

TEXAS DEFENDER SERVICE SUMMER 2025 LEGAL INTERNSHIPS

We are an equal-opportunity organization. We welcome qualified applicants of all races, physical abilities, ethnicities, genders, gender identities or expressions, national origins, sexual orientations, creeds, religions, and ages. We also welcome qualified applicants who are pregnant have veteran status, have a history of union membership or activism, and who have been previously incarcerated or system involved.

Texas Defender Service (TDS) seeks passionate law students to join our team in Summer 2025 as legal interns. Our legal interns play an essential role in helping us further our mission to end mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the Lone Star State.

We value a diverse, inclusive, and antiracist workforce. We seek to cultivate a community of lawyers, mitigation specialists, policy advocates, and interns whose talents, skills, and personal life experiences help us deeply and creatively engage with the project of unwinding mass incarceration and excessive punishment in Texas. Women, people of color, people with disabilities, people from communities harmed by incarceration and over-policing, people from underrepresented communities, and people who have personal or familial experience with the criminal-legal system are deeply encouraged to apply.

Our Mission

At Texas Defender Service, we fight for the end of mass incarceration and excessive punishment in Texas through direct representation, policy reform, and public education. We stand up for the dignity and humanity of people harmed by mass incarceration, and advocate for a reimagined criminal-legal system that is just, humane, and free from racism and cruelty.

History

Texas Defender Service has led the fight to end the death penalty in the Lone Star State for over twenty-five years. Founded in 1995, Texas Defender Service has argued –

and won – five cases before the United States Supreme Court; achieved countless victories for clients who faced the death penalty because of their mental illness, intellectual disability, or race; and won innumerable legislative reforms to protect Texans facing the death penalty and other extreme punishments. Since 2018 alone, TDS has gotten prosecutors to drop capital charges against 39 of our clients. TDS has driven down new executions – from their startling height of 40 in 2000 – to just a trickle today. In 2022, we expanded our mission to battle other excessive punishments in Texas.

Legal Internship Overview

Legal interns at Texas Defender Service contribute to all aspects of our work. Legal interns conduct on-the-ground mitigation investigations; meet with our clients and others who are incarcerated; conduct high-level legal research; and draft legal memos, briefs, and policy papers. Internships require a full-time commitment of 40 hours a week for 10 weeks and are located in Austin, Texas. Responsibilities and opportunities include:

- Performing high-level legal and policy research;
- Drafting legal memos, legal pleadings, and policy papers;
- Analyzing and collecting data for cases and advocacy projects;
- Carrying out ground-level intensive investigative work and records review;
- Attending local trainings, hearings, trials, and oral arguments;
- Receiving training on conducting mitigation investigations in capital cases, both in preparation for trial and for post-conviction briefing; and
- Meeting and interviewing incarcerated clients

How to Apply

Please send your complete application package to Estelle Hebron-Jones (ehbron-jones@texasdefender.org) and Emily Follansbee (efollansbee@texasdefender.org). A complete application includes:

- cover letter;
- resume;
- writing sample; and
- contact information for two references.

In your cover letter, please let us know why you are excited to intern at Texas Defender Service and how your talents, skills, educational and/or personal life experiences will contribute to our mission. If you wish to do so, please also feel free to inform us of the pronouns you would like us to use when referring to you (such as: he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). Only complete applications will be considered. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis.

Internships are unpaid, but TDS will provide any necessary documentation or assistance in applications for scholarships or fellowships.