

Colorado Public Defender – Class Specification

Class Title: Licensed Social Worker (LSW)
Class Series: Social Worker
Class Code: R49H22
Reports to: Attorney or Social Work Supervisor or Manager; LCSW for clinical practice
Range Min/Max: \$4,056 - \$5,881

GENERAL SUMMARY:

This is a Licensed Social Worker (LSW) position, which requires the application of fundamental theories of psychosocial variables to assist in identifying the presence of physical or mental health impairments, substance abuse issues, family or other social history patterns that impact the client's behavior and development.

This classification describes the first level within the series wherein employees learn and apply policies, procedures, rules and regulations specific to the organization and relevant techniques, methods and/or theories of the profession. Positions work under direct supervision, to include regular guidance, review and oversight by supervisors and more experienced staff, while learning fundamental skills and technical aspects of the work. It is expected that employees will develop the necessary competencies to assume the duties and responsibilities at the Senior Social Worker level. Positions should not remain in this class indefinitely.

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Public Defender Social Workers serve as part of the defense team, and as such, are bound by the Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct including rules regarding the attorney-client privilege and client confidentiality. Public Defender Social Workers perform duties and assume responsibility for case assignments under the specific direction, instruction and guidance of a defense attorney.
 - Conducts assessments and compiles psychosocial histories to develop recommendations concerning pretrial release, detention, case preparation, alternative placements, treatment options, conditions of probation or diversion, and sentencing and post-sentencing options, as appropriate. Assessments may include reviewing arrest reports, juvenile screening team reports and other relevant information that becomes available to address pretrial release or detention concerns.
 - Conducts assessments to identify physical or mental health issues, substance abuse or other patterns potentially influencing the client's development, personality or behavior. Documents and interprets symptoms of mental and behavioral impairment to assist the defense in developing case strategies throughout various stages of the legal proceedings.
 - Collects social and family history information to identify psychosocial influences and patterns in the client's development and behavior including, but not limited to, socio/cultural/economic status and behavioral health issues.
 - Conducts interviews with the client, family members, friends and others to elicit family and social history data, including highly sensitive and confidential information.
 - Participates in pretrial, adjudication and sentencing hearings as requested by the defense attorney. Prepares reports and provides additional information and support, as required.

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- Assists in obtaining and reviewing records, evaluations or reports and analyzes the significance of information relevant to the client's circumstances and case. Where appropriate, assists the defense team in documenting and organizing digital and physical files of information collected.
- May assist the defense attorney in locating medical or mental health experts to further examine, evaluate, and testify regarding the findings and implications of the client's physical or mental health issues. Exchanges relevant information and assists in interpreting evaluation findings.
- Serves as a collaborative member of the defense team: Consults with attorneys on the appropriate approach to the case, including any potential ethical issues, to effectively mitigate the case, identify any behavioral health factors, support the client, and identify options for the client short of incarceration.
- Maintains regular and timely communications with attorneys and other members of the defense team to keep apprised as to the status of the case, court dates, social support information, and progress on the case; and, to seek clarification on social work requests in order to prioritize and complete assigned tasks on the social work request within appropriate timelines.
- Keeps current on statewide resources available and relevant to the individual needs of clients including, but not limited to, treatment programs and alternative placements. Conducts research necessary to ensure resources are current for providing appropriate recommendations.
- Attends multi-agency and multi-disciplinary staffing meetings involving the client.
- Keeps attorneys abreast of relevant issues and findings; and, seeks direction regarding case strategies and matters requiring further assessment or evaluation.
- Maintains required statistical information and data collection.
- May supervise and mentor student interns enrolled in a graduate-level social work education program. Elements of supervision may include training and guidance within the scope of the school's academic program and providing formal evaluation and feedback to the school staff.
- Organizes daily activities to effectively manage time and resources, including the performance of work that falls outside normal business hours.
- Frequent travel within and occasionally outside the State of Colorado, including occasional overnight travel.
- Provides assistance to other regional offices, as needed.
- Attends meetings and trainings as required.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

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QUALIFICATIONS

Education and Experience:

Master's degree from an accredited college or university educational program in social work; and, licensure to practice social work (LSW) in the State of Colorado or willingness and ability to obtain licensure within 90 days of employment. Positions at this level are expected to develop skills and experience specific to practice in the public defender system.

Conditions of Employment:

- Licensure to practice social work in the State of Colorado;
- Valid driver's license, proof of insurance and access to a working vehicle.

Knowledge (position requirements at entry):

- Understanding of the fundamentals of evidence-based theory and practice;
- Understanding of the professional and constitutional ethics principles and practices including client confidentiality and attorney-client privilege.

Skills (position requirements at entry):

- Strong client service focus;
- Ability to comply with rules regarding the attorney-client privilege and client confidentiality;
- Ability to apply the theories of social work practice;
- Ability to assess implications of physical, mental health, or substance abuse issues on development and behavior;
- Strong interpersonal skills to establish positive, productive and respectful working relationships with clients, client families and persons of diverse backgrounds;
- Ability to establish effective working relationships with members of the Public Defense system, witnesses, court personnel, mental health experts and others in the medical and mental health community;
- Ability to process and retain large amounts of information, manage a caseload and meet deadlines;
- Effective communication, verbal and written, sufficient to exchange or convey information, including interviewing and report-writing skills and receiving/giving direction;
- Proficient in standard software applications such as, Microsoft Office Word, Excel, Power Point, internet browsers and e-mail and ability to learn Adobe Acrobat;
- Ability to handle emergency or crisis situations;
- Bilingual, Spanish-speaking skills may be preferred in some assignments.

Physical Requirements (*Employees must be able to meet the physical demands of the job, with or without reasonable accommodation.*)

Light Work: Exerting up to 20 pounds of force occasionally and/or up to 10 pounds of force frequently, and/or a negligible amount of force constantly to move objects. Physical demands are in excess of those of sedentary work. Light work usually requires walking or standing to a significant degree.

- Talking and hearing;
- Vision to review discovery and records.