



**DISABILITY BENEFITS SPECIALIST
ONE YEAR FELLOWSHIP BEGINNING AUGUST 2016**

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (ULS), a nonprofit protection and advocacy agency that advances the rights of DC residents with disabilities, seeks a recent law school graduate for a one-year fellowship focusing on securing timely Social Security disability benefits for incarcerated women with mental illness who are preparing to return to the community. Our goal is to promote the successful integration into the community of DC residents with mental illness.

As part of the Women's Resiliency and Reentry Project, the Benefits Specialist will assist women with mental illness at Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) facilities, including halfway houses, and the DC Correctional Treatment Facility with prerelease applications for SSI and SSDI in preparation for their reentry. Responsibilities include:

- ❑ Conduct outreach to identified FBOP facilities and the DC Department of Corrections (DOC) to identify women who might qualify for disability benefits.
- ❑ Develop outreach and promotional materials about the Women's Resiliency and Reentry Project.
- ❑ Conduct trainings for returning citizens, criminal justice professionals and others on disability benefits eligibility, and evidence-based practices for completion of prerelease applications.
- ❑ Provide technical assistance to correctional staff and others who are assisting incarcerated women with SSI/SSDI applications.
- ❑ Identify and collect or develop medical evidence in support of claims for disability benefits.
- ❑ Prepare and submit memoranda to the Social Security Administration in support of claims for disability benefits.
- ❑ Act as liaison with the Social Security Administration to follow up benefits applications and advocate for applicants.
- ❑ Track project outcomes and produce regular reports for both internal and external use.
- ❑ Coordinate with ULS staff and partners to implement other aspects of the Women's Resiliency and Reentry Project.

Compensation: The Fellow will work full-time and earn a stipend of \$40,000 plus benefits, which include full medical insurance, vacation, sick leave and other benefits.

QUALIFICATIONS

- ❑ Required: JD degree
- ❑ Required: Either bar membership –or- take a bar examination by July 2016. Applicants who are not members of the DC Bar or are not sitting for the DC Bar in July 2016 must be willing to apply to waive into the DC Bar in Fall 2016.
- ❑ Required: Complete MPRE exam no later than August 2016.

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- ❑ Required: Ability to communicate and build rapport with women who have extensive trauma histories, serious and persistent mental illness, and criminal justice involvement, and who are predominantly low-income and women of color.
- ❑ Required: Ability to communicate and work effectively as a proactive member of interdisciplinary team. Demonstrated competence in verbal, written, organizational and prioritization skills. Strong problem-solving skills and ability to troubleshoot challenging situations and creatively advance civil rights protections.
- ❑ Required: Ability to pass criminal background check required by the FBOP and DOC.
- ❑ Preferred: Driver's license for travel locally and to FBOP facilities in the region.
- ❑ Preferred: Experience working within a social justice or civil rights organization, or for a criminal defense law office, particularly one that serves homeless or incarcerated individuals.
- ❑ Preferred: Familiarity and/or experience with SSI/SSDI eligibility and application process.

HOW TO APPLY

All applicants must *briefly* respond to the following three questions within a cover letter or in a separate essay (maximum 2 pages total):

- 1) What are your personal or professional motivations behind working in the criminal justice/disability rights field?
- 2) What do you believe is one problem in the criminal justice system that could benefit from more advocacy reform?
- 3) What do you believe is one problem in the behavioral health system which could benefit from more advocacy reform?

Please send your responses together with a resume, writing sample, and list of references electronically

no later than February 12, 2016 to:

Tammy Seltzer, Director
DC Jail & Prison Advocacy Project
University Legal Services
tseltzer@uls-dc.org

No calls please

Applications will be considered as soon as they are received.

ULS values diversity of culture, disability and other life experiences, and is an equal opportunity employer by choice. People with personal experience in the criminal justice system are welcome and encouraged to apply.

For more information about ULS please visit our website at www.uls-dc.org.

