



## **JUVENILE REGIONAL SERVICES JOB DESCRIPTION: SOCIAL WORKER**

*Juvenile Regional Services, a nonprofit law office that defends young people in Louisiana's juvenile justice system and serves as the juvenile public defender in New Orleans, 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 New Orleans' 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.*

### ***Organizational Overview***

Juvenile Regional Services (JRS) is a nonprofit, public-interest law office that defends young people in Louisiana's juvenile justice system.

In New Orleans, JRS is the juvenile public defender, providing holistic, passionate, skilled, and client-directed advocacy for more than 1,000 indigent young people in the city's juvenile justice system every year. Our clients are represented by multidisciplinary teams – case managers, social workers, attorneys, and investigators – that develop and implement comprehensive advocacy plans to help children achieve their goals in court and in life.

JRS believes 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 difference in the lives of our clients.

Statewide, JRS is a leader in protecting and enhancing the right of every Louisiana child to high-quality legal representation and in advocating for systemic juvenile justice reform. We pursue our statewide objectives through strategies including direct representation of youth, policy reform, and training and technical assistance for Louisiana's juvenile defender community.

### ***Responsibilities***

*Juvenile Regional Services values diversity and is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Women, people of color, people who are LGBT, and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply.*

The responsibilities of social workers at JRS include:

- *Assessing Client Needs*
  - Interviewing JRS 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 JRS client, including clients who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning;
  - Providing crisis mediation as needed.
- *Developing and Implementing Service Plans*
  - 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 JRS 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 JRS 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;
  - Maintaining regular contact with programs providing services to JRS clients, monitoring service quality and client compliance;
  - Evaluating client progress towards service plan goals, and counseling clients to help ensure that goals are met.
- *Consulting and Advising*
  - 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.
- *Communication, Presentation and Documentation*
  - Building and maintaining strong relationships of trust with clients and their families;
  - 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;
- Preparing written reports on subjects including client needs and service plans;
- Thoroughly documenting all work and all information gathered.
- *Administrative and Program Responsibilities*
  - Supervising interns, AmeriCorps members, and other non-permanent staff, as appropriate;
  - Collaborating with other JRS staff in strategic planning and new project development;
  - Assisting in project evaluation and assessment;
  - Other projects as directed by JRS' Executive Director and/or Managing Director.

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

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 office's Managing Director.

### ***Required Qualifications***

- Deep commitment to the defense of indigent youth and to JRS' 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 masters-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***

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

### ***Compensation and Hours***

The salary range for this position is \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year, depending on experience and educational attainment. JRS will assist in obtaining 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.

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:

Meghan Garvey, Managing Director  
1820 St. Charles Avenue, Suite 205  
New Orleans, LA 70130  
jobs@jrsla.org