AmeriCorps Member Position Description

Orleans Public Defender

Member Position / Title: Volunteer Coordinator

# of Member Slots in this Position: 1

Member Immediate Supervisor
Ginger Parsons **Member Immediate Supervisor Title:**
Supervisor of client services division

Name: Days / Hours of Service: Monday-Friday 8-5

Website: www.opdla.org

Partner Organization Name:
Orleans Public Defenders
Address: 2601 Tulane Avenue, Suite 700 City: NO, **LA Zip Code:** 70119

Organization/Agency Mission and/or Goals: The mission of the Orleans Public Defenders Office (OPD) is to fight for our clients by providing excellent client-centered representation, reforming the system and partnering with the community.

Program Mission and/or Goals: The Orleans Public Defenders Office provides holistic, community based representation for all indigent criminal defendants in Orleans Parish. Corps members will work within the Client Services Division (CSD) at OPD. CSD provides a broad range of services to mitigate the significant consequences of incarceration and/or arrest on the individual, the families affected and the community as a whole-as well as to connect clients with services to prevent future contact with the criminal justice system. Clients that need specific attention and assistance are those who suffer from mental illness, substance abuse, or are HIV+, as well as those who are homeless. They are both disproportionately represented among our clients and the most vulnerable to inappropriate outcomes in the criminal justice system.

Community Need: Alternatives to incarceration are crucial because poor people, especially those with mental illness and substance abuse issues, or those who are homeless and at risk for contracting HIV, are more likely to be detained by the police and more likely to remain detained because they cannot afford bail. The community needs people that are able to work to be out of jail and in the community. The community needs people who need services but are unable to manage this on their own to receive assistance in linkage to services. OPD is in a position to link our clients to services they need in order to remain out of jail and in lieu of a jail sentence. OPD stands at a unique position with a high level of access to clients with acute mental and physical health needs and a responsibility to advocate for those clients. We have significant room for growth to meet more of those needs in a community-conscious manner.

Member Position Summary: The Corps member will recruit and manage our court volunteers from Tulane and Loyola Universities each school semester. He/she will attend the Serve Fair at Loyola University in the fall and spring and present information to potential volunteers about the volunteer opportunities at OPD. The Corps member will also present to Professor Ostertag's Criminal Justice class at Tulane University. The Corps member will then schedule and present an initial training to all accepted volunteers. He/she will follow up by building the database of volunteers and availability and create a weekly calendar of volunteer shifts. He/she will be responsible for tracking attendance and communicating with volunteers who need to miss their shift for any reason. The Corps member will also communicate with the advocate supervisors and attorneys from each shift to make sure that they are aware of volunteers' inability to attend. At the end of each semester, the Corps member will be responsible for gathering attendance and performance information and providing performance reviews to the appropriate university entities. The Corps member would be help the Client Services Division supervisor to measure the impact of volunteers for the quarterly Client Services Division report.

Necessary Training or Training Plan to be implemented prior to Member Placement: Corps members will receive intense orientation training at OPD. The first week will be comprised of four hours a day of direct training through training materials, lecture and meetings with various members across the organization. The other four hours of the day, the corps members will shadow different staff members who will demonstrate all of the core skills and tasks associated with their work. The second week, corps members will continue to shadow and take on responsibility as they demonstrate mastery of the work. In addition, corps members will be encouraged to attend local and national conferences pertaining to their community outreach project to receive further education on possible avenues for service.

Member Impact:
We anticipate this Corps member providing training and oversight to approximately 25 volunteers per university semester.

The Corps member will train these volunteers to interact with clients when they are first arrested in order to begin the process of advocating for a reasonable bail or release to an alternative treatment setting. The Corps member will teach the volunteers to identify mental illness, substance abuse, and health needs at the earliest possible point to be able to communicate these needs to the defense attorneys, to jail staff, and to family members or organizations who support these clients. Through the training and leadership of these volunteers, this Corps member will touch as many as 100 clients per month with special health or mental health needs. These interventions increase the availability of medically necessary treatment to clients, decrease the trauma of incarceration and create a healthier community that may prevent future crime. The corps member will also create space for healing and recovery in the midst of a process that is typically highly disruptive to lives and communities.

Essential Functions of Position:

- Source and recruit volunteers through Tulane and Loyola University contacts
- Collect information on availabilities
- Arrange for appropriate training
- Produce schedules for everyday activities
- Communicate frequently with volunteers to ensure they are satisfied
- Keep detailed records of volunteers' information and assignments
- Strengthen relationship between OPD and university partners
- Track and evaluate volunteer performance and outcomes

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

The volunteer coordinator should be comfortable working with and have a good working knowledge of various software programs, including but not limited to Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook; Google Documents; and PDF's. The corps members should be comfortable and adapt at learning new software programs such as OPD's case management system, the Sheriff's data management system, etc.

The volunteer coordinator must:

- Be a team player who can collaborate well with others;
- Be able to follow clear instructions and meet deadlines;
- Have the self-confidence and initiative to propose new projects and/or alternative ways to improve the development and implementation of current projects;
- Be comfortable visiting jail and speaking to inmates;
- Be responsive to supervision;
- Be respectful of our client population who are all poor and disproportionately people of color;
- Be an effective communicator who can clearly articulate ideas, problems and solutions;
- Possess good writing and research skills;
- Be resourceful in tackling issues from multiple angles and viewpoints;
- Be able to work in a high-paced office juggling multiple responsibilities with sometimes short deadlines;

Be willing to put in the necessary hours (means working after 5:30pm or coming in on a weekend) to complete a project, assist a client, or meet a deadline.

Required Academic and Experience Qualifications: The program outreach & community awareness coordinator must have a high school diploma, with a college degree preferred. Previous education or experience in the legal or medical fields would be helpful but certainly not required.