

FEDERAL DEFENDER SERVICES OF EASTERN TENNESSEE, INCORPORATED

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Position Announcement – Capital Habeas Unit Supervisor

Who We Are

Federal Defender Services of Eastern Tennessee, Inc. (FDSET) stands on the front lines every day to keep people out of prison and halt state executions. Guided by our core values of compassion, courage, competency, creativity, and collaboration, we provide client-centered representation to those who need it most. Our clients are indigent defendants charged with federal offenses ranging from drug crimes to complex white-collar conspiracies, as well as individuals sentenced to death. Through holistic lawyering, we safeguard our clients' constitutional rights while championing their dignity, humanity, and future at every stage of their case. We actively embrace diversity, cultivate inclusion, and foster a workplace grounded in fairness, flexibility, and shared purpose. We are united by a deep commitment to standing beside our clients in their most critical moments.

FDSET is a nonprofit community defender organization funded by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, with offices in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Greeneville. Each location has a trial unit, and our Knoxville office is also home to our Capital Habeas Unit—where we handle some of the most complex and high-stakes litigation in the federal system.

The Place

Nestled in the heart of the South, East Tennessee is a place where breathtaking landscapes meet vibrant community life. Framed by the rolling foothills of the Smoky Mountains and laced with miles of rivers and lakes, the region offers postcard-worthy views in every direction. Here, even the largest cities maintain a warm, small-town charm—yet surprise visitors with a dynamic culinary and cultural scene. Savor farm-to-table fare, soulful Southern classics, slow-smoked barbecue, and authentic international cuisine, all perfectly paired with locally crafted beers. Stroll through lively farmers markets, celebrate at year-round festivals, and enjoy performances in venues such as the historic Bijou Theatre or Niswonger Performing Arts Center, which feature Broadway productions, concerts, opera, ballet, and more. Explore award-winning history, science, and children's museums or cheer on your favorite



team—from the Tennessee Volunteers to professional hockey, baseball, roller derby, and even the Bassmaster Elite Series.

With a mild climate that still showcases the beauty of all four seasons, East Tennessee invites outdoor adventure year-round. Spend the day at Dollywood, take in sweeping mountaintop views at Anakeesta, marvel at marine life at the Tennessee Aquarium, or experience beloved traditions like the Greene County Fair and the National Storytelling Festival. With more than 60 state and national parks, including the iconic Great Smoky Mountains National Park, adventure is always just minutes away. And if you're bringing a four-legged friend, you'll feel right at home. The area proudly embraces a pet-friendly spirit, with cozy cat cafés, playful goat yoga sessions, ample public water bowls, and wide-open spaces where your pup, horse, cows, and so on, can roam free. In East Tennessee, life moves at the perfect pace.

The Job

We are hiring a full-time third level supervisor for our Capital Habeas Unit (CHU) housed in our Knoxville office.

Duties

The third level supervisor will serve as chief counsel for the CHU. In this leadership position, the supervisor recommends actions and makes decisions that affect the basic content and character of the CHU's legal operations. The supervisor manages a team of four assistant federal defenders, two investigators, and four paralegals.

Responsibilities include maintaining expertise in federal habeas practice and case law, as well as execution protocols and procedures in jurisdictions where our clients were sentenced; ensuring staff are adequately trained; monitoring caseloads; participating in hiring committees and conducting performance evaluations; managing the CHU operating budget; and participating in cross-organizational collaboration.

Additionally, the supervisor carries a caseload consisting of cases at various stages of post-conviction review. The supervisor writes briefs, motions, and other pleadings; reviews voluminous trial and appellate records; develops claims and litigation strategy; advocates at evidentiary hearings and oral arguments; directs and conducts case-related investigations; and meets with clients, experts, witnesses, and family members.

Requirements

Applicants must be a member in good standing before the federal bar in combination with admission and good standing with a state bar. Ten years of attorney experience is required, with at least five of those years in capital post-conviction/capital habeas litigation. The ideal candidate will have supervisory experience and a working knowledge of CaseMap. Overnight travel for client visits and investigative trips is required. Applicants must have a driver's license and appropriate motor vehicle insurance. Attorneys in this office may not engage in the private practice of law.

An affinity for teamwork is essential.

Salary & Benefits

Salary is commensurate with years of experience and qualifications in accordance with the Defender Organization Classification System and Salary Charts. The current salary range is \$154,743 to \$197,100 annually.

FDSET offers a generous benefits package, which includes paid vacation and sick leave, 11+ paid annual holidays, medical, dental, vision, life/AD&D, long-term disability, and 401K retirement. FDSET provides medical (employee-only plans), dental, vision, basic life/AD&D, and long-term disability at no monthly premium cost to employees. A partial remote work week is available to employees after an initial probationary period.

How To Apply

Qualified individuals may apply by sending ALL the following documents in a *combined PDF file* to **Sharon_Buckingham@fd.org** by **Friday, April 17, 2026**.

- (1) Cover Letter
- (2) Resume
- (3) Three References
- (4) Writing Sample

An email confirming receipt of the application materials will be sent to all applicants. Only those selected for interviews will receive further communication.

**FDSET VALUES A DIVERSE WORKFORCE
AND IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
EMPLOYER**