



Washington State Office of Public Defense

June 15, 2022

Open Until Filled

Exempt Recruitment Blake Triage Paralegal \$65,000 - \$70,000 annually

Full-time paralegal position to assist Blake “triage” efforts, including reviewing conviction history and prioritizing cases for representation statewide. This is a project position and is dependent on continued project funding. Funding is currently available through June, 2023. Full state benefits are included with this position.

Washington State Office of Public Defense
Olympia, Washington
www.opd.wa.gov

We Want You to Join Our Passionate Public Defense Team!

About the Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD)

We are an independent judicial branch agency mandated to implement the constitutional and statutory guarantees of counsel and to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of indigent defense services funded by the state.

Mission: Upholding the rights of all people who are facing the loss of liberty or family by providing statewide leadership, administration, and support to the multidisciplinary public defense profession.

Vision: Public defense clients, everywhere in the state, receive truly equitable and client-centered representation from fully supported professionals.

Values: Justice ■ Service ■ Equity ■ Excellence

We administer a variety of programs, including systemic improvement programs and programs providing direct representation. To learn about OPD’s programs click [here](#). We are dedicated to excellence in public law and indigent defense, and we seek talented candidates who share this commitment to client-centered service. We value employees who bring diverse backgrounds in education, employment, community activities, and life experiences to enhance our office.

The Trial Level Program

Our Trial Level Program is comprised of three teams. We carry out a variety of projects to assist local governments in fulfilling their public defense responsibilities, and to support public defense and assigned counsel attorneys in delivering client-centered advocacy. **The Blake Team** contracts with counties and individual attorneys to ensure that people have access to counsel to seek resentencing orders and vacate convictions consistent with the *State v. Blake* decision, and collaborates with state and local organizations for implementation of *Blake* defense work. The new Triage component (see

more below) expands this team's efforts. **The Youth Access to Counsel Team** contracts with attorneys to provide on-demand legal consultation for youth making decisions on their constitutional rights when interacting with law enforcement. **The Public Defense Improvement Team** distributes grant funds to counties and cities, administers continuing legal education programs, and provides technical assistance to city and county governments. Each Trial Level team includes a mixture of attorneys and support staff. In addition to fulfilling contract and grant functions, members work with stakeholders on policy, training, and resource development within their respective subject matter areas.

Background on *Blake* Defense

In *State v. Blake*, 197 Wn.2d 170 (2021) the Washington State Supreme Court ruled that Washington's simple drug possession law was unconstitutional and void. Consequently, thousands of simple drug possession convictions needed to be vacated, including convictions of currently incarcerated people. Public defenders across the state are working to deliver *Blake* relief to individuals under DOC control and/or individuals who have already served their sentences. One-year post-*Blake*, a pressing need remains in many counties for a review of the criminal history of individuals serving sentences on convictions from those counties to determine which individuals should be served first, depending on how significant a difference *Blake* will make in their sentence. Additionally, in many counties a vacation of a simple possession conviction requires an attorney to review priority level for those individuals as well, i.e. a review of the individual's criminal history to determine whether the individual's case requires i) the services of a criminal defense attorney, ii) the services of a civil attorney, or iii) is susceptible to a pro se motion for vacation.

The Role of the Newly Funded *Blake* Triage Team

As Paralegal you will collaborate with your fellow Triage Team members (managing attorney, data analyst, and contractors) to improve the management and flow of *Blake* hearings statewide. This position is a unique opportunity for an experienced paralegal to enact improvements to the statewide response for delivering *Blake* relief, and reversing these unconstitutional convictions. Specific responsibilities will include:

- Review sentence data on individuals under DOC incarceration or community custody to determine eligibility for *Blake* relief.
- Review case dockets and obtain Judgement and Sentence documents to determine who under DOC has already been served, and who still requires attorney consultation regarding *Blake*. Assign recommended priority levels, and share findings with local public defense counsel.
- Review case history and determine eligibility for vacation for persons with historical *Blake* convictions.
- Assist the managing attorney and coordinate with the Triage Team in the creation of forms and pleadings to assist in a consistent statewide response to the impacts of *Blake*.
- Collaborate with Triage Team members to respond to inquiries from and conduct outreach to *Blake*-impacted individuals in the community, track statewide progress on *Blake* relief, and review previous work that has been completed.
- Identify jurisdictions that may need corrected orders for purposes of LFO reimbursement and/or appropriate recording in Washington State Patrol criminal history databases.
- Assist Triage Team Managing Attorney in organizing and conducting training for trial level attorneys representing *Blake* clients.
- Collaborate with the OPD *Blake* Defense Team, new Superior Court Judges Association Scheduling Referee, and other stakeholders to coordinate the statewide response to *Blake*.

Questions about this position are welcome, and should be directed to the Lead Managing Attorney, Katrin.Johnson@opd.wa.gov or 360-586-3164 ext. 108.

Minimum Qualifications

- Two years or more experience working with full-time felony defenders in Washington Courts.
- Ability to develop and sustain respectful professional relationships and communicate with a diverse community of stakeholders – state and county government officials, defense attorneys, incarcerated and other impacted individuals, and others.
- Sufficient understanding of Washington criminal court procedures so that you are able to provide effective assistance within a wide variety of court systems throughout the state.
- Demonstrated understanding of the impact of race, bias, discrimination, and differential treatment of communities that have been historically disproportionately overrepresented in court systems.
- Have the ability to prioritize tasks, and to function independently as well as part of a team in a collaborative environment.
- Strong computer skills including Outlook, Word, and especially Excel.
- Significant experience with Washington Court Information Systems including JIS, SCOMIS, Odyssey Portal, JABS, and ACORDS.
- Attention to detail and excellent writing and proofreading skills.

Desired Qualifications

- Experience preparing for *Blake* or other resentencing hearings and motions to vacate.
- Experience working with public defense and/or assigned counsel attorneys
- Experience working in different jurisdictions.
- Experience working on data-driven projects.
- Experience working with people living in poverty and/or from diverse cultures.
- Experience developing and organizing training programs.
- Lived experience with the adult or youth criminal court system.

General Responsibilities

- Exercise mature judgment in potentially sensitive, high-stress situations.
- Participate in and foster a collaborative working environment at OPD.
- Diligently follow state employee ethics requirements.
- Conduct all activities with the highest degree of professionalism in furtherance of OPD's Mission, Vision and Values.

Compensation

\$65,000 - \$70,000 annually.

Compensation depending on qualifications. Washington State employees are offered a comprehensive benefits package that includes: paid holidays, vacation and sick leave, retirement and health, dental and life insurance coverage for self and family. There are also options for deferred compensation and pre-tax flexible spending accounts. This is a project-based position, and funding for the Blake Triage Team members is currently available through June 30, 2023. For more information, please contact Lead Managing Attorney, Katrin Johnson.

Application Process

Interested candidates should *submit the following by email* to Nicole.Dodge@opd.wa.gov:

- Letter of interest.
- Current résumé and a list of at least three professional references.
- [Application for State Jobs](#) (Word file) (Rev. 6/4/19)

COVID-19

With regard to COVID-19, OPD will follow the guidance of federal and state restrictions in considering any future at home or in office work requirements and will strive to maintain a policy that is safe for the office and individual employees. Currently, people working in the office must be vaccinated or have an accommodation approved by the Director.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We vigorously pursue diversity in the work force. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, persons over 40 years of age, LGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, formerly incarcerated, prior child welfare involvement, and military veterans are encouraged to apply. Pursuing diversity, equity and inclusion means that as an agency, and as individuals, we are committed to ensuring that all employees enjoy a respectful, safe, and supportive working environment.

Teleworking

Our offices are in Olympia, Washington. We have teleworking options available by policy, and will be considered on an individual basis depending on the needs of the position and the availability of adequate equipment.