Equal Justice Works Fellowship

Texas Fair Defense Project is seeking applicants for a fellowship project focusing on the criminalization of homelessness in Texas. The applicant selected for the fellowship will partner with TFDP to develop an application for the 2023-2025 Equal Justice Works fellowship and other similar fellowship programs.

This fellowship project seeks to end the criminalization of homelessness in Austin by providing direct representation to unhoused persons within TFDP’s established issue areas and, in turn, identifying and bringing affirmative litigation on behalf of both individuals and groups of unhoused persons based on the criminalization of living unhoused. The fellow will work closely with the Managing Attorney of Client Services to identify and represent unhoused people in wrap-around legal representation through a variety of cases, likely including Class C misdemeanor tickets, driver’s license recovery, probation, challenges to seizures and forfeitures of property, and criminal record clearing. The fellow will collaborate with TFDP’s Systems Navigator to connect clients to social services and provide general support during and after legal representation. The fellow will also work with the Managing Attorney of Client Services and the Managing Attorney of Litigation to identify affirmative litigation on behalf of individuals or groups of people that could have a wider positive impact on behalf of the unhoused community. All of this work will be done in collaboration with community partners and through a movement lawyering lens.

About Texas Fair Defense Project

Texas Fair Defense Project is a nonprofit legal organization whose mission is to fight to end the criminalization of poverty. Our office environment is collaborative, mission-focused, and values-driven. Much of what we do is in coalition with partners, working closely with clients, community organizations, other legal organizations, and public officials to provide direct services to clients and push for greater systemic change through policy advocacy, education and impact litigation. We prioritize community care and longevity, and actively work to foster a supportive and sustaining organizational culture. As an organization and as individuals, we are committed to anti-racism work, which includes ongoing critical examination of our programs, relationships, and approaches.

Job Responsibilities

Our office is currently functioning with a hybrid of remote and in-person work due to the global pandemic. While TFDP has staff members located in multiple Texas cities, due to the nature of the enforcement of HB 1925—the state law criminalizing camping in public—the fellow will be based in Austin, TX. The fellow will report to the Managing Attorneys of Client Services and Litigation, and
will be responsible for the following:

- Conduct legal intake for those experiencing homelessness, including utilizing creative tactics to reach potential clients;
- Represent clients in Class C cases, driver’s license recovery, criminal record clearing, probation fines and costs and other cases in TFDP’s issue areas;
- Work with supervisors to develop policy and litigation strategies to vindicate clients’ constitutional rights;
- Develop relationships with grassroots organizations and community service providers who provide resources and services to individuals experiencing homelessness;
- Work with the Systems Navigator to establish pathways for members of the unhoused community to avail themselves of the full range of TFDP’s services; and
- Other duties as appropriate.

Qualifications
We are seeking candidates who are organized, attentive and enthusiastic about making the criminal legal system more accountable to the public.

You should have:
- A J.D. with eligibility to practice in Texas or willingness to take Texas bar exam (by Fall 2023);
- Eligibility to apply for an Equal Justice Works and other post graduate fellowship programs;
- Experience providing excellent legal services to low-income people;
- A commitment to client-centered representation with an eye toward strategy for systemic change;
- A track record of maintaining strong working relationships with a diverse group of stakeholders; and
- A demonstrated interest in social justice.

Salary will vary according to particular fellowship plan parameters, but will be a minimum of $62,000. TFDP provides all fellows medical and dental benefits, paid vacation, sick and family leave. TFDP is an equal opportunity employer. People of color, people who have been directly impacted by the criminal justice system, and people from other underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply. This position is contingent on fellowship funding with a possibility for renewal.

To apply, please send a cover letter, resume and a list of three references to jobs@fairdefense.org. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and accepted until July 15, 2022.