

Job Announcement

Metro Defender Pilot Project for the Metro Jackson and surrounding areas. Office location: 239 N. Lamar Street, Jackson, MS.

Job Title: Full-time staff attorney

Salary: Between \$75,000.00 and \$90,000.00 (depending on experience); retirement and health benefits

Job Description: Representation of indigent youth accused of status offenses and delinquent acts in the youth courts of the Jackson Metro and surrounding areas.

Job essentials:

- Willingness to meet clients in youth detention facilities at, or near time of arrest.
- Knowledge of youth court law and the pertinent laws of the State of Mississippi, and the ability to apply the law to the particular facts of the case.
- Attendance and preparedness at detention hearings, adjudicatory hearings, disposition hearings, and post-disposition hearings.
- Compliance with OSPD Youth Defense Standards, the MS Youth Court Act, the Mississippi Uniform Rules of Youth Court Practice, the Rules of Professional Responsibility and all procedural guidelines in all courts.
- Robust Pre-trial motion practice.
- Zealous and compassionate advocacy for indigent youthful clients.

Minimum Qualifications: Must possess a Juris Doctorate and be licensed to practice in all Mississippi State Courts; be or become a Certified Youth Defender within 60 days of hire date, be in good standing with the Mississippi Bar Association and Courts of this State.

Required Skills and Knowledge:

- Knowledge of the MS Youth Court Act, MS Uniform Rules of Youth Court Practice, the Rules of Evidence, and Criminal Statutes, as well as the MS and United States Constitutions.
- Ability to conduct legal research, prepare pleadings and make legal arguments.
- Maintain confidentiality with clients.
- Regularly communicate with clients, providing timely updates.
- Meet clients in detention facilities and The Oakley Youth Development Center, regularly.
- Maintain professional relationships with clients, court personnel, attorneys, judges, and other office staff.
- Ability to provide availability on limited weekends.
- Ability to empower clients to make decisions about their cases, by communicating effectively using age-appropriate language & terminology, properly preparing with clients, researching issues for them, and assisting them in understanding the law and procedures as it applies to their circumstances.

- To attend and complete required continuing education, focused on status offense and delinquency defense for indigent youth.
- Possess a valid driver's license and have reliable transportation.
- Basic computer skills preferred, including the use of word processing programs, spreadsheets, and database programs.
- Familiarity with MYCIDS preferred.

Submit resumes and any references to Brenda Locke at blocke@ospd.ms.gov, Youth Defense Program Director, Office of State Public Defender.

PROBLEM

In many Mississippi counties, indigent youth defense is extremely fractured and does not provide early access to counsel nor effective assistance of counsel. There are three barriers to effective assistance of counsel for many youths. First, there is an insufficient number of independent, well-trained attorneys to provide representation of indigent youths charged. Second, is the late appointment of attorneys to youth, thereby making it virtually impossible for counsel to be adequately prepared for the hearing. And lastly, there are insufficient resources and support staff to effectively prepare for representation of the youth's expressed interest.

PLAN

The Office of State Public Defender has received grant funding from the Mississippi Justice Fund to open a Metro Defender Pilot Project. The pilot will serve the Jackson Metro and surrounding areas. Appropriation for year one will allow for one full-time attorney, and an administrative assistant. The pilot will handle delinquency and status offense cases in youth court from arrest to conclusion of the case.

BENEFITS

The project will: Preserve existing public defender positions; Decrease the caseloads of local youth defenders; Alleviate the challenge of locating conflict counsel; Represent arrested/detained youth at the earliest possible stage; Deliver continuous effective representation to charged youth; Assist judges to make better-informed pretrial decisions; Recruit lawyers and law students to youth defense; and evaluate and report pilot results to support possible replication.

Contact Information: OSPD Pilot Office André de Gruy, State Defender (601) 576-2315 adegr@ospd.ms.gov; Brenda Locke, Youth Defense Program Director (601) 576-4206, blocke@ospd.ms.gov.