role, the Senior Attorney will work closely with PDA's Legal Services Director and Policy and Advocacy Director. This work will include, for example, continuing to develop systems to ensure PDA complies with its Rules of Professional Conduct responsibilities, ensuring staff receive high-quality training, managing PDA's case management system (PracticePanther) so that it supports efficient legal service delivery, and creating effective systems for staff supervision.

The Senior Attorney will report to the Legal Services Director. PDA has a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination requirement for all staff, unless they meet specific exceptions under PDA's COVID-19 Vaccination Policy.

Location

PDA's office is located at 110 Prefontaine Pl. S., Seattle, WA. Although the office remains open for necessary in-person work, staff currently work largely remote due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person work will be required if necessary to provide legal services. Travel within Washington may be required. In the future, PDA will likely adopt a hybrid model, where staff will work from home and from the office, as needed.

Qualifications

- Member, in good-standing, of the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA); or ability to quickly obtain APR 8(c) admission, with full WSBA admission by January 2022.
- The ability to manage a legal services program, ensuring continuity between program activities and goals, leading team meetings, and putting program staff members in positions to succeed.

- Skill in supervising legal staff, ensuring that team members provide high quality legal representation, fostering an inclusive and collaborative team environment, and responding to staff performance issues in a constructive manner.
- Knowledge of legal service delivery, including how to effectively utilize case management systems, ensure RPC compliance, and effectively serve clients.
- Strong organization skills. The Senior Attorney should be able to manage numerous projects and supervision responsibilities, ensuring that tasks are completed in a timely manner and lower-priority items do not slip through the cracks.
- Ability to work with little direction, taking a project from conception through planning to completion. Ability to balance taking the initiative with ensuring that internal and external stakeholders are included in program discussions.
- The ability to independently and efficiently learn new legal practice areas and offer representation and supervision with a high level of competence.
- Although no applicant will have experience in all expected areas of practice, greater experience with the following areas will be preferred: family law, landlord-tenant, criminal (warrants, criminal defense, sex offender registration relief, record vacation/sealing), legal financial obligations, civil rights, employment, and immigration.
- Strong legal research and writing skills.
- Trial advocacy experience.
- Demonstrated cultural competence and sensitivity in working with diverse clients, communities, and colleagues.
- Experience and skill working with individuals with mental illness, substance use disorder, and other disabilities. The successful applicant will excel in providing legal services to individuals who have difficulty consistently engaging in their own representation.
- Ability to work on tight, and, sometimes, unpredictable timelines.
- Strong ability to work collaboratively, both with colleagues and with client case managers. The successful applicant will have strong conflict management skills and be able to tactfully engage with external partners.
- Policy advocacy and organizing skills are preferred, including the ability to review and digest core aspects of legislation, organize community in relation to PDA policy priorities, and identify policy advocacy opportunities for PDA.
- Familiarity and strong relationships with local policymakers, community leaders, and marginalized communities are preferred.

Compensation

Salary range is \$102,544-\$145,938 depending on experience. Within the position salary range, salary increases 4% annually. An additional annual cost of living increase is provided at the discretion of the Board of Directors. Benefits include:

- 401k match of up to 4% of salary, beginning after six months of employment;
- Annual, 2% of salary, profit sharing contribution to 401k, provided in most years;
- Generous medical and dental benefits for employees and family members;
- 15 days vacation, accrued annually, increasing to 20 days vacation, accrued annually;
- 12 personal days, accrued annually;

- Unlimited ORCA card; and
- Monthly \$50 employer cell phone contribution.

This is a Fair Labor Standards Act exempt, at-will position; continuation in the position depends on both performance and funding.

Equal Opportunity Employer

PDA is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and fosters an environment free of barriers and discriminatory practices. PDA actively promotes mutual respect, acceptance, teamwork and productivity. PDA is committed to maintaining an organization whose staff, Board and clients are diverse in background, experience, race, color, national origin, gender, age, religious affiliation, marital status, sexual identity, sensory, mental or physical abilities, veteran status, and other qualities that strengthen the program while reinforcing its commitment to basic fairness. People of color, those directly impacted by the criminal legal system, people who identify as queer, trans, lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and those with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply. Individuals needing a reasonable accommodation for the application or interview process should contact Corey Guilmette at corey.guilmette@defender.org or (206) 641-5334.

How to Apply

The position will remain open until filled. Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. Please submit the following to Zahra Al-Najaf (she/her pronouns) at zahra.al-najaf@defender.org:

- Letter of interest.
- Resumé.
- One legal writing sample, unedited by others.
- Names and contact information for three references.