

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



Announcement 2023-04

Position Title:	CJA Administrative Attorney CL 29
Location:	Circuit Mediation and Judicial Support Office, Fifth Circuit - New Orleans, Louisiana
Salary Range/Grade:	CL 29 (\$78,784 - \$128,064 per annum). Starting salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience.
Closing Date:	Applications will be considered as soon as received and will continue to be considered until filled. The United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Judicial Circuit, is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Overview:

The Circuit Mediation and Judicial Support Office (CMJSO) invites applications from qualified persons for the position of CJA Administrative Attorney. Under the supervision of the Chief Circuit Mediator, and working with the other members of the office, the CJA Administrative Attorney coordinates and administers the court's Criminal Justice Act (CJA) voucher compensation program and plans and executes all case-related and other functions of that program.

Representative Duties:

The CJA Administrative Attorney is responsible for circuit-level oversight of compensation requests by attorneys, experts, and service providers appointed under the Criminal Justice Act to represent defendants charged with federal crimes. Primary responsibilities include audit of fee claims for compensability and reasonableness, advising district and circuit judges on CJA matters, and drafting memoranda to the reviewing circuit judges. The CJA Administrative Attorney works closely with other members of the CMJSO and with members of court staff in the nine district courts within the circuit. The CJA Administrative Attorney serves as a resource to the reviewing circuit and district judges on CJA policies and questions, assists attorneys on CJA billing and funding related questions, and is expected to have a proficient knowledge of the Criminal Justice Act and related statutes, guidelines, and policies.

In addition to mediation and CJA voucher review, CMJSO assists the Chief Circuit Judge and the Fifth Circuit in matters of judicial conduct and disability, attorney discipline, CJA case budgeting, and pro bono representations. The Office works in a collaborative manner. The CJA Administrative Attorney will assist the Chief Circuit Mediator with other functions of the CMJSO, including attorney discipline, judicial misconduct complaints, and pro bono appointments.

Duties include:

- Conducting reasonableness review of CJA compensation claims using a national web-based program, requiring reference to federal criminal substantive and procedural law and the CJA guidelines and policies.
- Drafting memoranda to the Chief Circuit Judge and the Chief Circuit Judge's designee summarizing the underlying criminal case and making recommendations on the compensation claim on the CJA voucher.
- Providing advice/training on CJA compensation, policies, and related subjects to judges, district court CJA staff, and appointed counsel.
- Fielding inquiries on CJA compensability issues and processes, including inquiries from judges, court personnel, and appointed counsel.
- Assisting judges on issues of CJA panel attorneys' performance and potential disqualification.
- Preparing regular and *ad hoc* statistical reports.
- Collaborating with the Circuit CJA Case Budgeting Attorney regarding excess compensation vouchers and case budgeting matters that implicate novel or complex CJA policy issues or funding requests; and collaborating on voucher best practices.
- Completing special projects as assigned by the Chief Circuit Mediator. These projects include attorney disqualification and discipline referrals, both circuit original disqualification and discipline matters and attorney discipline orders from courts or State Bars; judicial misconduct complaints; and administration of the Circuit's pro bono program.

Qualifications and Requirements:

- A JD degree from an accredited law school in the United States or an equivalent degree from an institution elsewhere is required. Membership in good standing to practice before the highest court of a state, territory, or commonwealth, or federal court of general jurisdiction of the United States.
- Significant experience in the practice of criminal law, with at least two years in the practice of criminal defense law (especially indigent defense) strongly preferred.
- Ability to interpret and apply federal criminal law and procedure, statutes, rules and regulations, policies and guidelines applicable to the operation of the Criminal Justice Act and other court-related duties required of the position.
- Meticulous attention to detail, intelligent adherence to procedural requirements, the utmost judgment and discretion, and absolute compliance with the office's requirements of confidentiality.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills as necessary to prepare, edit, and proofread memoranda, respond to telephone inquiries, and confer with judges and court staff.

- Proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office, Adobe Pro and other computer and web-based programs, including database and word processing applications.
- Initiative to prioritize workloads and effectively manage multiple and time-sensitive projects.
- Ability to collaborate with senior administrative personnel within the court system.

Application Procedure:

Qualified applicants must submit a cover letter, résumé, and salary history, in a single PDF document via email to: vacancy@ca5.uscourts.gov.

Applications will be considered as soon as received and will continue to be considered until the position is filled. Applicants should therefore submit applications as soon as possible, even if they are not immediately available to begin work.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The fringe benefits offered to employees of the United States Courts include:

- 13 days paid annual leave per year for the first three years of service.
- 20 days paid annual leave per year after three years of service.
- 26 days paid annual leave per year after 15 years of service.
- 13 days paid sick leave accrued per year.
- 11 paid holidays per year, plus Mardi Gras day.
- Choice of medical, dental, and vision coverage from a wide variety of plans.
- Life, long-term disability, and long-term care insurance options.
- Participation in the Federal Employees Retirement System.
- Participation in the Thrift Savings Plan (similar to 401k, with matching up to 5% of pay).
- Pre-tax flexible spending accounts (medical and dependent care).
- Transit/Parking subsidy (subject to the availability of funds).
- Eligible employer for Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

Information for Applicants:

- Only qualified applicants who submit complete applications will be considered for this position.
- Applicants must be United States citizens or [otherwise eligible to work in the federal court system](#).
- The court provides reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities.
- Funding is not available to support interviewee travel or relocation expenses.
- The selected applicant must provide educational transcripts. A background investigation, including fingerprint and records check, will be conducted as a condition of employment.
- All employees of the Judiciary are “at will” employees in the excepted service.
- The position is subject to mandatory electronic funds transfer for payment of salary.
- The court reserves the right to modify the conditions of this job announcement, withdraw the job announcement, or fill the position, any of which actions may occur without any prior written or other notice.

ADDENDUM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE CJA VOUCHER PROCESS

The Criminal Justice Act (CJA) provides for appointment of counsel and funding for experts and service providers for financially eligible defendants charged with federal crimes, including federal capital prosecutions and representation of death sentenced inmates seeking habeas corpus relief under 28 U.S.C. §§ 2254, 2255.

Appointed counsel (and when funded, experts and service providers) claim compensation through eVoucher, a web-based billing platform. The voucher is typically submitted at the conclusion of the criminal proceeding in the district court and contains total hours worked and expenses incurred in the representation, accompanied by detailed time sheets and documentation of expenses as required. All payment requests must be reviewed and approved by the presiding judge. If the amount exceeds a specified limit, payment must also be approved by the Chief Circuit Judge, or a circuit judge to whom that authority has been delegated.

The CJA Administrative Attorney is responsible for reviewing and processing attorney, expert, and service provider vouchers at the circuit level. Voucher review requires an analysis of the underlying criminal case, particularly identifying unique or complex issues, and an evaluation of the fee claim under the CJA Guidelines and policies. The work is very nuanced and requires knowledge of and reference to the applicable policy manuals as well as the federal criminal law. A memorandum is then prepared for the reviewing judge which summarizes the criminal case, counsel's work, and an assessment of the fee claim.

The incumbent will regularly interact with circuit and district court judges throughout the Fifth Circuit. Regular communication with CJA-appointed attorneys is required. Periodic reports must be prepared for the court about the operations of the office, and there are sometimes requests for more detailed statistical analyses of particular aspects of the appointment and payment process.

Vouchers for appointed counsel's work on appeal undergo a similar process. Payment in excess of certain specified limits require approval by a circuit judge, and a memorandum similar to the one described above must be prepared.

The volume of submissions is high, and the workload is heavy. Although the Chief Circuit Mediator and the more senior attorneys in the office are always available for consultation, the CJA Administrative Attorney is expected to work independently and to be responsible for maintaining assigned workflow without over-the-shoulder supervision. Timely processing of payment is vital to the operation of the CJA and backlogs cannot be tolerated.

The applicant should provide evidence of education and experience that demonstrates a high level of comfort in working with computer applications, applying rules accurately and precisely, and with accepting the substantial responsibilities and workload of the position. Communication with judges, court personnel, and attorneys is an important aspect of the position; skills in this area are also required and should be demonstrated in the application.