

Colorado Public Defender – Class Specification

Class Title: Licensed Social Worker (LSW)
Class Series: Social Worker
Class Code: R49H22
Reports to: Supervising/Managing Attorney or Supervising Social Worker; LCSW for clinical practice
FLSA: Exempt
Date: July 1, 2022
Range Min/Max: \$4,392 - \$6,149

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 are oriented to the role of mitigation, case management release planning, and forensic social work in a criminal public defense system; apply relevant techniques, methods and/or theories of the profession within that role; and, learn to apply their social work practice within the policies, procedures, rules and regulations specific to the Colorado State Public Defender. 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.

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. Social Workers perform duties and assume responsibility for case assignments under the specific direction, instruction and guidance of a defense attorney.

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Conducts assessments and compile 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.
- 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.
- Collects social and family histories through interviews and document review, including highly sensitive and confidential information. Identifies psychosocial influences and patterns in the client's development and behavior including, but not limited to, socio/cultural/economic status and behavioral health issues.
- Assists in obtaining and reviewing relevant 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.

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- Assists the defense team in identifying medical or mental health experts to further examine, evaluate and testify regarding the client's physical or mental health issues. Assists in interpreting evaluation findings.
- Serves as a collaborative member of the defense team: Consults with attorneys on the appropriate approach to the case; maintains regular and timely communications with the team; provides support to the client; and, identifies and advocates for appropriate options for the client.
- Participates in pretrial and sentencing hearings, prepares reports, and provides additional support as requested by the defense attorney.
- Keeps current on statewide resources available and relevant to client needs such as, treatment programs and alternative placements. Conducts research necessary to ensure resources are current.
- Attends multi-agency and multi-disciplinary staffing meetings regarding the client.
- May supervise and mentor student interns enrolled in a graduate-level social work education program.
- Requires frequent travel within the State of Colorado, including occasional overnight travel.
- Provides assistance to other regional offices, as needed.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

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:

- 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:

- 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;

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- 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.