

PUBLIC DEFENDER CLIENT ADVOCATE

Job Summary

Partners for Justice (PFJ) is seeking Client Advocates for its Professional Fellowship Program in multiple locations nationwide. Advocates will support public defender clients throughout the legal process, helping to identify client priorities, connect clients with community social services, and assess potential enmeshed penalties of legal system contact. For more information about specific placement locations and timelines, please visit www.partnersforjustice.org/become-an-advocate.

Who We Are

PFJ was founded to transform public defense at scale, diminishing the effect of race and wealth on legal outcomes. This means empowering public defenders to assist clients with the underlying drivers of arrest and achieve better legal and non-legal outcomes, ensuring people can walk away from the criminal legal system with their rights, lives, and future intact. As a national nonprofit organization, PFJ partners with public defenders in 20 states nationwide through our Professional Fellowship program, advisory services, training, and communications.

About the Partners for Justice Professional Fellowship for Client Advocates

PFJ's Professional Fellowship offers a unique opportunity to create an impact while gaining hands-on experience within the criminal legal system. As a Client Advocate, you'll engage in a meaningful fellowship experience designed to make a concrete difference in the lives of the people you work with. With training, mentorship, and ongoing support, Advocates are integrated as full-time employees within public defender offices across the country.

During your fellowship placement, you'll become part of a carefully selected national cohort of fellows with aligned passions and goals. Throughout your time, you'll cultivate negotiation, problem-solving, and storytelling skills that will equip you for opportunities beyond your placement. The PFJ Professional Fellowship also offers access to professional development support, funding, mentorship, and assistance in professional and academic applications. Acknowledging the challenges of working inside the criminal legal system, PFJ supports Advocates with mental health and wellness programming and an Advocate Hardship Fund to address financial emergencies.

What You'll Do as a Client Advocate

As a Client Advocate, you'll serve as a full-time employee within a public defender office for up to two years. Advocates play a pivotal role by providing client-led direct service to people facing criminal charges. Each day presents new challenges and opportunities, from direct engagement with clients to collaboration with community partners to participating in legal proceedings.



Client Advocate responsibilities include:

- Conduct client interviews and build relationships with clients to understand their priorities, identify potential enmeshed penalties of arrest, and assess barriers to the client accessing desired services.
- Refer clients, based on their priorities, to community programs and social services such as housing, employment, social and medical benefits, and treatment.
- Identify potential civil, family, and immigration legal needs with a nexus to the client's criminal case and refer clients to legal partners for consultation and representation.
- Build partnerships with local community organizations and government agencies to maintain knowledge about available services and facilitate access for clients.
- Develop and maintain a resource guide of available social and legal services in the local community and in the county more broadly.
- Advocate for clients by engaging with service providers, landlords, employers, and others, conveying clients' stories and needs in a compelling way that gets results.
- In coordination with attorneys, write persuasive narratives and recommendations to be used in court proceedings.
- Coordinate with legal and social service teams to facilitate collaboration and communication on client cases.
- Maintain detailed knowledge of court processes and requirements; share information with clients and their families about the criminal legal process and assist clients in overcoming barriers to meeting court requirements.
- Collect and report data about your work and achievements.
- Actively participate in the Partners for Justice Professional Fellowship program.

Who We're Looking For

We're looking for people who want to make a change in our communities and in the American criminal legal system. People who share lived experiences with our clients are encouraged to apply for current openings, given the insight such experience brings into the systems in which we operate.

As a potential Client Advocate, you will need:

- A demonstrated interest in public service or social justice.
- Strong relationship management skills or customer support experience.
- Outstanding verbal and written communication skills, including the ability to draft professional written narratives suitable for submission in court proceedings.
- Comfort in working with minimal oversight and the ability to independently structure your own work.
- Past work or volunteer experience within a public defender office, a legal office serving low-income people, or in social service delivery is preferred.
- Experience bringing trauma-informed approaches to direct service work or enthusiasm for learning how to engage in trauma-informed advocacy.
- Reliable transportation.
- Professional-level Spanish language skills are highly valued. Spanish-speaking Advocates in some offices are eligible for a pay increase



You should be an early-career professional or be willing to accept an entry-level position. Please note that Advocates cannot offer legal advice or clinical support, and we are unable to place candidates who are already licensed social workers or hold law degrees.

Compensation and Benefits

Annual compensation ranges from \$40,000 to \$61,000, depending on office placement. In addition to the fellowship's supplemental benefits, employment benefits are specific to the placement office and may vary; however, all placements include medical coverage and paid time off. During the interview process, we provide more information on the compensation and benefits package for specific placements.

As part of the PFJ Professional Fellowship, you will also have access to the benefits described above, such as career support, mental health programming, and ongoing training and mentorship.

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy & Fair Chance Hiring

PFJ provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment and prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local laws. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training.

Furthermore, qualified applicants with arrest or conviction records will be considered for employment in accordance with the fair chance ordinances of the jurisdictions we work within, including but not limited to the [Los Angeles County Fair Chance Ordinance](#) and the [California Fair Chance Act](#).

Application and Selection Process

Are you ready to create meaningful impact, serve clients, and gain hands-on experience in the criminal legal system? If so, please apply at www.partnersforjustice.org/apply!

The fellowship application consists of a resume and short answer questions. We assess your responses both for their substance and for your writing ability. Please provide sufficiently lengthy responses (3-6 sentences) so that we may evaluate your writing skills. While an unofficial transcript is optional, it is encouraged if applicable.

The fellowship selection process consists of three stages: a pre-recorded first-round interview, a virtual final interview with a PFJ staff person, and a meeting for final placement approval with public defender staff. Additional information on our selection process and timeframe can be found on our [website](#). For any questions, feel free to contact us at apply@partnersforjustice.org.

