

Parent Advocate (Family Defense Unit) - White Plains, NY

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley

<http://www.lshv.org>

Job Type: Family Defense Unit – Parent Advocate

Schedule Type: Full-Time

Date: November 20, 2020

Overview

For more than 50 years, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) has been providing free, high-quality legal counsel in civil matters when basic human needs are at stake including: eviction and foreclosure prevention, domestic violence, disability, elder law, healthcare, consumer fraud and more. Our services support almost 600,000 poor and low-income families and individuals who cannot afford an attorney in our seven-county service area. With the gap separating those who can and cannot afford legal representation widening each day, we work to ensure that everyone has equal access to justice, regardless of their ability to pay. As the only provider of comprehensive civil legal services in the lower and mid-Hudson Valley (Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Rockland, Orange, Ulster and Sullivan), LSHV is proud to have handled almost 15,000 cases impacting nearly 34,000 household members including 13,000 children last year. LSHV has ten offices, a staff of 160, including 97 attorneys and 35 paralegals.

As part of a collaboration with Westchester County and NYS's Indigent Legal Services, LSHV is launching a new Family Defense Unit (FDU) as a Model Program to provide holistic and comprehensive interdisciplinary legal services to families with child welfare matters. LSHV's FDU will represent parents in child welfare proceedings in Family Court including Article 10 cases and related custody, visitation, as well as permanency planning and termination of parental rights cases. The FDU will also work to prevent placement of children in foster care by advocating for parents at the earliest stages of child welfare engagement including at the investigation stage and by litigating emergency removal hearings. Using a ground-breaking and nationally recognized approach to assisting parents, the Parent Advocate will be part of a team which includes a staff attorney, social worker and parent advocate in every matter ensuring that parents obtain the benefits and services they need to keep their families safe and stable. The FDU parent advocate will be part of LSHV's holistic client-centered civil team which will ensure that Families in crisis receive a full range civil legal services support from LSHV including legal assistance with public benefits, housing, disability and domestic violence. FDU team members will receive intensive training in support of this program.

Job Description

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) has an immediate opening for two (2) full-time Parent Advocates to be part of the Family Defense Unit (FDU) to serve parents who are accused of neglect and abuse in investigations, administrative hearings, Article 10, Permanency Planning, and Termination of Parental Rights matters as well as other related family court matters in the White Plains, Yonkers, and New Rochelle Family Courts. The positions will be based out of the White Plains Office but will require travel throughout Westchester County and appearances in all three Family Courts as well as meetings at all four DSS Offices – White Plains, Mount Vernon, Yonkers and Peekskill. FDU Parent Advocates will participate in developing a holistic case management plan in consultation with clients, attorneys, and the social worker, accounting for the strengths and needs of the client and the family.

Acting as a supportive peer, the FDU Parent Advocate will help prepare clients for CPS interactions; facilitate interactions with various system actors; attend interviews and meetings with clients, as necessary; actively participate with the multidisciplinary team in developing an effective case management plan; and encourage clients to meaningfully participate in engaging with the services outlined in LSHV's case management plan and CPS's service plan to avoid further state intervention. Furthermore, the Parent Advocate will provide emotional support, mentorship and attend meetings with the client's caseworkers and CPS workers to encourage clients to meaningfully participate in engaging with the services outlined in LSHV's case management plan and CPS

and court-mandated services. The Parent Advocate will help identify resources for the client and facilitate connection to those resources as necessary to ensure a smooth transition.

Duties of the Position: Working collaboratively with attorneys, social workers and paralegals to represent parents in Child Protective (Article 10) and Termination of Parental Rights proceedings in Family Court, providing social work support and advocacy to clients, conducting intake and client interviews, assessing clients' needs and goals, ensuring clients are engaged in appropriate and meaningful service plans, referring clients for necessary services and at times accompanying them to meetings with CPS and other entities, maintaining contact with service providers to obtain letters for court, advocating for clients with CPS and at foster care agency conferences, participating in team meetings as well as administrative meetings within LSHV, and keeping up to date client legal notes and entering data in LSHV's database. Objectives of the teams include shortening lengths of stay for children in foster care, promoting quality visiting arrangements and ensuring that families receive services that are well-tailored to expediting safe and lasting reunification.

Requirements

- Personal Experience with the Child Welfare System
- Experience working with families in crisis, preferably in the Child Welfare or Family Court System,
- Excellent people skills;
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills; Ability to work effectively with a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Ability to collaborate in a multidisciplinary team with other legal professionals, social workers, government agencies and other service providers
- Demonstrated enthusiasm for the work of defending parents in Child Welfare Proceedings and Investigations and a desire to support parents
- Valid driver's license and access to a car

Preferred

- Associate degree;
- Fluency in Spanish;
- Demonstrated commitment to serving low-income persons with prior experience in legal services or similar program.

Salary: DOE, with excellent benefits.

Please apply at our career center through the following link, and include a cover letter, writing sample and references:

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Legal Services of the Hudson Valley is proud to be an equal opportunity employer that celebrates our employees' differences. Applicants of diverse race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability and veteran status, are strongly encouraged to apply. Our differences make us better