Education Staff Attorney – School Justice Project

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc. (AFC) seeks a dedicated attorney to join the School Justice Project to provide direct representation, outreach, community education, and policy advocacy, to ensure that youth involved in the juvenile and/or criminal legal system have meaningful access to appropriate educational services during an unparalleled time of difficulty for them and their families. Given the evolving implementation of policies and programs for court-involved youth, the need for education advocacy by an attorney versed in the juvenile and/or criminal legal system is critical.

AFC is a not-for-profit social justice organization that strives to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. AFC works on behalf of children and youth who are at greatest risk of academic failure due to poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, homelessness, immigration status/limited English proficiency, or involvement in the child welfare or juvenile/criminal legal systems. We use uniquely integrated strategies to advance systemic reform, empower families and communities, and advocate for the educational rights of individual students.

Responsibilities

Direct Representation:
The attorney will advocate for youth involved in or at risk of being involved in the juvenile or criminal legal system who are: suspended from school, policed in school, illegally removed from or pushed out of school, in need of more support in school, in need of another school, in need of special education services, or experiencing other school-related difficulties. As part of this advocacy, the attorney will provide families with information on their rights in school, including schools in juvenile and adult correctional facilities and in the community; facilitate referrals for evaluations; participate in school meetings; advocate to schools, administrators in the New York City Department of Education, Administration for Children’s Services, and Department of Correction, and Family, Criminal, and Supreme Court judges; collaborate with defense attorneys, alternative to incarceration providers, and other professionals working with youth in the juvenile/criminal legal systems; identify appropriate school options and services for students; and represent families at IEP meetings, suspension hearings, Manifestation Determination Reviews, and special education administrative hearings, and on appeals.

Outreach and Training:
The attorney will do outreach to, collaborate with, develop materials for, and provide capacity-building trainings, resources, and technical assistance for professionals working with youth in the juvenile/criminal legal systems (e.g., alternative to incarceration and detention providers, Close to Home providers, and court staff) to support the education-related needs and positive education outcomes of
court-involved youth. The attorney will also create know-your-rights materials and conduct trainings for students and parents.

**Policy Advocacy:**
Using the information learned through individual case advocacy and trainings, the attorney will advocate for systemic changes, such as improving the educational and vocational attainment of students at risk of, involved in, or transitioning out of the juvenile or criminal legal system. This advocacy may include writing letters, reports, and public comments; participating in city and state policy meetings; testifying before the City Council; and working with other organizations to advocate for systemwide changes.

**Qualifications:**
- Law degree required, with admission to the NYS bar preferred.
- Experience working with communities with low income, communities of color, and/or communities with disabilities required.
- One to three years direct representation or litigation experience strongly preferred.
- Experience and/or knowledge of the juvenile and/or criminal legal system strongly preferred.
- Experience and/or knowledge of education, disability, or civil rights laws strongly preferred.
- Proficiency in a language other than English, particularly Spanish, preferred.
- Excellent oral and written communication and advocacy skills (including adversarial and negotiation).
- Ability to identify, analyze, and creatively resolve layered and complex problems.
- Strong organizational skills, attention to detail, and client database record-keeping skills.
- Flexibility, initiative, maturity, and cooperative attitude.
- Ability to set priorities, meet deadlines, and work both independently and collaboratively.

**How to apply:**
Please send an e-mail with “School Justice Project Staff Attorney” in the subject line with a cover letter, resume, and writing sample (at most, lightly edited by others) to sjpattorney@advocatesforchildren.org. Cover letter should describe candidate’s interest in and connection to this work. Candidates should highlight any personal or professional experience that demonstrates their connection to the populations that AFC serves. Candidates selected for interviews must provide contact information for three references.

Only candidates being scheduled for interviews will be contacted. No phone calls or messages, please.

The position is currently in person from our New York City office two days a week and remote on other days. At some point, more or less in-person work may be required, depending on the course of the pandemic.

**Expected Start Date:**
The position is available immediately, and resumes will be considered on a rolling basis.
Compensation:
The salary range for this position is $64,000 - $76,500, depending on experience. AFC’s current compensation package includes full payment of medical plan premiums for a Platinum medical plan for staff and their qualified dependents; dental coverage; coverage of the premium cost of life insurance and long- and short-term disability insurance; a 403(b) plan with a fully vested employer match; 12 weeks of paid parental leave after one year of employment; and generous time-off policies, including 15 vacation days and an additional 15 paid time off days in the first year of employment.

AFC is an affirmative action employer that actively seeks to recruit and retain a diverse staff and especially encourages applications from people of color, persons with disabilities, persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or gender expressions and persons of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. For more information on AFC, see www.advocatesforchildren.org.

AFC is committed to providing access, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation when requested by a qualified applicant or employee with a disability or other protected characteristic. The policy regarding requests for reasonable accommodation applies to all aspects of employment, including the application process. For more information and to request an accommodation, contact Human Resources at HR@advocatesforchildren.org.