

**STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA**  
**Title: Chief Defender**  
**Attorney Career Band: L4**

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**A. Purpose**

Provide direction and support to attorneys to ensure an efficient delivery of legal services.

Ensure all clients assigned to the Office of Indigent Legal Services receive professional and effective legal services.

**B. Distinguishing Feature:**

The Chief Defender leads and directs the work of a team of public defense professionals to provide statewide indigent representation services in direct appeals in criminal cases, habeas corpus appeals, and abuse and neglect of child appeal cases or other services as determined by the Commission. The Chief Defender provides direction and guidance in strategic operations and planning for Office of Indigent Legal Services as well as performing highly advanced managerial work. Daily work varies widely and may include budget planning and management, policy monitoring and review, publications, communications planning, legislative affairs, data collection, strategic planning, staff supervision and coaching, policy development, board meeting planning, and more. Works under minimal supervision, with extensive latitude for the use of initiative and independent judgement.

**C. Functions:**

- Lead the department in the planning, development, coordination, and implementation of the Office of Indigent Legal Services policies, procedures, goals, and objectives. Provide direction for the department through strategic short and long-term goal setting and planning. Direct the department's policies, procedures, and administration to ensure compliance with applicable ordinances and laws.
- Collaborates with the County public defender offices, county and state officials, judges, lawyers, and community members.
- Represent the Office of Indigent Legal Services at public, private, and inter-governmental programs, and events. Communicate with the media. Attend meetings and trainings. Keep current on changes in law and statutes.
- Directly responsible for operations, budget management, legislation, staffing, and progress of the Office of Indigent Legal Services.
- Perform legal research and writing. Draft, prepare, and file legal documents and correspondence. Confer with state's attorneys, judges, court personnel, jail personnel, staff, and other agencies and personnel.
- Performs other work as assigned.

#### **D. Reporting Relationships:**

The Chief Defender supervises a team of public defenders and office staff and works directly under the supervision of the Commission of Indigent Legal Services.

#### **F. Decision-making Authority:**

Decisions include prioritizing work of the indigent legal office.

Decisions include legal advice, accepting legal cases, performing legal services, appearing in court, and direct supervision of legal team.

#### **H. Working Conditions:**

The Chief Defender works in a typical office environment.

#### **I. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:**

Knowledge of:

- Trial litigation;
- Criminal law, justice proceedings, and court practices;
- Legal concepts and practices;
- Executive Management;
- Legal research techniques and procedures;
- Interviewing techniques and procedures;
- Indigent representation services in criminal cases;
- Judicial processes.

Ability to:

- Uphold the mission to ensure representation for all indigent defendants;
- Utilize strong interpersonal skills;
- Analyze facts, evidence, and precedents and arrive at a logical conclusion;
- Present to a variety of audiences to include, but not limited to, government officials, judges, University classes, and other legal teams;
- Review decisions and investigative reports in relation to prescribed laws and regulations;
- Use discretion regarding confidential material and to understand the legal code of ethics;
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with coworkers and the public;
- Prepare legal reports and briefings;
- Communicate findings and information clearly and concisely.