



DIRECTOR of SOCIAL WORK

Region 1, Region 2, Region 3 and Region 4

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma (LASO) is searching for an experienced Regional Director of Social Work (DSW) to work in the **Oklahoma Office of Family Representation (OFR)**. The DSW will work closely with the Executive Director and the Regional Managing Attorney and be primarily responsible for the Office of Family Representation social work practice with parents and children in the assigned Region and will report to the Executive Director.

The Family Representation Advocacy Act enacted into law on June 2, 2023, established the Family Representation Advocacy Program within the Administrative Office of the Courts and AOC has contracted with Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma to bring the OFR to life. The purpose of the OFR is to ensure uniform and high quality legal 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.

The OFR will ensure that all parents, legal guardians, and Indian custodians who are entitled to 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 Social Workers and Mentors play a critical role in achieving the best outcomes for children in child welfare cases by providing social work support to assist parents and children in healing, presenting balanced information to the courts, and promoting the preservation of family relationships.

The OFR will implement interdisciplinary legal defense statewide for qualified parents, legal guardians, Indian custodians and children. Interdisciplinary legal defense is defined as an attorney, social worker, and/or mentor working together on a team to represent their client. High quality legal representation is defined as interdisciplinary representation. 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 DSW 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 court-appointed counsel and all children and will provide administrative oversight, as well as expanding and managing the interdisciplinary contractors. The DSW will also provide support for the independent contracted social workers and mentors providing services to the contracted attorneys.

The DSW will need to work closely with the Executive team to create, evaluate, and refine processes, and tools for the contracted social workers and mentors to assist the contracted

attorneys to deliver high quality representation. The DSW shall regularly review, understand and thoughtfully implement new initiatives by gathering, analyzing and reporting data.

The DSW will provide training, oversight and evaluation of the contracted social workers and mentors as well as working with the Regional Managing Attorney to provide relevant legal training for social workers and mentors. The DSW will attend and actively participate in LASO administrative meetings and will work closely with external stakeholders in the child welfare system.

Job Description

The DSW will serve the assigned Region and be responsible for the overall quality and consistency of FRAP's social work practice. The DSW will be responsible to recruit, train, oversee, and support the social work contractors and mentors. The DSW will work closely with the Executive Director, Regional Managing Attorney, and others on the Executive team to develop a strategic approach to the OFR's social work practice and help shepherd the development and expansion of the OFR's social work practice to serve all eligible clients.

Responsibilities

- Working with the Executive Director, Regional Managing Attorney and others on the Executive team as well as external stakeholders to execute the purpose of the OFR as defined by Oklahoma Statute.
- Working to ensure high quality representation, consistent practice, and quality assurance to achieve best practices across the entire State of Oklahoma.
- Having a routine, physical presence in the Court's in the assigned Region in which contracted social workers and mentors appear.
- Recruiting, training, supporting, and overseeing contracted social workers and mentors.
- Working closely with the Regional Managing Attorney to develop litigation and social work strategy and lead processes to assist the interdisciplinary teams execute the purpose of the FRAP as defined by Oklahoma Statute.
- Manage resources effectively .
- Providing robust reviews of the contractors' scope of work requirements contained within in their contracts.
- Representing the OFR in various external meetings, trainings, and conferences.
- Assisting the Regional Managing Attorney in ensuring the social work perspective is included in all trainings.
- Assisting the Executive team in analyzing and making decisions on potential ethical issues in the OFR's social work practice; developing, disseminating and ensuring compliance with the OFR's conflict check procedure.

- Supporting contractors by monitoring caseloads.
- Working closely with the Executive team to meet the OFR's contractual obligations and reporting requirements.

Requirements

- LMSW or LCSW
- At least 8 years of experience in child welfare and deprived court proceedings and experience supervising senior level staff.
- Commitment to interdisciplinary representation of children and parents.
- 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 public benefits, education, housing, or immigration.
- 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.
- This position will is not client facing and will not "stand in" nor "substitute" for contract social workers and/or mentors.

Desirable

- Experience working in a holistic practice.
- Experience providing social work support or supervision in child welfare and/or other relevant legal matters.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Knowledge of:

- OKDHS policies and state law pertaining to child abuse and neglect.
- Child development, trauma, the child welfare system, public interest issues, and related community services available to support children and families.
- Risk assessment and safety planning.

Skill In:

- Multi-tasking and being a productive TEAM player.
- Compassionate and respectful work supporting contract social workers and mentors who have clients in crisis.

-Operating a variety of office equipment and software including word processing, spreadsheets, databases, PowerPoints, Outlook, Microsoft products such as Teams and LegalServer.

Ability To:

- Focus on the purpose and objectives of the OFR.
- Motivate, train, and supervise 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; good finger dexterity; frequent repetitive motions; and the ability to speak and hear; or the ability to perform essential job functions with reasonable accommodation.

Work Environment & Travel

- Remote or hybrid depending on Region.
- Travel throughout the State of Oklahoma will be required on a frequent basis. Travel for conferences and training may also be required.

How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, resume and three references to gwendolyn.clegg@laok.org and tara.zinn@laok.org

LASO is committed to equal employment opportunities for all. LASO is committed to hiring the most qualified applicants.

LASO is committed to compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local antidiscrimination laws.