

**Washington County
Job Description**

JOB TITLE: Legal Assistant

Exempt (Y/N): No

Date Prepared: June 2014

Department: Office of the Public Defender

Supervisor: Chief Deputy Public Defender

SUMMARY:

The person is responsible for performing all legal assistant duties within the department while also answering a high volume of incoming phone calls. They ensure that all office functions are performed proficiently, and in a professional and timely manner to provide office continuity. This position requires a highly motivated individual who can contribute to the implementation of new ideas for a more efficient operation to properly handle the high volume of scheduling client appointments as office procedures become more modernize. The public sees and/or hears this person initially and the office reputation is dependent upon the attitude and information of incumbent as well as their competency to relay accurate information. This person is responsible for ensuring that each situation is handled accordingly. Also is responsible for the supervision of part-time law clerks.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES include the following:

1. Greet individuals entering the office to provide information and/or check them in for their appointment with their court appointed attorney, and/or the proper investigator.
2. Ensure that the public is treated with courtesy, and respect in a friendly manner.
3. Answer and screen telephone calls, direct phone calls to appropriate person, or take and relay messages in a polite and proficient manner.
4. Assess whether callers and/or visitors should have the information being requested in order to ensure that confidential information is given only to authorized persons.
5. Resolve problems with a courteous and helpful attitude when dealing with the public, local police agencies and/or others in a professional manner as well as have the ability to establish a good rapport with individuals and verbally defuse hostile individuals that may be irate or unreasonable.
6. Handle delicate phone calls in a professional and efficient manner.
7. Explain the process to citizens on how a public defender is assigned to criminal cases within Washington and Madison County.
8. Supervise law clerks to ensure that all law clerk duties are being properly carried out in a timely manner.
9. Coordinate work schedules for law clerks to ensure that discovery on legal cases assigned to the attorneys are copied in a reasonable amount of time.
10. Delegate tasks among several law clerks to perform essential duties such as picking up and delivering mail, invoices, and other documents to the main courthouse, the old courthouse, and the Washington County Detention Center.

11. Maintain the docketing system with precision that is consistent with actual court dates and/or hearings; arraignments for circuit court and district court cases, in an efficient and productive manner.
12. Prepare and type legal documents with accuracy including the ability to draft motions and orders with little or no supervision.
13. Comprehend common legal documents and oversee that orders are file marked by the law clerks at the circuit clerk's office and certified as necessary.
14. Schedule and set phone and in-person appointments for clients with their appointed attorney, including appointments for circuit court, district court for Washington and Madison County.
15. Facilitate appointments between language interpreters, attorneys, and client's schedules as needed by attorneys to meet with their clients.
16. Verify that invoices received from language interpreters meet audit requirements and handle the billing for such services. Ensure that these invoices are properly approved and then forwarded to the Arkansas Public Defender Commission for payment in a timely manner.
17. Prepare a weekly jail census of clients that are detained, in which the court has appointed a public defender to represent them. Revision of this complied list is done daily.
18. Validate jail calls from our clients in which they need to speak to their appointed attorney.
19. Maintain the handling of servicing 800 active case files.
20. Organize closed case files with the older files being sent to archives with a log of what and where cases files can be located.
21. Successfully complete continuing education (classes and/or seminars) as they are necessary.
22. Handle office correspondence, open and distribute all incoming mail.
23. Provide assistance to other office staff and perform miscellaneous duties as assigned.
24. Communicate with clients, probation officers, legal enforcement officers and others in and out of the office about adult and juvenile criminal cases.
25. Ensure office equipment is in working order. Receive reports from employees of any inoperable or broken equipment such as computers, faxes, copiers, phone system, air-conditioners, lights, elevator, housekeeping, or any other maintenance problems. Call for service and/or report repairs to maintenance as this duty is performed daily.
26. Must be a team player who is willing to contribute to a team atmosphere to accomplish the desired results. Provide support to everyone's effort to succeed by actively contributing while continuing to add to a positive team attitude.
27. Assist in filling in for co-workers to ensure that cases are being handled when they are absent. This includes being informed and familiar for the juvenile, adult circuit and district court case coordinator positions.
28. Safeguard the public entrance to the office by ensuring that the building's elevator is accessible at the start of the day and locked at the end of the day.
29. Perform secretarial duties, which include data entry, scanning, photocopying, filing, and faxing of documents.
30. Conduct all liaison activities in a professional manner to ensure maximum cooperation between Washington County and other agencies.

31. Assist in development of continued improvements and changes in the current case management system.
32. Keep the reception area tidy.
33. Ensure all duties assigned are performed in an efficient, timely and responsible manner according to office policy and procedures in accordance with the law to protect the individual rights all citizens in Washington County.
34. Treat all people with respect in a professional and ethical manner consistent to the standards set by Washington County.

Qualifications/Requirements:

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Education and/or Experience:

Associates Degree (A.A) or equivalent from two-year or technical school or minimum of high school diploma or general education (GED), with five (5) or more years secretarial/clerical experience in general office skills, setting and functionality; or equivalent combination of education and experience in lieu of post-secondary education. (Experience in a legal office preferred.)

Supervisory Responsibilities:

Responsible for the supervision of part-time law clerks. Monitors work schedules to ensure that a realistic action plan exists to complete assigned tasks.

Communication Skills:

The incumbent should possess strong communication and human relations skills as frequent contact is required with the public, especially with non-English speaking citizens, as well as other agencies. As well as the ability to read, analyze, and understand general legal paperwork including articles and professionals journals.

Writes clearly and informatively while checking for spelling and grammar accuracy to meet the different writing styles as needed. Able to read, interpret and understand written information.

Speaks clearly and persuasively in positive and negative situations as they arise; listens and gets clarification for accuracy to minimize potential errors; responds well to questions.

Critical Thinking Skills:

This employee will need to have the ability to use personal judgment and discretion to develop effective and constructive solutions to everyday situations as they arise. To be to apply common sense to carry out written, oral or diagrammed instructions; while understanding and anticipating problems involving several known variables in normal everyday situations or that are routine in nature.

Mathematical Skills:

This incumbent should have the ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide in all units of measure, using whole numbers, common fractions, and decimals. Computes rate, ratio, and percent. This person also needs to understand and be proficient in units of time.

Software Skills Required:

Intermediate: Word Processing/ Typing, Database systems

Basic: Alphanumeric Data Entry, Spreadsheet, Calendars

Assesses own strengths and weakness to pursue training and development opportunities designed to advance county-related technical or professional skills.

Other Skills and Abilities:

This employee must be a self-starter and able to do a variety of duties. This employee should have a basic understanding of the judicial system and criminal legal terminology; and/or have the ability to learn fundamental law concepts in order to answer questions from the general public often under stressful situations.

This staff member must have knowledge of a modern office environment with common practices, procedures, and equipment. Should possess computer skills such as Microsoft Office and have general knowledge of common office equipment such as calculator, copier, fax, scanner, etc.

Decision Making:

Performs work operation which permits frequent opportunity for decision-making of minor importance and also frequent opportunity for decision-making of major importance; the latter of which would affect the work operations of other employees and/or clientele to a high degree.

Must apply common sense and understanding to carry out detailed, but uninvolved, written or oral instructions. Formulates solutions to problems involving a few concrete variables in standardized situations.

Exhibits sound and accurate judgment being able to support and explain the reasoning for their decisions and includes the appropriate people in decision-making process as needed.

Planning:

Considerable amount of responsibility with regard to general assignments in planning time, method, manner, and/or sequence of performance of own work and those of others inside the office, but also to others outside the office to include but not limited to clients and/or interpreters; may also occasionally assist in the planning of work assignments performed by others within a limited area of operation.

Exceptional organizational management of time, skills, and resources are a necessity to complete required tasks. Prioritizes and plans work activities to use their time efficiently.

Mental Demand:

Requires the constant operation of requiring close and continuous attention while managing a high number of phone calls, while also handling other requests simultaneously. Operations require intermittent direct thinking to determine and/or select the most applicable way of professionally handling situations regarding the organization's administration and day to day operations.

Adapts to changes in the work environment and manages competing demands by applying the method best fit for the situation. Able to deal with frequent variations of situations as well as unexpected events in a professional manner.

Analytical Ability/Problem Solving:

Directed supervisory and/or professional skills using structured practices or policies and directed as to execution and review. Combination of learned things in moderately varied situations where reasoning and decision-making are essential to accurately identify and resolve problems in a timely manner. Gathers and analyze information skillfully to promote the intended outcome. Uses reasoning and professionalism when handling emotional situations.

Supervision Received:

Acts under the direction of the Chief Deputy Public Defender; arranges own work referring only unusual cases to supervisor. Monitors own work to ensure quality.

Accuracy:

Reads and comprehends simple instructions, short correspondence, and memos. Probable errors would not likely be detected until they reached another department, office and/or client and would then require considerable time and effort to correct the situation as well may having severe legal consequences for the client and/or subpoenaed witnesses. Frequently, the possibility of error would affect the organization's prestige and relationship with the general public to a limited extent, but where succeeding operations or supervision would normally preclude the possibility of a serious situation arising as a result of the error or decision.

Demonstrates accuracy and thoroughness with looking for ways to improve and promote quality while applying feedback to improve job performance.

Public Contact:

Initiates frequent contact with clients and/or citizens of Washington County. This involves both furnishing and obtaining information, while also attempting to influence the decisions of those people.

Shows respect and sensitivity for cultural differences. Approaches others in a professional manner and reacts well under pressure. Treats others with respect and consideration regardless of their status or position.

Employee Contact:

Contact with other departments and/or an office is common; and it is typical to deal with people of middle level positions to consult with on problems in which proper judgment is required to obtain cooperation amongst agencies. Contact with co-workers in advanced supervisory positions as well as frequent contact with senior level internal associates is a common practice.

Responsibility for Funds, Property and Equipment:

Reports potentially unsafe conditions and uses equipment and material properly.

Occasionally responsible for organization's property where carelessness, error, or misappropriation would result in moderate damage or moderate monetary loss to the organization. The total value for the above would range from \$5,000 to \$150,000.

Accountability:

Freedom to Act: Directed. Freedom to complete duties as defined by wide-ranging policies and precedents with mid to upper-level managerial oversight.

Annual Monetary Impact: Job creates a monetary impact for the organization up to an annual level of \$100,000.

Impact On End Results: High impact. Job has high level of impact on the day to day operations on the entire office on a direct level as far as functioning goes. Provides support services to allow attorneys to meet with their clients and that aides them to navigate the criminal defense process that affects others.

Accepts responsibility for own actions and follows through on commitments, inspiring the trust of others.

Regular and prompt attendance is necessary. Ensures work responsibilities are covered when absent.

Environmental Conditions:

The office is full of activity that requires the management of several items and/or projects that require immediate attention and may be interrupted frequently to meet the needs and requests of office. The environment can be expected at times to be busy as well a moderate amount of regular office noise.

Physical Demands:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Semi-repetitive type work which requires periods of concentration for varied time cycles as prescribed by the tasks. Semi-repetitive with a low level amount of physical demand.

While performing the duties of this position, the employee must frequently sit and talk or hear; use hands to handle, finger or feel objects. The employee must occasionally walk, reach with hands and

arms, stoop, kneel or crouch. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 10 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, color vision and the ability to adjust focus.

Work Environment:

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate as it could be expected in an office building setting.

Use of Machines, Equipment and/or Computers:

Regular use of common office equipment such as computer with multiple screens, calculator, copier, fax, scanner, etc; specialized or advanced software programs.