

# Director of Litigation, Lawyers For Children

## ABOUT LAWYERS FOR CHILDREN

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When children are before the New York City Family Courts, the biggest decisions in their lives can often be made for them, without their input. At Lawyers For Children, our mission is to give children a voice in the decisions that critically impact their lives. Since LFC's founding in 1984, our attorneys and social workers have been listening to their clients, protecting their legal rights, and empowering them with the tools and resources they need to grow and thrive.

Lawyers For Children utilizes a pioneering interdisciplinary staffing model, wherein a lawyer and social worker, both with extensive experience and training, work together on every case. In addition, LFC was the first children's law office in the country to employ two full-time Youth Advocates (young adults who have successfully aged out of foster care) to provide additional support for older clients. Each LFC team is thus comprised of individuals with expertise in both the law and the full range of existing services available to ensure a successful future for every one of our young clients.

Since 1984, we have represented almost 50,000 children in New York City court proceedings involving: voluntary foster care placement, abuse, neglect, delinquency, PINS, termination of parental rights, custody and visitation, adoption, guardianship, and paternity. We listen carefully to our clients, help them understand their options and vigorously protect their right to a safe, secure and supportive place to call home. For some clients, this means returning to live safely with their families. For others, it means speeding up the adoption process. For many of our clients who are over 18, the goal is to set out on their own with stable housing, a stable source of income, and the knowledge and support necessary to live independently and embark on successful careers of their own.

Each year, our staff of close to seventy professionals represents over 3,000 individual children in more than 6,000 court proceedings. Our advocacy helps children find safe and loving homes and helps minimize the trauma of court and child welfare intervention in their lives. We also help youth aging out of foster care access the education, housing, and employment they need to transition to independence. We are continuously evolving our practice with special projects that focus on the most vulnerable and underserved among our clients, including LGBTQ youth, children with special educational needs, youth who have experienced sexual abuse and exploitation, children living with intimate partner violence,

respondents in delinquency and PINS proceedings, and young people with immigration challenges. Our Public Policy and Special Litigation project tracks recurring challenges for young people across all of our individual cases and uses this data to promote comprehensive reform of the foster care system through both legislative advocacy and class action litigation.

## PROFILE

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Lawyers For Children is seeking a highly skilled and experienced litigation attorney for the position of Director of Litigation. The Director of Litigation will manage, oversee and supervise the approximately 25 staff attorneys handling the litigation of all proceedings assigned to LFC in New York County Family Court and additional Courts where we are asked to appear on behalf of our clients. These proceedings include, but are not limited to: abuse, neglect, voluntary placement, destitute minor, termination of parental rights, delinquency, custody, visitation, family offense guardianship and paternity proceedings.

The Director of Litigation will also work closely with Lawyers For Children's Executive and Deputy Executive Directors as a member of LFC's interdisciplinary Leadership Team. This position requires an individual with excellent courtroom, communication, supervisory and leadership skills. The Litigation Director will play a key role in helping define the direction of LFC's litigation practice and insuring the highest level of practice, including embracing LFC's interdisciplinary team approach to advocacy on behalf of every client. This individual should exemplify Lawyers For Children's mission, vision and values to help foster a productive and collaborative work environment. The ideal candidate will embrace LFC's interdisciplinary team approach to advocacy, on behalf of every client.

Responsibilities for this role include, but are not limited to:

### **Attorney Leadership**

- The Director of Litigation is responsible for leading a Supervisory Team who maintain a caseload of their own, and for providing general legal case guidance for all staff.
- Work with Directors of Social Work to enhance collaboration, resolve case specific conflicts, and promote an environment of client directed strategic case planning and direction.

- In partnership with leadership, contribute to and support vision, direction, coordination, and strategic oversight regarding equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- Infuse the advocacy process with cultural sensitivity, respect, and humility.

### **Attorney Development and Training**

- Key contributor to further development and implementation of a professional development infrastructure that insures the highest quality legal representation for LFC's clients, that includes, but is not limited to, training programs that support Lawyers For Children's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and contribute to critical litigation skills development.
- Identify, evaluate and address obstacles to attorney performance and drive performance improvement through an effective employee evaluation process.

### **Litigation**

- Responsible for overseeing all day to day litigation matters conducted by Lawyers For Children in the New York County Family Court and other courts in which we practice. This includes overall review of litigation matters and one-on-one supervision of attorney supervisors and front-line staff attorneys. This additionally includes, on an emergency basis, covering complex and contested hearings when necessary.
- Responsible for their own caseload of between 15 and 20 cases.
- Work collaboratively with the Legal Supervisors and Social Work Directors & Supervisors at Lawyers For Children.
- Work collaboratively with the other legal offices and stakeholders who practice in the New York City Family Courts.
- Work collaboratively with the supervising judges and other jurists in the New York City Family Courts.
- Attend committee meetings focused on LFC's area of practice, including stakeholders meetings held in New York County Family Court and the offices of other organizations.
- Facilitate regular Staff Attorney Meetings with agenda items collaboratively worked out with legal supervisors and other LFC colleagues. Responsibilities at these meetings include the presentation of recent critical case law, statutes and policies that affect our practice, updates regarding court operations, issues relating to collaboration with social work colleagues, etc.

- Attend and contribute to all relevant Lawyers For Children internal meetings, including Leadership Team meetings, Legal Supervisor meetings and All-Supervisor meetings.
- Oversee and participate in - when necessary - any disciplinary or conflict resolution meetings concerning LFC staff.
- Responsible for conducting written evaluations of supervising attorneys.

## SKILLS PROFILE

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The successful candidate will have a proven track record of attorney leadership and familiarity with child welfare, custody, and delinquency litigation and a deep level of understanding and practice in these practice areas. With at least 10 years of increasing levels of responsibility, the Director of Litigation's experience should reflect significant courtroom litigation and supervisory experience and leadership skills in a not-for-profit legal services environment.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we highlight the following:

- **Ability to Think Strategically and Act Tactically:** The successful candidate operates effectively in both strategic and tactical worlds. The ideal candidate will be strategically oriented to drive the overarching goals of the legal practice, yet tactically focused to ensure that the practice runs smoothly. This individual should build strategies based on a nuanced understanding of legal practice skills and trial strategy, and a desire to support and enhance legal practice both inside and outside of the courtroom.
- **Influencing and Relationship-Building Skills:** The successful candidate is capable of building and sustaining excellent relationships at multiple levels in the workplace and in the broader advocacy and judicial professional settings and organizations in which LFC participates. The ideal candidate will have well-honed supervisory skills that will enable them to foster trust and confidence, gain buy-in, and implement important initiatives.
- **Leader/Collaborator/Team Builder:** The successful candidate is a highly collaborative, true team player, coach, and mentor more focused on the success of others than themselves. They are a leader who sets and demonstrates high standards of performance, inspires others to perform on those levels, and ensures effective performance management. The successful candidate is a good listener who is straightforward, articulate and open in communication with others. They

possess communications skills that build trust, create open channels of communication, and achieve collective buy-in.

In summary, as a member of LFC's leadership team, the successful candidate will have most or all of the following traits:

- o Has 10-15 years prior experience as a litigator and a minimum of 5 years prior experience as a supervisor
  - o takes initiative
  - o authoritative --conveys a sense of leadership and accountability
  - o supportive -- provides the tools needed to do the job
  - o fosters collaboration
  - o demonstrates problem solving ability
  - o respected by colleagues
  - o committed to staff's professional development
  - o shows composure under pressure
  - o awareness of how they relate to & are perceived by others
  - o open & approachable
  - o able to develop meaningful connections with staff and external partners
  - o learns from mistakes
  - o recognizes the importance of showing appreciation & recognizing others
  - o committed to communicating organizational vision and strategy

### COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

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Lawyers For Children offers competitive salary and benefits, commensurate with experience and skills. LFC is an equal opportunity employer.

### HOW TO APPLY

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Submit your resume to: [zasghar@lawyersforchildren.org](mailto:zasghar@lawyersforchildren.org) with the position you are applying for in the subject line.