



MANAGING ATTORNEY OF APPELLATE PRACTICE

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma (LASO) is searching for an experienced Managing Attorney of Appellate Practice (MA-AP) to work in the Family Representation Advocacy Program with the Oklahoma Office of Family Representation Office (OFR) in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The Family Representation Advocacy Act enacted into law on June 2, 2023, established the Family Representation Advocacy Program (FRAP) within the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). AOC has contracted with LASO to bring the OFR to life. The purpose of the FRAP is to ensure uniform and high-quality legal trial and appellate representation for children and indigent parents, legal guardians and Indian custodians in deprived child actions brought by the state pursuant to the provisions of Section 1-1-101 et seq. of Title 10A of the Oklahoma Statutes.

OFR will ensure that all parents, legal guardians, and Indian custodians who are entitled to trial and appellate court-appointed counsel and all children are appointed counsel who have training, support and access to resources to provide uniform and high-quality legal representation. Contract Attorneys play a critical role in achieving the best outcomes for families in child welfare cases by protecting the legal and due process rights of parents and children, presenting balanced information to the courts, and promoting the preservation of family relationships. Our goal is to protect our clients' rights, reduce the harm of family separation and prevent or minimize the time a child spends in foster care.

The MA-AP will work closely with the Executive Director, the Managing Attorneys for Parent/Child Representation, and the Regional Directors of Social Work. The MA-AP will be responsible for recruiting, training, and supporting OFR's appellate contract attorney panel, including administrative oversight, resource database, resource development, and the implementation of OFR's high-quality legal *appellate* representation throughout the State. The MA-AP will report to the Executive Director.

The MA-AP will perform various duties, including recruiting, contracting, and evaluating contract appellate attorneys; providing appellate litigation support and appellate case consultation; implementing attorney practice standards; coordinating and executing attorney training and resources; and performing various support functions for OFR.

The MA-AP will play a leadership role in LASO's implementation of providing high-quality legal representation to all parents, legal guardians, and Indian custodians who are entitled to trial and appellate court-appointed counsel and all children.

The MA will need to work closely with the Executive team to create, evaluate, and refine processes and tools to deliver high-quality legal appellate representation to the families OFR serves. The MA-AP will provide training, oversight, and evaluation of the appellate contract attorneys. The MA-AP shall regularly review, understand, and thoughtfully implement new initiatives by gathering, analyzing, and reporting data.

The MA-AP will attend and actively participate in LASO administrative meetings and will work closely with external stakeholders in the child welfare system.

Job Description

The MA-AP will serve the entire State of Oklahoma and be responsible for the overall quality and consistency of OFR's *appellate* legal representation practice. The MA-AP will also recruit, train, oversee, and support the *appellate* contract attorneys. The MA-AP will work closely with the Executive Director, Managing Attorneys, Directors of Social Work, and others on the Executive team to develop a strategic approach to OFR's *appellate* legal representation.

Responsibilities

- Working with the Executive Director, Managing Attorneys, Regional Directors of Social Work, and others on the Executive team, as well as external stakeholders, to execute the purpose of OFR as defined by Oklahoma Statute.
- Assist in drafting and preparing the annual budget narrative, annual program performance report, and other agency-related documents as necessary.
- Working to ensure high-quality *appellate* representation, consistent practice, and quality assurance to achieve best practices across the entire State of Oklahoma, planning or assisting in planning and developing policies and procedures, goals, and objectives to execute the purpose of OFR as defined by Oklahoma Statute.
- Meeting with Judges regarding uniform court administration of the Oklahoma Children's Code.
- Identify systemic problems and develop and communicate strategies for addressing those problems.
- Recruiting and determining the eligibility of potential contractors seeking an annual contract for appellate legal representation.
- Overseeing quality of practice through annual review of the contract attorney's scope of work requirements contained within their contracts for competency and quality of legal services by providing timely feedback and training to contract *appellate* attorneys and addressing the validity of any concerns expressed by clients or courts.
- Monitoring *appellate* attorney caseloads without substantive supervision to ensure that high-quality services are being provided.
- Assist in locating potential experts who will work at the state rate, consult with experts about their area of expertise, and promote the use of appropriate experts in litigation strategies; assist in evaluating the effectiveness of experts, improve engagement with experts, and create a user-friendly expert database.
- Develop an *appellate* practice database with primary and secondary resources including but not limited to federal and state case law, published and unpublished appellate opinions, treatises, law review articles, and other news articles relevant to child welfare appellate practice as well as adjacent legal practice areas such as family law and criminal law. Developing and managing OFR's information sharing resources such as listserv, brief and forms bank; assist in drafting and preparing legal memoranda and briefs as necessary.

- Assisting *appellate* contract attorneys through training and providing technical assistance by responding to questions and requests for information.
- Identifying and creating professional development opportunities for OFR contractors that include evidence-based training, resources, and support.
- Monitor state and national legal developments in case law, regulations, and rules changes relevant to the OFR's mission.
- Manage resources effectively.
- Representing OFR in various external meetings, trainings, and conferences.
- Assisting the Executive team in analyzing and making decisions on potential ethical issues in developing, disseminating, and ensuring compliance with the Oklahoma Rules of Professional Conduct's conflict rules.
- Generating management reports.
- Compiling data and statistics.
- Attending meetings with LASO administrative staff and staff in other LASO offices to discuss management issues and child welfare policy and practice issues.
- Developing and maintaining working relationships with judges, bar associations, the Department of Human Services, and other child welfare stakeholders.
- Working closely with the Executive team to meet the OFR's contractual obligations and reporting requirements.
- Working closely with the Executive team to determine staffing for OFR's central office.

Requirements

- Licensed to practice law in the State of Oklahoma and in good standing with the Oklahoma Bar Association.
- J.D/LL.B. from an accredited law school with (5) five to ten (10) years of experience as a licensed attorney
- Experience in appellate work, specifically juvenile-deprived appeals,
- Experience with appellate oral arguments, writs, and petitions for certiorari
- Familiar with the demands of representing children, parents, legal guardians, and Indian custodians in Oklahoma deprived child cases.
- At least three (3) years of supervisory experience and a minimum of five (5) years of litigation experience in child welfare and deprived court proceedings including substantial hearing and trial experience.
- Experience leading racially diverse teams and creating equitable and inclusive environments.
- Demonstrated commitment to an integrated strategy, including social work, litigation, policy and community engagement.

- Experience with administration, training, organization, or program development.
- Ability to communicate effectively in multiple forms and oral advocacy contexts.
- Teamwork skills and aptitude for problem-solving and management of independent contractors.

Desirable

- Experience working in holistic practice.
- Experience mentoring other attorneys.
- Passion for deprived law and case strategy.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Knowledge of:

- Legal principles and practices including federal, civil, juvenile, constitutional, and alternative dispute resolution.
- Management and supervisory principles, practices, and techniques.
- The American Bar Association’s Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Abuse and Neglect cases.
- Oklahoma Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Deprived Child Proceedings and the Oklahoma Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Children in Deprived Child Proceedings.
- Oklahoma Supreme Court Rules, Oklahoma Rules of Evidence, Rules of Civil Procedure, Local Rules, Oklahoma Children’s Code, and all other relevant State and Federal Laws, codes and regulations.
- Methods and practices of perfecting appeals and pleading cases; and effective techniques for presentation of cases in court.
- OKDHS policies and state law pertaining to child abuse and neglect.
- Child development, social work, trauma, the child welfare system, public interest issues, and related community services available to support children and families.
- The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges’ Enhances Resource Guidelines for Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect cases.
- All aspects of substantive child abuse and neglect civil litigation.

Skill In:

- Multi-tasking and being a productive TEAM player.
- Supervising others and allocating resources.
- Problem solving and decision-making.
- Analyzing and appraising facts, policies, procedures, and legal precedents in the area of specialty.

- Operating a variety of office equipment and Microsoft software products, including Word, Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint, Outlook, Teams, Planner, as well as LegalServer and Paycom.

Ability To:

- Focus on the intended purpose and objectives of the office.
- Motivate, train, and supervise independent contractors.
- Demonstrate strong interpersonal and communication skills.
- Work independently and efficiently to meet deadlines.
- Manage time well and perform multiple tasks.
- Work well under pressure and exercise tact in trying situations.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with attorneys, courts, and community stakeholders.

Physical Requirements

This work is sedentary and requires the following physical activities:

- Sitting for long periods of time; occasional bending, squatting, kneeling, stooping; frequent repetitive motions; and the ability to speak and hear; or the ability to perform essential job functions with reasonable accommodation.
- Frequent lifting (up to 25 pounds of paper supplies or minor office equipment).

Working Conditions

- Normal office environment.
- Remote or hybrid depending on Region. If office-based role may have occasional lifting of materials up to 25 lbs.

Travel

Travel throughout the State of Oklahoma will be required on a frequent basis. Travel for state and national conferences and training may also be required.

Application Instructions

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, resume, and three professional references (including a former supervisee) to gwendolyn.clegg@laok.org and tara.zinn@laok.org by March 7, 2025.

LASO is an Equal Opportunity Employer