

Staff Attorney (Family Defense Unit) - White Plains, NY

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley

<http://www.lshv.org>

Job Type: Family Defense Unit - Staff Attorney

Schedule Type: Full-Time

Date: April 9, 2021

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.

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!

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 Staff Attorney 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 attorney will be part of LSHV's holistic client-centered civil team which will ensure that Families in crisis receive a full range of civil legal services support from LSHV including legal assistance with public benefits, housing, disability and domestic violence.

Job Description

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) has an immediate opening for a full-time staff attorney to be part of the Family Defense Unit (FDU) to represent 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 position will be based out of the White Plains Office but will require travel throughout Westchester County and appearances in all three Family Courts.

FDU Attorneys will advise and counsel clients about their rights during investigations which necessarily includes explaining the process and attendant laws, preparing clients for interactions with CPS and other system actors, and guiding them through the decision-making process (including, where applicable, counseling clients regarding voluntary placement of the child with relatives and other suitable caregivers); attend interviews and meetings with clients and CPS and/or other system actors, as necessary; and negotiate with CPS to avoid court action and achieve meaningful service plans. FDU Attorneys will coordinate legal representation on matters affecting the child's safety and the family's stability by, *inter alia*, actively participating with the multidisciplinary team in developing an effective case management plan.

Duties of the Position: intakes and individual case work, litigation in state courts, including appellate practice, and education and outreach efforts directed at community members, advocates and service providers. The persons hired will also be expected to adhere to program and case handling standards, funder requirements, the highest professional standards, and be available as a resource to LSHV staff and access to justice communities.

Requirements

- Member in good standing of the New York State Bar;
- Two or more years of legal experience preferably in Family Law and child welfare matters, including litigation, or its equivalent; ability to provide high-quality zealous representation in high-stakes cases and the ability to conduct hearings on short notice, experienced candidates welcomed to apply;
- 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 attorneys, legal professionals, social workers, government agencies and other service providers;
- Demonstrated enthusiasm for the work of defending parents in Child Welfare Proceedings and Investigations;
- Valid driver's license and access to a car.

Preferred

- Demonstrated commitment to serving low-income persons with prior experience in legal services or similar program;
- English/Spanish bilingual

Salary: DOE, union scale, 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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