

OFFICE OF THE
FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

Chief Federal Defender
Dumaka Shabazz

164 Rosa L. Parks Blvd. Nashville, TN 37203 615-736-5047

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT No. 2026-09

Position: Term Paralegal (Chapter 154 / Opt-In Special Litigation)-
Capital Habeas Unit (CHU)

Location: Office of the Federal Public Defender, 164 Rosa L. Parks Blvd., Nashville,
Tennessee

Position Type: Term Position (1 to 3 Years)

Application Deadline: Open until filled, preference given to those applying by
September 1, 2026.

The Federal Public Defender for the Middle District of Tennessee is accepting applications for a **Term Paralegal** to join our Capital Habeas Unit (CHU). This position is a **term appointment for 1 to 3 years**, funded specifically to provide high-level litigation support for complex matters arising under Chapter 154 of the Judicial Code (28 U.S.C. § 2261 *et seq.*).

Guided by an office philosophy of inspiration, connection, and empowerment, the CHU provides client-centered, team-based representation to death-sentenced individuals in federal habeas corpus proceedings.

ABOUT CHAPTER 154 (OPT-IN) & THIS ROLE:

In July 2026, the State of Tennessee received certification under Chapter 154 ("Opt-In"), a specialized statutory framework that accelerates federal habeas corpus proceedings and imposes strict procedural timelines in capital cases.

The successful candidate will serve as **Opt-In Lead Paralegal**, providing critical case management and litigation support across a dedicated docket affected by Chapter 154. Responsibilities will include statutory deadline tracking, discovery organization, and support for district court and appellate filings. This position will involve managing large volumes of historical state post-conviction records, organizing complex electronic databases, tracking expedited filing deadlines under 28 U.S.C. § 2263, and assisting attorneys and investigators with time-sensitive litigation.

REQUIREMENTS:

A high school diploma or equivalent is required. A bachelor's degree or paralegal certificate from an accredited institution is preferred. Candidates must have significant specialized experience as a paralegal or legal assistant in complex criminal defense, litigation, or habeas corpus proceedings.

The ideal candidate will demonstrate:

- Strong proficiency in litigation-support technology, electronic case filing (CM/ECF), and legal database management, including platforms such as TrialDirector, CaseMap, Eclipse, Relativity, or similar systems
- Expertise in legal research, citation checking (Bluebook and applicable judiciary standards), and preparation of routine procedural pleadings and exhibit indexes.
- Exceptional organizational skills and attention to detail, with the ability to track complex statutory deadlines and manage voluminous state court records, transcripts, and other case materials.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills, with the ability to work independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced environment with demanding statutory deadlines.
- Proficiency in Windows, Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, and Outlook), and Adobe Acrobat Pro.

DUTIES:

- Manage case files, dockets, and electronic databases for Chapter 154 litigation across the unit, maintaining accurate and timely tracking of expedited statutory deadlines and tolling periods.
- Organize, index, digitize, and maintain extensive historical state post-conviction records, trial transcripts, and discovery materials.
- Format, cite-check, proofread, and file complex pleadings, emergency stay applications, and appellate briefs through CM/ECF in accordance with strict court deadlines
- Assist attorneys and investigators with witness-outreach logistics, subpoena preparation, exhibit preparation, and document requests.
- Coordinate litigation-support needs with multi-disciplinary defense teams, expert witnesses, and court personnel.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Successful applicants will demonstrate a strong commitment to indigent criminal defense and a dedication to holistic, client-centered representation. We seek highly organized, technologically adept, and dependable professionals who can thrive in a fast-paced, high-stakes legal environment.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT:

This is a **term position tied to specialized funding for Chapter 154 litigation and is expected to last 1 to 3 years**. The selected candidate will be subject to a comprehensive background investigation, including FBI fingerprint checks, and must receive a favorable suitability determination.

Employees of the Federal Public Defender's Office are in the excepted service, are considered "at-will" employees, and are not covered by the Civil Service Reform Act.

Consistent with current appropriations law, applicants must be United States citizens or permanent residents seeking citizenship. See [Judiciary Citizenship Requirements](#).

SALARY AND COMPENSATION:

Starting salary is commensurate with experience and qualifications under the Judiciary Salary Plan (JSP 9–12), with a range of approximately \$60,000 – \$105,000, depending on experience and applicable local pay tables. Benefits include health and life insurance, retirement benefits, and participation in the Thrift Savings Plan. For details on benefits, visit [Judiciary Benefits](#). Salary is payable by direct deposit.

TO APPLY:

To apply for this specialized term position, please email a letter of interest, resume, and three professional references in **a single combined PDF document** with the subject line “**Term Paralegal - Opt-In CHU**” to Federal Public Defender Dumaka Shabazz at HR_TNM@FD.ORG.

Incomplete applications will not be considered. The position is open until filled. No phone calls, please. Multiple positions may be filled from this announcement.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Middle District of Tennessee is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply.