Clinical Social Worker

Job Summary

Under the direct supervision of [SUPERVISOR NAME] and/or their designee, the clinical social worker will engage with clients, family members, community service providers, and other stakeholders to provide case assessment and evaluation. The clinical social worker will develop mental health, substance use and/or medical treatment plans for public defender clients, identify needed resources, and ensure each client is connected to appropriate treatments. In collaboration with attorneys, the clinical social worker will gather mitigating information and develop alternative sentencing or dispositional recommendations or options. The clinical social worker may perform other duties as assigned.

Typical Duties

Collaborate as part of an interdisciplinary defense team to provide case assessment and evaluation, identify needed resources, and provide alternative sentencing or dispositional recommendations or options.

Interview and build relationships with clients by visiting them in their homes, in jail, and/or in other non-office settings.

Establish a process to receive referrals from other colleagues within the office.

Assessment & Service Planning

Conduct mental health screenings to identify clients’ psychiatric, substance use, and social service needs and provide recommendations for further services.

Conduct comprehensive biopsychosocial assessments and family histories to inform service planning and legal representation.

Work in partnership with clients to devise, recommend, and implement individualized treatment plans.

Work in partnership with clients to create goals and action plans. Coach clients through crises, setbacks, and successes.

Identify and make referrals for substance use treatment, mental health treatment, counseling, and any other necessary medical treatment. Coordinate with internal staff to make referrals for other social or legal service needs, such as housing, employment, identification, or benefits.

Community Connection

Build and maintain relationships with schools, hospitals, community-based organizations, and other service providers.

Assist with the development and maintenance of a resource guide for services, with a focus on mental health, behavioral health, and substance use treatment services.

Represent the public defender at community meetings, events, and gatherings, including those held on evenings and/or weekends.

Collaborative Client Advocacy

Collaborate with attorneys to identify significant historical information, formulate mitigation strategies, develop a plan for mitigating sentencing, and execute appropriate linkages.

Prepare psychosocial reports and conduct comprehensive records reviews to obtain information for attorneys’ use in developing their clients’ legal defense, in service of plea negotiations, and for sentencing mitigation.

Develop strategies for mitigation and client advocacy that incorporate developmental psychology, exposure to violence and trauma, substance use and mental health issues, with a focus on evidence-based decision making, research-informed practices, and other best practice approaches.

At the direction of the attorney, testify in court proceedings and write persuasive narratives and recommendations to be used in court proceedings.

Other Duties

Provide training and advice to other members of the interdisciplinary team related to trauma-informed practices and applying principles of trauma-informed care.

Maintain accurate data and records on client contacts, needs, and requests to ensure service requests are handled in a timely manner.

Perform other duties as assigned.

Minimum Qualifications

* Graduation from an accredited college or university with a master’s degree in social work, psychology, forensic psychology, or counseling.

Preferred Qualifications

* Licensed as a licensed social worker (LSW), licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), licensed professional counselor (LPC), or licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC).
* Five years of full-time professional experience providing services to people with criminal legal system contact.

Knowledge, Skills, Abilities & Other Characteristics

Deep professional and/or personal knowledge of one of the neighborhoods in which the public defender’s offices are located, including the systems, agencies, institutions, and organizations that its residents interact with.

Extensive knowledge of the theories, principles, and techniques of social work practice as applied in the context of legal defense.

Knowledge of the theories and principles of trauma-informed care, with experience applying relevant techniques.

Knowledge of best practices and techniques in conflict resolution and trauma-informed crisis intervention.

Knowledge of adult court processes and procedures in the county, and basic knowledge of the public defender’s policies and procedures governing social work.

Knowledge of inclusive practices in the legal, social work, and/or forensic psychology fields.

Knowledge of evidence-based practices and treatment planning.

Familiarity with research and its practical application.

Strong communication skills and exceptional writing skills, including the ability to communicate with people of varying backgrounds and educational levels and to translate complex clinical topics to non-technical audiences.

Skilled in active listening and motivational interviewing techniques.

Ability to work within a judicial setting with the capacity to effectively communicate sensitive and confidential information to the administration, judges, licensed clinicians, federal and state authorities, and all other supportive entities and community providers.

Ability to work with diverse populations in court proceedings and in home-based settings, relating effectively to people with a variety of values and social backgrounds.

Ability to work collaboratively as part of an interdisciplinary team.

Ability to independently manage a caseload in a timely and efficient manner.