Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia
Washington, DC

Mission Statement:

The Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (PDS) provides and promotes quality legal representation to indigent adults and children facing a loss of liberty in the District of Columbia and thereby protects society's interest in the fair administration of justice.

The Criminal Law Internship Program is designed to provide current undergraduate and graduate students with the fundamental investigative techniques and relevant criminal law knowledge needed to assist attorneys within the organization in preparation for legal representation of our clients.

Internship Title:

Intern Investigator

Responsibilities/Projects:

The Criminal Law Internship Program (CLIP) at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (PDS) provides undergraduate and graduate students with the fundamental investigative techniques and the relevant criminal law knowledge needed to assist staff attorneys. The greatest aspect of this internship is the enormous amount of responsibility given to each student, as well as the hands-on nature of the workload. The internship kicks-off with a comprehensive, mandatory weeklong training session that orients interns to PDS and the City. In the second week, Intern Investigators are assigned to attorneys in one of our legal services divisions for whom they are to complete all investigative aspects of the assigned cases. The staff attorneys represent adults and juveniles facing charges that can range anywhere from drug possession to homicide. The investigative responsibilities include: locating and interviewing witnesses, meeting with and interviewing clients, taking detailed witness statements, performing extensive criminal background checks, serving subpoenas, photographing, diagramming and measuring crime scenes, preparing courtroom exhibits, preparing memoranda regarding investigative activities, assisting with defense theory development, and generally assisting the assigned attorney(s) in and out of court.

Qualifications:

The Intern Investigators selected to participate in the program must be a current student at an undergraduate institution or graduate school. Applicants must display strong written and oral communication skills and a strong work ethic. Non-US citizens are eligible to participate as volunteers. The Public Defender Service is strongly committed to the principle of diversity and actively encourages applications from people of varied and diverse background. It is also necessary for the Intern Investigators to be capable of being unbiased and objective when considering our clients and their cases.
Is there a language requirement? If so, please specify the language and level of proficiency needed.

There is no language requirement; however, fluency in a second language is highly sought in applicants.

Working Conditions:

Investigating at the Public Defender Service is not a 9 to 5 job. The hours are flexible, but can also be demanding at times when the attorney is in trial. Many of the witnesses that need to be interviewed work during the day, making it necessary, on occasion, to go into the community in the evening or on weekends. The office environment at PDS is informal. Staff Investigators dress casually (i.e. jeans, tennis shoes) and the Intern Investigators are encouraged to do the same. The Intern Investigators could potentially be required to testify in court, therefore suits or other business attire may be needed. Intern Investigators have a computer lab to write reports and conduct investigative searches on the Internet; however, the majority of the time will be spent away from the office in the community.

On-Site Supervisor/Mentor:

Matthew Hanna
Internship Supervisor/Supervisory Investigator
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Additional Contact:

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Program Assistant
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Mentorship Plan:

Once the one-week training session is complete, the Intern Investigators will be assigned to attorneys who will act as immediate supervisors. The Internship Supervisor, as well as other Investigations Supervisors, will be available any time at the office or by cell phone to answer investigative questions, discuss problems regarding attorney and/or partners assignments and to accompany interns into the field. There will also be Intern Investigator Practice Group (IIPG) meetings each month with the Internship Supervisor and the other Investigators to discuss investigative difficulties and any other specific case-related problems. The hiring process for the Criminal Law Internship Program generally takes about two to three weeks, however it can take longer. Once the application is received, the Internship Office will review it, along with the required writing sample, and then email the applicant to schedule an interview. Skype interviews are possible for those who are not in the area. After the interview has taken place, and the applicant satisfactorily meets all qualifications, an acceptance letter will be sent out.

The program is further supplemented with a tour and lecture series that may include but is not limited to the US Attorney's Office, the D.C. Department Corrections, the Medical Examiner's Office, St. Elizabeth’s Mental Hospital and the Metropolitan Police Department. The purpose of the tours and
lectures are to expand the scope and understanding of the criminal justice system. Also, student interaction with the staff is highly encouraged as it provides increased comprehension of our role in the system. The backgrounds and motivations of our professional staff are quite varied and impressive. Working directly with them provides students with an opportunity to understand the passion and dedication towards our mission. In addition, discounted services are available with LSAT test preparatory courses in the area (Testmasters), for those seeking admission to law school

**Is the organization accessible via public transportation?**

Yes, PDS is located in close proximity to multiple stops, on varying lines, on the Metro.

**Does the Intern need to provide his/her own transportation?**

Intern Investigators spend significant time traveling within DC and surrounding areas, visiting witnesses, crimes scenes and collecting documents. It is beneficial to have full-time access to a vehicle, but it is not required. All work related travel expenses and most parking expenses incurred while on the job are reimbursed.