

Legal Director, Civil Rights & Racial Justice Program (Criminal Justice Focus)

Legal Aid Justice Center

About the Legal Aid Justice Center

The Legal Aid Justice Center is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization that partners with communities and clients to achieve justice by dismantling the systems that create and perpetuate poverty. Justice means racial justice, economic justice, and social justice.

Founded in 1967, LAJC provides services under four key program areas: Civil Rights & Racial Justice (CRRJ focuses on the criminal legal system), Economic Justice, Youth Justice, and Immigrant Advocacy. Working closely with communities, LAJC boldly tackles issues of systemic injustice and aims to raise public and policymaker awareness of some of the most pressing challenges facing low-income Virginia residents. For more information, visit www.justice4all.org.

From offices in Charlottesville, Richmond, Petersburg, and Falls Church, LAJC fiercely advocates for low-income clients and communities of color in Central and Northern Virginia, and its work broadly impacts the entire state. Just in the past year, our team of advocates won a class-wide injunction ordering healthcare reforms in a women's prison, secured a national settlement providing new avenues for relief to over 400 traumatized asylum-seekers whose children were taken from them at the border, worked successfully in partnership with community leaders to demand police accountability, and won major legislative reforms regulating school policing.

With a staff of over 60 and growing, LAJC is committed to tackling some of the most entrenched obstacles to eradicating poverty and discrimination in the state. Building on its roots as a traditional, direct-service, legal aid organization, LAJC has been expanding its focus to work toward broad systemic change while maintaining its deep connections to Virginia's low-income communities and communities of color. We design strategic advocacy campaigns pursuing change through the courts, state legislature, and local bodies, and we prioritize listening to and organizing in communities seeking support dismantling barriers to racial, economic, and social justice.

About CRRJ

Working at the intersection of race and poverty, the Civil Rights and Racial Justice Program (CRRJ) challenges the practices and exposes the enmeshed penalties within Virginia's criminal legal system that create or exacerbate poverty in the lives of low-income people and people of color. CRRJ organizers and attorneys collaborate closely to design and implement campaigns that bring a range of advocacy tools to bear in support of Virginia's communities. The team is committed to being informed by community partners and to developing the campaign and leadership skills of community members and those most impacted by the issues the program confronts.

Launched in 2017, CRRJ has already made its mark at the state and local level. In the 2021 state legislative session, CRRJ and its partners celebrated key victories that will: establish a system of automatic criminal record sealing; create a first-of-its-kind, publicly accessible

statewide pre-trial data aggregation system; and reform the use of fines and fees in Virginia's court system. Additional successes include: supporting community leaders' efforts to secure the release of policing data in Richmond that revealed widespread racial disparities in departmental interaction with city residents; ending the law requiring the suspension of driver's licenses for unpaid court debt; cementing civilian oversight of law enforcement in Charlottesville in the wake of deadly, unchecked white supremacist violence; and successfully challenging as unconstitutional Virginia's "habitual drunkard" law for criminalizing people experiencing homelessness and substance use disorders. You can read more about CRRJ's work [here](#).

About the Position

Legal Aid Justice Center seeks a strategic, collaborative legal advocate to lead a creative and passionate team of attorneys and organizers as CRRJ Legal Director. Reporting to the Deputy Director for Advocacy, the Legal Director provides strategic vision for and guidance over CRRJ's advocacy campaigns.

Responsibilities

- Devise strategic advocacy campaigns using the variety of tools employed by LAJC's programs, including impact litigation (and individual representation in limited instances), organizing, policy advocacy, and community education and technical assistance.
- Mentor and directly supervise staff, including attorneys, organizers, interns/fellows and volunteers.
- Build relationships with directly impacted community members, members of the bench and bar, agency heads and elected officials.
- Work in coalition with other legal, non-profit and community-based advocacy organizations.
- LAJC also hosts the University of Virginia Law School's Civil Rights Clinic, and, if interested, the Legal Director may work with other staff to provide supervision and instruction to clinic students.
- Serve as a member of LAJC's management team, which advises the Executive Director as she decides organizational priorities for all programmatic work and provides stewardship of organizational resources.

Required Qualifications

While no one candidate will possess all of the requirements listed below, the ideal candidate will have many of the following qualifications:

- Minimum 5 years' membership in any state bar; if not admitted in Virginia, must be eligible to waive in or to sit for the Virginia Bar. *(Note, the Virginia Supreme Court will be considering a rule change that would make it easier for legal aid employees licensed in other states to waive into the Virginia Bar.)*
- Mission-aligned experience (work or lived) partnering with and advocating in low-wealth communities and communities of color
- Sincere and demonstrated commitment to racial equity, inclusion, and justice
- Familiarity with criminal legal policy/system (from work or lived experience)
- Ability to work and communicate effectively across lines of identity and difference
- Ability to effectively supervise across lines of identity and difference
- Ability to work effectively both independently and collaboratively
- Strong oral advocacy, research and writing skills
- Willingness to work a flexible schedule that may include evening and weekend events, as well as occasional travel
- Strong commitment to social, economic, and racial justice

Preferred Qualifications

- Federal civil rights litigation experience
- Policy advocacy at the agency and legislative level
- Familiarity with organizing campaigns and/or community or movement lawyering
- Prior advocacy experience (work or lived) using an explicit race equity lens
- Minimum 3 years' prior supervisory experience (in official capacity as supervisor or substantially similar work without official title)
- Comfort with technology and data review

Location

Richmond or Charlottesville, Virginia but statewide travel is necessary.

Currently, all offices are closed to the public. This position will operate remotely until our offices resume in-person operation. The new Legal Director will have 6 months from the date we return to in-person work to relocate.

Start Date

Applications will start being reviewed immediately and on a rolling basis.

Salary

Salary range is \$80,000 to \$105,000 based on experience and LAJC's salary scale.

Benefits

- Generous leave
- Excellent family health, dental, and optical insurance
- 403(b) retirement plan
- Personal professional development budget

Application Instructions

Email a cover letter, resume, three references, and a writing sample to Elaine Poon, Deputy Director for Advocacy, at hire@justice4all.org. If you're able, please submit your application as a single PDF titled "[date submitted in yyyy.mm.dd format][last name][first name][position sought]." Please include "CRRJ Legal Director" in the email subject.

The cover letter should highlight any experience (lived or worked) advocating for justice for people who experience marginalization because of their race or economic status and/or specialized skills, such as data analysis, technology skills, or language fluency.

Questions? Contact Nareen Scott at nareen@justice4all.org.

The Legal Aid Justice Center is an equal opportunity employer, committed to inclusive hiring and dedicated to diversity in our work and staff. We strongly encourage candidates of all identities, experiences, and communities to apply. The Legal Aid Justice Center is committed to strengthening the voices of our low-income clients, working in collaboration with community partners, and rooting out the inequities that keep people in poverty. We strive to take on the issues that have broad impact on our client communities and to be responsive to client input. Recognizing the particular impact of racism on our clients and staff, we devote special attention to dismantling racial injustice. All applicants must be dedicated to working in and sustaining an environment that enables staff and clients to feel empowered, valued, respected, and safe. In reviewing applications, we look for evidence that applicants have experience and/or thoughtfulness in working with traditionally marginalized populations.