Assistant Public Defender Lead Attorney Job Description

The Panhandle Area Public Defender Office is seeking a Team Lead Attorney for our Hereford, Deaf Smith County, TX office. Our current team lead will be the next district court judge for the 222nd Judicial District starting January 1, 2027. The Hereford office is located in the Deaf Smith County Courthouse and has 4 attorneys, 1 paralegal, a mental health specialist, and investigators to assist. This is a full-time position where the Team Lead will have a mixture of felony, misdemeanor, and juvenile cases along with managing the local office and participating with the administration team for the PAPDO. The Hereford branch offers the opportunity to mentor attorneys, work a variety of cases, and make a genuine difference in a traditionally underserved community. Our salary range for the role is $110,000-$130,000 depending on experience and foreign language skills, with the opportunity to earn extra income doing magistrations. Come be a part of a growing and difference-making team in the Texas Panhandle.

Potter County is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Salary: up to $130,000 depending upon experience. Additional stipends for special skills/foreign language.

Office Benefits

- Relaxed office culture
- Diversity and inclusion
- Team oriented and supportive atmosphere

County Benefits

- 210% County match for retirement account, transferrable to other counties after vesting.
- Optional 457(b)
- Medical/Dental/Vision – other insurance options

Please check out these links for more information on the Texas Panhandle and working with the Panhandle Area Public Defender Office:

https://www.nps.gov/lamr/index.htm
https://palodurocanyon.com/
https://www.milb.com/amarillo
https://welcomepardner.com/new/calendar/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bI92kM0p00M
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBN2qKRYO4w&t=10s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnkNLtwWnR0
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8gquc2R4GI
https://www.herefordtx.org/event-calendar.html
https://www.tourtexas.com/destinations/Dumas-Moore-County-events
https://panhandletx.govoffice2.com/index.asp?Type=B_EV&SEC=%7B2CF16748-9D8B-4BFB-8969-5ACCCD21ED4D%7D&MODE=LIST

https://www.papdmac.org/

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Guide and oversee the work of junior Assistant Public Defenders, legal assistants, investigators, and mitigation specialists.
- Participate in budget preparation.
- Prepares and delivers comprehensive budget proposals and operational updates to the Commissioners' Court to secure necessary funding and resource authorizations.
- Acts as a primary liaison to county leadership, delivering formal presentations on litigation needs, resource allocation, and legislative updates requiring stakeholder approval.
- Serve as lead attorney in criminal court proceedings, including evidentiary hearings, bench trials, and high-stakes jury trials.
- Conduct initial interviews, explain legal options, counsel clients on plea offers, and maintain consistent communication throughout the legal process.
- Represent clients accused of felony and misdemeanor offenses in the Panhandle area.
- May have appellate or juvenile cases assigned by the PAPDO Chief.
- Assure zealous representation for indigent clients.
- Meet with indigent clients for initial interviews, explain the law, give legal advice, explain legal options, and discuss plea offers or trial strategies.
- Review discovery and evidence, including police reports, witness statements and interrogations, dashcam and surveillance video, cellphone records, forensic reports and other discovery and evidence.
- Research, analyze and interpret issues of law. Prepare memoranda, motions, and other pleadings. Review drafts of pleadings, motions, and memoranda prepared by legal staff.
- Appear in court for trial, pleas, and other hearings.
- Work with other APDs in the formulation of legal strategies and options for clients.
- Communicate with clients, witnesses, prosecutors, and law enforcement as required, including regular trips to the participating county jails. Includes magistration appearance with recently arrested clients.
- Assist fellow public defenders in researching legal issues and in preparing memoranda, pleadings and motions.
- Prepare cases for jury trials, bench trials, open pleas, and contested motion hearings.
- Collaborate with the social services and mental health coordinator to get clients into appropriate social and behavioral health services. Work for alternative dispositions such as specialty courts, mental health treatment, pre-trial diversion, and other options.
- Negotiate with prosecutors on behalf of clients.
- Maintain good standing with the State Bar of Texas along with all required CLE.
- The duties listed above are examples of types of work that may be performed. Nothing in this job description restricts the PAPDO Chief's right to assign or reassign duties and responsibilities to this job at any time as the need arises.
- Coordinate and interview prospective team members across office departments.
- Lead recruitment lifecycle, including sourcing, screening, and interviewing qualified candidates.

Requirements

- J.D. degree and license in good standing to practice law with the State Bar of Texas.
- 2+ years of felony criminal trial experience. Extensive jury trial experience.
- Good trial skills and/or a willingness to develop such skills are required.
- Effective organizational and time management skills.
- Ability to manage a trial schedule and caseload that complies with TIDC Guidelines.
- May require evening and weekend hours. Travel may be required as well.
- Must have or obtain by date of hire a valid driver's license and reliable transportation.

Preferences

- Foreign language speakers. (Spanish and Burmese are in high demand)
- Prior appellate and juvenile criminal experience.
- Experience in managing employees.
- Experience with developing and implementing organizational policies, budgets, and HR matters.
- Good technological abilities.

Send resume and references to Jason.howell@papdmac.org and Amy.Conner@papdmac.org
If you have any questions, call (806)242-3415.