



**FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA  
Capital Habeas Unit for the Fourth Circuit**

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**John G. Baker**  
*Federal Public Defender*

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**Position Announcement  
Paralegal (Capital Habeas Unit)  
Charlotte, North Carolina**

The Federal Public Defender's Office for the Western District of North Carolina is looking for a Paralegal for our Capital Habeas Unit based in Charlotte. We are committed to excellence and the quest for justice of the indigent accused, focusing on our clients' needs with innovation, passion, and through dynamic advocacy.

**Posted:** September 30, 2026.

**Closing date:** Applications received by October 23, 2026, will receive priority consideration. The position will remain open until filled.



**Job Description:** The scope of our work includes all stages of federal habeas corpus proceedings, stay litigation, method-of-execution challenges, and executive clemency. We have an active caseload in North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, and the United States Military. We regularly litigate in federal district courts, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Paralegal will play an integral role in litigation teams that represent death-sentenced prisoners. A paralegal's duties include: performing general case preparation as directed by the CHU staff, including assisting in the creation, maintenance, organization, and indexing of case files; participating in case management functions such as calendaring, conflict checks, and docket control; assisting in the preparation and submission of pleadings and correspondence; assisting in the development of evidence, including the locating, collecting, organizing, summarizing and analyzing of records from a variety of different sources relating to the offense and the client's life history and supporting investigations; and assisting in the maintenance of "banks" of substantive pleadings and reference materials. The position may require frequent travel and work outside of business hours, including weekends and holidays.

**Requirements:** Applicants should have at least three years of paralegal or comparable experience. Experience with complex litigation and large records is preferred. Prior criminal, capital, or habeas experience is valued but not required. As this office is paper-light, experience with maintaining electronic case files, scanning, and document management and conversion software is desirable. Experience with computer-assisted research and litigation support and platforms for collaboration and case management (such as Box, CaseMap, Everlaw, or an equivalent) is favored. Willingness to learn new or updated case and document management software is imperative. The successful applicant will have strong research and organizational skills, the ability to work independently and on a team, a facility with multi-tasking, and a commitment to the capital representation of indigent clients.

This position is classified at JSP grade levels 11, 12, 13, and 14. All levels require three years of

general experience plus specialized experience, which increases with level as shown in the Salary and Benefits section below. One year of qualifying experience must have been at, or equivalent to, the next lower level. Higher education may be substituted for a portion of the required experience.

**Salary and Benefits:** Salary is commensurate with experience and qualifications. The current salary range for this position is JSP 11/1 at \$76,343 to JSP 14/10 at \$167,160 annually. The level at appointment is based on the selected candidate's general and specialized experience, as described under Requirements; step placement within the level is determined at the time of appointment.

| Level  | Specialized experience | 2026 salary (steps 1–10) |
|--------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| JSP 11 | 3 years                | \$76,343 – \$99,252      |
| JSP 12 | 4 years                | \$91,503 – \$118,957     |
| JSP 13 | 5 years                | \$108,810 – \$141,455    |
| JSP 14 | 6 years                | \$128,581 – \$167,160    |

This is an excepted service position with federal employee benefits, including health and life insurance and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) pension, Social Security, and Thrift Savings Plan. We observe Federal holidays and provide generous annual and sick leave. Salary is payable only by Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit).

**Conditions of Employment:** The official duty station for this position is the Charlotte office. This position supports a remote work arrangement, with a requirement to report to the duty station two (2) days per pay period. Employees must reside within a commuting distance of the duty station, as on-site presence may also be required for meetings, training, operational needs, or other official business as directed by management. The employee will be expected to be in-office for their first 90 days as part of orientation/onboarding.

Applicants must be United States citizens, or persons authorized to work in the United States. Appointment to the position is provisional pending the successful completion of a background check. *A prior criminal conviction is not necessarily disqualifying.* Employees are members of the judicial branch and considered “at will” employees. Travel by a personal vehicle may be required.

**About Us:** Our regional CHU represents indigent people sentenced to death in the state and federal courts within the Fourth Circuit's appellate jurisdiction. We have an experienced team of investigators, paralegals, and attorneys who are committed to innovative and passionate advocacy.

Our office is based in [Charlotte](#), a compact and thriving city in the Carolina Piedmont. Charlotte offers expansive parks and greenways, premier theatre and concert venues, outstanding restaurants, professional sports, and a strong public school system. It's also within easy reach of the Carolina coast and the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains.



We recognize that we cannot serve the distinct needs of our clients without assembling a diverse team of dedicated professionals who work and advocate collaboratively on their behalf. We welcome applicants of any race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, disability, age, and status. We are committed to ensuring an inclusive and equitable workplace. Click [here](#) for more information about our office. We have attached our office's Mission, Vision, and Values statements to this announcement to provide additional insight into the work that you will be asked to perform as an employee of this office.

**How to Apply.** Qualified persons should email a *single PDF* containing a letter of interest and résumé to [WDNCAapplication@fd.org](mailto:WDNCAapplication@fd.org), with "Paralegal - CHU" in the subject line.

Only those selected for an interview will be contacted. No phone calls, please.

We welcome requests for accommodations from applicants with disabilities. Please submit any such requests to [WDNCAapplication@fd.org](mailto:WDNCAapplication@fd.org).

Interviews will be conducted in person or virtually.

This position is subject to the availability of funds.

**The Federal Public Defender is an Equal Opportunity Employer**



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**Mission Statement**

We are committed to excellence and the quest for justice of the indigent accused, focusing on our clients' needs with innovation, passion, and through dynamic advocacy.

**Vision Statement**

Advocacy requires engaging with every aspect of our clients' lives. We will defend our clients with purpose, compassion, and courage; identifying inequities that deny them of freedoms, drive their prosecutions, and inflate their sentences. We will work to reform the criminal legal system that is too often blind to these realities. We will partner with those who serve our community to help secure a future for our clients and their families. And we will strive to provide aid to and set an example for the present and future generations of our professions.

**Values Statement**

We are a diverse office motivated by our devotion to represent the indigent accused with respect and dignity, serving them with dynamic advocacy, excellence, and compassion. We are client-centered and driven by our passion and dedication to our clients. We are unwavering and purposeful in the representation of each client.

- **Dynamic Advocacy:** We are passionate about advocating for our clients. We listen to their stories, address their concerns, and advise them with compassion and expertise. We are innovative, intentional, and creative in our legal strategies. We are tenacious in our efforts to ensure that our clients' needs are always addressed, regardless of income or abilities.
- **Client-Centered Representation:** Clients' voices are at the core of every decision we make. We will represent and connect with our clients with integrity, dignity, and respect and be their voice. We embrace diversity and ensure that those we serve are the experts in their own life stories.
- **Excellence:** We seek the best practices and embody the highest standards of professionalism in all aspects of our representation. We are unafraid of innovation and embrace collaboration within and outside our discipline. We work with our colleagues and peers to hone our skills, challenge our practices, and raise the bar for our professions. We are tireless advocates for the indigent, dedicated and committed, accepting nothing less than excellence.
- **Diversity:** Diversity is essential to advocacy. We cannot represent our community unless we reflect its cultural differences. It makes us better advocates and is at the core of who we are. Diversity is fundamental to building strong relationships with our clients and colleagues. Our office encompasses and embraces people of different races, ethnicities, gender, ages, religious beliefs, sexual identities, etc. We are dedicated to having staff from all walks of life and will continue to recruit diverse talent.