



Louisiana Center for Children's Rights

LOUISIANA CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS JOB DESCRIPTION:

EBRPD Advanced Advocacy Project: Juvenile Defense Social Worker

Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, a nonprofit law office that defends young people in Louisiana's juvenile justice system, seeks a skilled and committed social worker to assist in developing and implementing holistic advocacy plans that address the causes and consequences of arrest for youth in the Baton Rouge juvenile justice system. Defender social workers work closely with defense attorneys and other advocacy team members to help clients meet both their case goals and their life goals. Creativity, responsibility, empathy, loyalty to clients, perseverance, strong clinical skills, and excellent written and oral communication skills are important qualities for effective social workers in a defense office.

Project Overview

The East Baton Rouge Office of the Public Defender (EBRPD) seeks to provide high-quality, holistic representation to young people in the juvenile court of Baton Rouge. This office serves a community from a large and geographically diverse parish. The Louisiana Center for Children's Rights (LCCR) is a nonprofit, public-interest law office that defends young people in Louisiana's juvenile justice system. Social workers at LCCR assist in providing holistic, passionate, skilled, and client-directed advocacy for indigent young people in the city's juvenile justice system. Together, LCCR and EBRPD plan to bring that same advanced advocacy to East Baton Rouge Juvenile Court. The social worker will be part of a multidisciplinary team along with attorneys, and investigators, that develops and implements comprehensive advocacy plans to help children achieve their goals in court and in life. We believe that every defense team member brings vital skills and viewpoints to the high quality advocacy that our clients deserve. Our work includes representing accused young people in court; investigating the state's claims and developing strong defenses; helping families navigate the school system to find the right fit for each child; advocating for special education services; connecting clients with community-based services like trauma counseling, medication management, and vocational training; and arranging for young people and their families to receive government benefits. We respond to the causes and consequences of arrest, aiming to make a long-term, positive, difference in the lives of our clients.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a social worker on the EBRPD Advanced Advocacy Project include:

- Completing intake of clients and their parents or guardians;

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- Interviewing clients and performing assessments to determine client needs, including psychiatric, social, emotional, and educational needs;
- Through records collection and collateral interviews – including interviews of parents, guardians, and other relevant family members – gathering and analyzing information relevant to assessing client needs;
- Developing and maintaining competency in assessing and meeting the needs of every client, including clients who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning;
- Providing crisis mediation as needed;
- Developing social service plans – including sentencing plans that present the court with compelling alternatives to incarceration, and plans for provision of services on release from incarceration – for clients, driven by clients’ expressed interests and goals;
- Becoming and remaining familiar with relevant service providers – including community-based providers of mental health care services, job training, counseling, and housing – and conducting site visits to assess the quality of service providers and their suitability for clients;
- Becoming and remaining familiar with the range of benefits that may be available to clients and their families, and with the mechanisms for accessing those benefits;
- Counseling clients and client families on available services and benefits and on overcoming potential barriers to accessing those services and benefits;
- Making referrals, finding placements, and assisting with logistics and enrollment to help clients and their families access needed services and benefits;
- Advising attorneys and other staff on issues within the expertise of social workers, including family dynamics, adolescent development and psychology, the use of standard social work assessment tools, and available community-based services;
- Assisting attorneys in working with, or preparing to confront, expert witnesses in fields related to the social worker’s area of expertise;
- Assisting attorneys in understanding mental health records and other materials related to the social worker’s area of expertise.
- Maintaining regular contact with clients, including regularly visiting clients at home and in custody;
- Testifying in court, as needed, and assisting in the preparation of presentations to judges and other decision-makers;
- Thoroughly documenting all work and all information gathered. Supervising interns, and other non-permanent staff, as appropriate;
- Assisting in project evaluation and assessment;
- Other projects as directed by LCCR’s Executive Director and/or EBRPD Supervising Attorney

Social workers must perform all duties in accordance with applicable law, ethical rules, and the performance standards promulgated by LCCR and by the Louisiana Public Defender Board.

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Social workers are responsible, in accordance with rules promulgated by the Louisiana State Board of Social Work Examiners, for timely obtaining and properly maintaining licensure and/or certification to practice master's level social work. Social workers will be provided with ongoing training in areas of importance to their job, including applicable professional, ethical, and legal rules.

Social workers report to the EBRPD Supervising Attorney.

Required Qualifications

- Deep commitment to the defense of indigent youth and to a client-directed ethic, which recognizes that all advocacy must be driven by the expressed interests of clients;
- Excellent interpersonal and interviewing skills, and the ability to develop rapport with a wide range of people;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills;
- Thorough understanding of social, psychological, medical, economic, and legal factors that affect adolescent behavior;
- Strong clinical skills;
- Strong analytical skills;
- Strong work ethic;
- Creativity and flexibility in solving problems and meeting challenges;
- Graduate-level social work degree from an accredited school of social work;
- Licensure or certification to practice master's level social work in Louisiana, or eligibility to obtain such certification or licensure in the immediate future;
- Car ownership, or daily use of a car, with a valid driver's license and insurance;
- Willingness to submit to a background check;
- Applicants must be at least 21 years of age.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience working with youth;
- Familiarity with developmental psychology, mental health issues, the East Baton Rouge public schools, and/or the geography, history, and people of East Baton Rouge and Louisiana;
- Understanding of relevant law and of the juvenile justice system.

Compensation and Hours

The salary range for this position is commensurate with experience. LCCR can provide a qualified social work supervisor for an LMSW in the position who is interested in working towards an LCSW. Vacation, parental leave, sick leave, and health benefits are provided.

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The position is full-time, and no outside compensated work is permitted. Depending upon case and client needs, social workers can expect to be called upon to work some nights and weekends.

How to Apply

Applicants must submit: (1) a cover letter; (2) a resume or C.V., including an e-mail address and daytime and evening telephone numbers; (3) a writing sample; and (4) a list of three professional references, including the name, address, telephone number and, if available, e-mail address of each.

The position will remain open until filled with a qualified applicant.

We prefer to receive applications by email. Please do not call with inquiries. Applications should be directed to:

Jack Harrison
Supervising Attorney
East Baton Rouge Office of the Public Defender
EBRPDadvancedadvocacyproject@laccr.org

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