NEW YORK STATE DEFENDERS ASSOCIATION, INC. (NYSDA)
Albany, New York

Position: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

About The Association

The mission of the New York State Defenders Association is to improve the quality and scope of publicly supported legal representation to low income people. NYSDA is a 50-year old non-profit membership association with 1,900 members, which since 1978 has sustained the nation’s only backup center for public defense. With a staff of 28, the Association and its state-funded clearinghouse and center provide training, litigation assistance, expert referrals, consultation, advice, and technical assistance to 6,000 lawyers representing clients in more than 120 plans in 62 counties. NYSDA also offers direct representation to some clients on appeal and in post-conviction matters.

NYSDA conducts regional and statewide training programs for lawyers providing parental and criminal defense representation; publishes electronic and print publications to serve the defender community; maintains an electronic library containing legal, historical, and contemporary information on law and New York’s public defense system; administers a website and technology center; created and supports the organization’s Public Defense Case Management System in 70 offices; coordinates with the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services and the Chief Defenders Association of New York; and manages a unique Veterans Defense Program to address the criminal and family court legal needs of returning veterans. The Association has a Client Advisory Board, which in addition to the Association’s Restorative Practice and Prisoner Pre-Entry Mentoring Programs, makes efforts to provide education within the client community. For more information about NYSDA, visit www.nysda.org.

Overview of Qualifications

The successful candidate will have passion, courage, and commitment to work towards transformative improvement of the public defense system. The applicant will be client and staff directed in the execution of ideas, and fully committed to a model of client-centered public defense representation. This candidate will be a person of demonstrable integrity.

Informed by fidelity to client community input, the successful applicant should demonstrate a level of experience and expertise with legislative advocacy, fundraising, and public speaking. While urging the improvement of systemic quality, this candidate will have credibility with public defense practitioners in the field, be collaborative without compromise, and be adroit at public and private diplomacy.

The successful candidate will understand that the defense function and its duty to our clients create an adversarial position with the State, even while funded by it. In continuing and building upon the current programs of the Backup Center and the
Association, the successful candidate will lead the organization to achieve aspirations not yet realized and will bring a vision for how mercy and compassion can be further brought to the forefront of holistic, trauma-informed client outcomes.

In seeking better ways to serve clients, the outstanding candidate will question and encourage questions from staff and the Board of Directors, from the client community, and from the defender community. The candidate will acknowledge and actively work to end the racial disparities, damaging implicit biases, and other corrosive prejudices that beset every aspect of the justice system, including public defense, and society at large.

The excellent communicator who will be accepted for this full-time position will come to NYSDA at a time of remarkable change in the public defense world and must be curious, open to new ideas, comfortable relying on a strong, experienced, tenured staff, and at ease with the stress, ambiguity, and contradictions that attend the work of social change.

**Essential Duties and Responsibilities of the Executive Director**

- Serves as the chief administrator of the Association and has authority and responsibility to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Association and to manage NYSDA’s advocacy programs.

- Provides leadership and management to ensure that the mission and core values of the Association are put into practice.

- Carries out the policies set by the Board of Directors; formulates, coordinates, and executes programs to carry out the purposes and objectives of the Association, and has full authority to expend sums necessary for such purposes and objectives.

- Establishes credibility throughout the organization and with the Board as an effective developer of solutions to organizational, financial, legal, and political challenges.

- Attracts, retains, and develops high quality staff with a commitment to supporting diversity in the workplace.

- Engages and, with the Managing Attorney, has responsibility to manage all employed and volunteer personnel of the Association and directs, delegates to, and supervises staff.

- Works with the NYSDA Client Advisory Board.

- Works within the local, state, and national criminal justice and family court systems to improve public defense and those systems.
• Acts as chief liaison officer with defenders, criminal justice agencies, the public, the Legislative, Judicial, and Executive branches of government, and funding sources.

• Acts as the spokesperson for the New York State Defenders Association.

• Oversees development of the annual budget.

• Negotiates and maintains agreements to provide resources to the Association for its programs.

• Leads and further develops a program of public and private fundraising and negotiates annual State appropriations for the Association.

• Serves as a non-voting, ex-officio member of the Board of Directors and of all committees of the Association; attends and plans with the Board President five Board meetings per year; and with the President and the staff plans and conducts the Annual Meeting of the Members and convenings of the state’s chief defenders.

• Serves as Executive Director of the allied New York State Defenders Justice Fund (501[c][4]).

**Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

• An attorney admitted to practice in any state; willingness to sit for the New York Bar or move for admission.

• Ability to communicate clearly and effectively, orally and in writing; public speaking experience.

• Awareness of and willingness to address racial and other disparities and implicit biases in the office, the criminal justice, family court, and public defense systems, and the larger culture.

• Ability to create an atmosphere of cooperation, professional growth, and unity.

• Ability to anticipate possibilities and effectuate plans and procedures to bring them into being; ability to anticipate problems and effectuate plans and procedures to avoid them.

• Knowledge and appreciation of public defense systems, criminal law and procedure, family court adult representational responsibilities, and the criminal justice system.

• Experience with legislative advocacy.
Experience with fundraising.

Commitment to a team-based management philosophy and a strong work ethic.

Ability to lead by example in the handling of work assignments, as well as in the treatment of staff.

Awareness of the value of self-care and the ability to encourage and support self-care by staff.

Ability to supervise and provide an office leadership role, including the ability to delegate tasks and authority, as appropriate.

Ability to recognize and analyze personnel issues within the framework of a policies and procedures manual and the law.

Preferred Knowledge and Experience

Ten years’ relevant experience.

Knowledge of the history of public defense in New York State.

Grant writing experience.

Experience running a membership organization.

Experience working with a Board of Directors.

Experience developing and overseeing organizational budgets.

Knowledge of military/veterans issues within the criminal justice and family court systems.

Salary: Salary is negotiable, dependent upon experience. Excellent benefits.

How to Apply

Applicants are expected to submit:

• A cover letter describing interest in the position and an expression of salary expectations.

• A current resume.

• At least three professional references and at least one personal reference.
• Responses to the following **Supplemental Questions**:

1. How would you foster a collaborative relationship with staff and the Board to encourage feedback and ideas?

2. How would you promote a culture that values client-centered solidarity, integrity, diversity, collaboration, and results? Give us specific examples of how you have done this in the past.

3. Please comment on the use of the word “indigent” when used to describe those who are entitled to appointed counsel.

4. In your opinion, what is the role of professional public defense in 21st Century criminal justice and family court systems?

Please mail or email application materials to:

**Susan Bryant**  
**Special Counsel**  
**New York State Defenders Association**  
**194 Washington Avenue, Suite 500**  
**Albany, NY 12210**  
**sbryant@nysda.org**

Questions? Email Susan Bryant at **sbryant@nysda.org**.

Applications will be considered until the position is filled. To receive full consideration, please submit your application materials by January 20, 2017. NYSDA expects to make a hiring decision in May 2017 and to have the successful applicant join the organization on July 1, 2017.

**NYSDA** is committed to ensuring equal opportunity in employment without discrimination unrelated to the individual’s abilities and qualifications to serve. All people are encouraged to apply.