

# STAFF ATTORNEY (Family Defense Unit)- White Plains, NY LEGAL SERVICES OF THE HUDSON VALLEY

<http://www.lshv.org>

**Job Type:** Family Defense Unit – APPELLATE STAFF ATTORNEY

**Schedule Type:** Full-Time

**Date:** March 9, 2023

## About Us

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 over 12,000 cases impacting nearly 27,500 household members including 10,000 children last year. LSHV is made up of ten offices, and a dedicated and highly skilled staff of attorneys, paralegals and administrative professionals.

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley is dedicated to building a highly skilled workforce that reflects the diverse communities we serve and where everyone feels empowered to bring their authentic selves to work. We are committed to racial justice and promoting equity for all, and we continuously review and strengthen our processes and practices to empower our staff, clients and the communities we serve. Respect is a cornerstone of relationships among our staff. Our affinity groups are self-directed and provide a space for members to support one another and their shared vision. We encourage applications from people of all identities.

As part of a collaboration with Westchester County and NYS's Indigent Legal Services, LSHV created a Family Defense Unit (FDU) in 2021 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, appeals 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 Appellate 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 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 appellate staff attorney to be part of the Family Defense Unit (FDU) to represent parents who are accused of neglect and abuse in appeals of court based matters including interlocutory appeals and appeals of 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. This position will also focus on researching and developing systemic issues and potential related litigation. Additionally, this position will have primary responsibility for any Amend and Seal hearings and Article 78 challenges to indicated reports and will assist the trial attorneys by drafting motions in court-based matters. 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, Amend and Seal administrative hearings and the Appellate Division, Second Department.

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, appellate practice, and education and outreach efforts directed at community members, advocates and service providers. The person 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;
- Five or more years of legal experience preferably in Family Law and child welfare matters, including litigation, appeals or its equivalent; ability to provide high-quality zealous representation in high-stakes cases and the ability to conduct hearings on short notice; experience with family court appeals and motion practice is a must.
- 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. After a brief probationary period, this position may permit working from home for up to two days per week.

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

**[FDU Appellate Staff Attorney - White Plains, NY - Legal Services of the Hudson Valley](#)**

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley is a proud equal opportunity employer. People of all races, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability and veteran status, are strongly encouraged to apply.