



Job Description

Client Support Specialist

Position: Client Support Specialist

Reports To: Participatory Defense Director

Position Summary:

In partnership with The Bail Project, the People's Advocacy Institute hosts the Mississippi Bail Fund Collective which is a coalition of directly impacted people, organizations, social workers, legal professionals and community members committed to ending wealth based detention and creating a better system of justice that fosters change, stability and a better quality of life for all people. The Client Support Specialist is a community member committed to racial and economic justice. They are the core, assessing people's needs to secure the release of people lingering behind bars simply because they are cash poor and then supporting them upon their release to assist in regaining stability and ensuring they are able to return to court.

About People's Advocacy Institute (PAI):

By providing legal support and engaging communities in participatory defense, electoral justice efforts, People's Assemblies, alternative to incarceration initiatives, and an intentional grassroots process for cultivating ideas and developing solutions PAI, inspires self-determination and community-driven solutions to crime and punitive legal systems and social injustice facing far too many communities. We believe that community agency is what architects robust systems change and is what is needed to build new institutional power that paves the way for a more just system rooted in restoration, resilience and self-determination.

The Context

The violence of the criminal justice system continues to injure people beyond their initial contact with police, to incarceration to the collateral consequences that prevent people from fully exercising their citizenship such as voting to employment, etc. For us, the connection of marching in the streets to oppose police violence, to standing with the community in the courtroom to challenge

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mass incarceration, to building communities' capacity to create the programs, policies and practices that foster community safety, joy and stability, go hand in hand. And we recognize that any effort to change the system must be led by the very people most impacted by the harm. That is why we have partnered with the [National Bail Out](#) (NBO) and [The Bail Project](#) (TBP), to provide bail support in Mississippi.

The Response

The People's Advocacy Institute, through its Mississippi Bail Fund Collective, provides free participatory legal defense including bail assistance, pretrial support and criminal defense guidance to help people take control of their own defense. We are on a mission to combat mass incarceration and demonstrate that a more humane, equitable, and effective system is possible.

The Model

The collateral consequences of being poor are not minor. As James Baldwin reminds us, 'being poor is very expensive.' There is no place in the criminal system where money more clearly buys justice than for one's criminal defense, starting with bail. People who can't afford bail remain in jail before trial, while those with money buy their liberty. Tying freedom to financial ability upends the presumption of innocence, tears lives apart, and perpetuates racial and economic disparities. It is also a key driver of mass incarceration, separation of families and divestment in communities. Each year, an estimated 2.5 million people sit in jail cells across America because they cannot afford bail. It is estimated that over 90 percent of people charged with a crime take a plea, not because they are guilty, but because they are scared of the trial process and can't afford a fully funded defense.

Our [Mississippi Bail Fund Collective](#) is a coalition of social workers, attorneys, and activists from across Mississippi working to address the injustices perpetrated by Mississippi's cash bail system. In partnership with the National Bail Out (NBO) and The Bail Project (TBP), we use a national revolving bail fund to pay bail for individuals who are legally presumed innocent, and whom a judge has deemed eligible for release. We then provide court reminders and work with local partner organizations to connect our clients with voluntary social services and community-based programs. We call this model Community Release with Support, and it has proven highly effective in helping people make their court dates. As our clients' cases close, bail comes back into the fund where it is recycled to help additional people.

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Job Summary:

The Client Support Specialist supports our clients and their families to assess and solve challenges in their lives that may impact their ability to gain stability upon their release from jail, return to court and obtain a resolution on their case. These challenges range from physical and mental illness to housing to child care and crises such as safety housing. Our Client Support Specialist conducts needs-assessments with bail candidates, compiles information and data to determine eligibility, counsels our clients and their families, engages with area social service agencies, plans and implements activities for the family, as well as maintains detailed case files and records.

Essential duties include the following.

- Complete needs assessments, intake forms, contact notes and other necessary client documentation
- Post bail for clients using bail funds provided by Mississippi Bail Fund
- Travel across the state of Mississippi and neighboring states to post bail, meet with clients and their families
- Visit clients in jail or prison in necessary
- Work with client and family to meet identified social needs
- Investigate case situations and present information to client support team on clients' family and social background pertinent to diagnosis and treatment (Care Planning)
- Serve as a link between client, referral agencies, and community
- Make arrangements for obtaining needed support including but not limited to State ID, birth certificate, social security cards, health insurance, clothing, personal items, dental care, eye care, hearing services, mobility services, and etc.
- Making referrals and obtaining services from outside entities
- Help clients to respond constructively to reentry plans and assist in adjustment leading to their long-term transition
- Participate in team and coalition meetings.
- Check-in with clients on a weekly basis via phone/video call, in-person at the office, or in the community to provide one-on-one mentoring support, make referrals to community partners based on individual needs, and requested supports.
- Monitor and document the progress of each client on their support plan and communicate progress with defense counsel, when appropriate, to inform mitigation strategies.
- Keep detailed case notes and records of all interactions, including the client, family members, and service providers, in required databases.

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- Ensure timeliness and quality of documentation as needed for client support and Program Director requests.
- Review program data regularly to meet performance goals and improve program quality for clients.
- Extensive travel required.

Qualifications:

You are driven, highly organized, and have a deep commitment to PAI and the Mississippi Bail Fund Coalition's mission to create a new system of justice founded in restoration, rehabilitation, and humane justice. You understand how the local criminal legal system operates and are familiar with the stakeholder groups who work inside it. We're looking for someone who is comfortable working independently or in a team-based setting. Adapting to the change inherent to a rapidly scaling startup is essential.

To excel in this role, you likely bring the following:

- Comfortable implementing organizational procedures and making effective and timely decisions
- Bachelor's degree in Social Work, Counseling or in a human services field including but not limited to sociology, special education, rehabilitation counseling, and psychology
- 1+ years' experience in working with people impacted by incarceration, working directly with individuals
- Must have a valid driver's license
- Certified Social Worker, preferred
- LCSW or Licensed Counselor preferred
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Outgoing and energetic personality
- Ability to multi-task while being detail-oriented
- Intermediate computer skills
- Experience with MS Office Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

Salary

The base salary is \$45,000 with increase commensurate with experience.

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Equal Opportunity Employer

The People's Advocacy Institute is home to the Mississippi Bail Fund Collective. We are proud to be an equal opportunity employer and actively seek the candidacy of people that have experienced incarceration/jail, people of color, women, LGBTQ people, people living with disabilities, and/or people that have experienced cash poverty.

To Apply

To apply, please send a **resume** and **cover letter** with the **subject line: Client Support Specialist** to info@peoplesadvocacyinstitute.com.

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