



Search for Executive Director

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

SEARCH SUMMARY

The Public Interest Law Center (“the Law Center”) seeks an exceptional leader who is committed to the mission of civil rights advocacy and to public interest legal strategies to serve as its next Executive Director. The executive director will have the opportunity to direct one of the leading civil rights organizations in Pennsylvania. Throughout its near half century of existence, the Law Center has pioneered pathbreaking high impact litigation that has significantly contributed to the quality of life, dignity, and security of the region’s citizens, especially its most vulnerable. Through the highly successful efforts of its outgoing executive director, resourceful board, and talented staff, the Law Center has achieved financial stability; a cohesive and collaborative team of lawyers and other professionals; an impressive network of pro bono counsel; and an enviable reputation for superb legal acumen and diligence and results that have had a positive impact in advancing a broad civil rights agenda.

At a time when civil rights and protections for citizens are facing fierce and unrelenting assaults from private and state actors, and the nation experiences a once-in-a-generation reckoning over its legacies of racism, poverty, disenfranchisement, and exclusion, the work of the Law Center could not be more relevant and critical. The Law Center requires a leader who can harness the urgency of the moment and the organization’s considerable talent and expertise to set the example of what high impact litigation can achieve in securing equality and justice for all.

The executive director serves as the chief executive of the Law Center and reports to the 36-member board of directors. S/he oversees operating revenue of approximately \$1.9 million and staff of 16 that includes professional staff in administration, development, communications, and attorneys who spearhead the Law Center’s litigation work in the areas of education, environmental justice, employment, healthcare, voting, and housing. The Law Center seeks an executive director who can increase financial contributions and grants to support its work; provide exceptional vision, leadership, and management for the staff; work collaboratively with the organization’s stakeholders around case selection and strategy; serve as an effective representative and spokesperson; and help set a vision with and maintain productive and collegial relationships with the board of directors.

The Public Interest Law Center has retained the search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this important recruitment. Instructions for inquiries, nominations, and applications can be found at the end of this document. The Law Center is an affirmative action employer and encourages applications for this position from women and underrepresented minorities.

THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW CENTER

In 1969 the Public Interest Law Center opened its doors in Philadelphia as a local affiliate of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. As the demand for civil rights lawyers became overwhelming, the leadership of the Philadelphia Bar Association officially incorporated the Law Center in 1974. The Law Center distinguishes itself through the use of high-impact legal strategies and novel court cases to advance the civil, social, and economic rights of communities primarily in Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia region.

Given the high stakes of the cases the Law Center pursues, careful planning goes into pursuing any new endeavor. Identifying and embarking upon new projects involves a process where staff and a committee of the board, determine whether an issue is "most pressing," that it impacts large numbers of people, that others cannot (or will not) do the work, and finally that the Law Center has the capacity to take it on. This process is informed by what the Law Center hears from clients, community and advocacy groups, and legal aid organizations. As a new project is initiated, a strategy for achieving its goals is developed. This usually involves a combination of tools including communications, community education, organizing, advocacy, technical assistance, and legal representation. In this enterprise, the work is aided by the extraordinary pro bono volunteer efforts of more than 100 attorneys from over a dozen firms and nonprofits committed to civil rights.

Today, the Law Center's sense of urgency is stronger than ever before. As federal policies threaten civil rights, and Philadelphia persists as the poorest big city in the nation, the board and staff know more must be done to combat injustice.

Currently, the Law Center focuses on projects that benefit large numbers of people that fall within six subject areas, each of which is a fundamental resource that low-income people need to live healthy, productive, and free lives: education, voting, environmental justice, employment, housing, and healthcare. Noted below are some of the recent work in each area:

- **Education:** The Law Center strives to secure for all Pennsylvania's children, regardless of their zip code, the funding needed for a good quality public education. Along with the Education Law Center and O'Melveny & Myers, the Law Center filed a lawsuit against government officials claiming that Pennsylvania's unfair and inadequate public education funding violates the state constitution and is preparing for trial. The Law Center has also participated in a broad-based state coalition to mobilize grass roots support for full and fair education funding. It has helped educate hundreds of individuals each year about how school funding works and how they can advocate for increases. The Law Center has also successfully advocated for the rights of the disabled to a quality education; challenged exorbitant truancy fines; and joined with organizations across the state demanding equity in remote learning for all students during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Voting:** Through the Jeffrey Golan & Frances Vilella-Vélez Voting Justice Project, the Law Center seeks to protect every citizen's right to vote by modernizing Pennsylvania's election system and challenging discriminatory barriers to the ballot box. It has advocated with state officials to ensure that after the 2020 Census, new state and federal legislative district lines fairly represent the population of Pennsylvania and do not gerrymander in favor of a political party or region. Among other inequities, this initiative is addressing the challenge that prison populations are currently

counted for census purposes where they are incarcerated rather than where they reside, a practice that shifts political power from urban and predominantly minority communities to rural and white ones where prisons are located.

The Law Center has also filed multiple lawsuits aimed at addressing the administration of the upcoming 2020 election, including the legality of drop boxes for mail-in ballots. The goal is to ensure maximum opportunities for individuals, particularly people of color, to vote. Prior to the primary, the Law Center filed two cases on behalf of voters, asking the court to extend the deadline for receiving mail-in ballots from receipt by election day to postmarked on election day. The Law Center gained national attention from two earlier voting cases: successful challenges to Pennsylvania's photo identification law and the state's politically gerrymandered Congressional maps.

- **Environmental Justice:** The Law Center provides legal representation and technical assistance to neighborhood groups to support them in addressing threats and opportunities to the built environment. Presently the Law Center is developing litigation against the proliferating chop shops that mar the residential neighborhoods in Southwest Philadelphia. Recently, it finished helping the Wynnefield Residents Association negotiate an agreement with PECO in connection with the construction of a new electric substation in their neighborhood. The agreement provides annual grants for community organizations, job-training programs for residents, and continued landscaping and maintenance of the area surrounding the substation. The Law Center's work has supported land tenure and long-term preservation of gardens and farms in Philadelphia by providing legal representation to community gardeners and market farmers. Finally, the Law Center has developed its "Grounded-in-Philly" web mapping and organizing tool that provides access to data on vacant land throughout Philadelphia and offers resources to individuals interested in starting or preserving community-based vacant land projects.
- **Employment:** Ensuring that people earn a living wage by addressing discrimination and systemic barriers to employment is another important focus area. Currently the Law Center is helping individuals with criminal records combat the discrimination that prevents them from earning a living wage. The strategy for this work seeks to take advantage of federal, state, and local laws prohibiting such discrimination. One case that the Law Center recently helped to a successful settlement was with Montgomery County, the area's ninth largest employer, whereby the county agreed to adopt and publicize robust and fair hiring policies. The Law Center is also working with Philadelphia area employers and employees to ensure that individuals understand the legal obligations with respect to criminal records and counsel employers on how to comply.
- **Housing:** The Law Center is deeply involved in efforts to improve the quality of housing for Philadelphia's low income and minority communities. Last year, the Law Center started a project to address the pervasive refusal by landlords to accept publicly funded vouchers as a rental down payment in all but the poorest areas with high concentration of minority renters. This refusal further exacerbated the segregation the voucher program was meant to address. A complaint was filed with the city's Commission on Human Relations. The hope is to use such cases to build awareness of this practice and pursue additional litigation where such refusals occur. The Law Center has also made use of community organizing to strengthen the collective power of renters. Recently, with the help of a lawyer and organizer from the Law Center, renters in the Frankford section of Philadelphia established an organizing union which has already secured improvement to the quality of one of the buildings.

- **Healthcare:** Through the Richard Berkman & Toni Seidl Health Care Justice Project, the Law Center has improved health outcomes in low-income communities, especially for children, by addressing systemic barriers to healthcare and public health threats. Of late, much of the work has focused on gun violence, an issue that is both a public health and civil rights crisis. The Law Center has used litigation to enforce measures that would save lives and would also develop case law to minimize the harmful effects of Pennsylvania state law prohibiting municipalities from regulating firearms. With co-counsel from Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr, the Law Center is representing two mothers who lost sons due to gun violence. They are also at work building a statewide coalition, the PA Safety Alliance, to advocate for gun regulation.

Current Context

The Public Interest Law Center is in excellent condition to continue its important work of advocating for the rights of vulnerable communities. Under the exceptional leadership of outgoing Executive Director Jennifer Clarke, the talented staff, and committed board members, the Law Center has greatly increased its financial stability and reputation as a preeminent civil rights organization in the region.

In recent years the Law Center has greatly increased its support from the Philadelphia region's legal community and foundations. It is currently concluding a capital campaign with the goal of raising \$2 million, to which virtually all Board members have contributed. With these additional resources, the Law Center hopes to carefully grow its staff to take on more work, as well as establish a permanent endowment to support its areas of strategic importance. In addition to their annual "give-or-get" financial requirement, board members have been especially useful in utilizing their networks to expand the Law Center's pool of potential supporters.

The Law Center has also continued to have highly collaborative and productive relationships with its network of pro bono lawyers. Amongst the Philadelphia and broader Pennsylvania legal community the Law Center has increased the number of pro bono partnerships. In recent years it has partnered with firms outside of Pennsylvania on some of its most important cases. In all these collaborations, attorneys from the Law Center have consistently demonstrated their superb legal acumen and ability to implement the detailed and painstaking hard work of trying complex civil rights litigation thus furthering the Law Center's exceptional reputation.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are important values of the Law Center, not only in how it informs its mission but also in its hiring and employment. Currently there is a staff and intern hiring process that requires a broad and diverse outreach. Care is taken to ensure that career opportunities are posted in locations and organizations that will be exposed to diverse candidates. Job descriptions and hiring processes are vetted by diversity experts to eliminate unconscious bias. When there is deviation from this, hiring committees must submit written explanations as to why the deviation was needed. Such measures have resulted in progress and the Law Center is fully committed to seeing greater progress in the near future.

The Law Center's most recent strategic plan (2017-2020) outlines three elements to guide its work: 1) Do the most important work; 2) Strengthen the organization's brand; and 3) Establish financial stability. In all three areas the organization has made great strides and positioned themselves to build off of its recent accomplishments.

In 2019, the Law Center had operating revenue of approximately \$1.9 million with the majority of it coming from law firms, foundations, and fee awards. It currently has a staff of 16 that includes skilled attorneys, an organizer, and professionals in the areas of administration, finance, communications, and development. A current and detailed organizational chart can be found at the end of this document (see Attachment A).

Governance

The Law Center is overseen by an active and supportive 36-member board of directors that oversees and supports its fiscal integrity and ensures that the organization's strategic priorities advance its mission. In 2018, the board adopted changes to its governing structure to include additional members who could provide greater insight to the community the Law Center serves. Six new board positions were established for individuals who are former clients and/or community leaders. By early 2020 all six of these positions were filled with two former clients, a climate change community organizer, a gun violence prevention advocate, and two former government officials.

For more information about the Law Center please visit www.pubintl.org.

THE ROLE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director of the Public Interest Law Center is the organization's chief executive and reports to the board of directors. The executive director works in collaboration with the board to establish the Law Center's strategic direction. S/he oversees and collaborates with the Law Center's staff to ensure a productive, collegial, and financially stable organization. The executive director is expected to provide guidance and direction to the legal staff around case selection, litigation strategy, workload, and document production. The executive director is also the chief external representative and fundraiser for the Law Center. The executive director's direct reports include the Director of Administration, Director of Development and Communications, and the Legal Director. The Law Center's most recent version (December 9, 2019) of the Executive Director Job Description is appended as Attachment B at the end of this document.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The success of the next Executive Director will be determined by how well s/he addresses the following leadership opportunities and challenges:

Increase financial resources to support the Law Center's mission

Fundraising will be a critical task for the next executive director in order to ensure that the Law Center has the financial resources to undertake the types of cases and initiatives that are vital to its mission. Today, the Law Center is on the strongest financial ground it has ever been; it has moved beyond the days of year-to-year budgetary uncertainty. However, given the scope and import of the Law Center's mission, there are always more cases to be pursued than the current level of resources can support. Therefore, the Law Center seeks to thoughtfully and sustainably grow its staff size in the future and philanthropic support from a variety of sources will be essential to achieving that.

The executive director, in collaboration with the Law Center's development staff and board members, will continue to cultivate relationships and support from the private bar and foundations in Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia area. Moreover, building relationships with individual major donors is an area of fundraising the executive director should seek to strengthen and expand.

Provide exceptional vision, leadership, and management to the Law Center's staff

The Law Center is incredibly fortunate to have a team of exceptional professional staff and lawyers supporting its important mission. The culture is marked by a desired balance of support while also providing autonomy to staff in pursuing their objectives. The Law Center is proud of its collegial atmosphere where

viewpoints and inputs at all levels are welcomed in coming to important decisions. The executive director must seek to nurture and sustain this culture while also communicating transparently to the team the opportunities and challenges facing the organization. Given the fairly wide array of areas in which the Law Center works, there is a need for the executive director to prevent the silo-ing that can occur among staff working in particular niche areas. The executive director should find ways for team members to learn and understand the variety of areas outside their own interests so that there is a more unified understanding of what the Law Center seeks to achieve.

The next executive director will also have the opportunity to examine and assess the current staffing model and determine if it is optimal. Working closely with the staff, s/he should determine what will be the best structure to meet the coming needs of the Law Center. With the goal of adding staff in the near to medium term future, thinking strategically about the about the Law Center's staffing structure will become more critical.

Bringing greater diversity to the Law Center's team will also be an important component of the executive director's stewardship of the organization. The executive director should continue to support the efforts already in place but also be willing to think creatively of other ways to increase diversity.

Work closely with the staff and board on the Law Center's case selection and legal strategies

The executive director will be expected to work collaboratively with the legal director, board members, and staff attorneys on the selection of cases the Law Center will pursue. In these efforts, the executive director will be expected to find the optimal balance between creativity and boldness and also strategic sense and realism around the resources needed and potential hurdles and impact a particular litigation strategy may entail. Given the time, effort, uncertainty, and resource constraints that exist in pursuing cases, the executive director will have to exercise judicious discernment in choosing where the Law Center can make a meaningful contribution.

Serve as an effective external representative and spokesperson for the Law Center

The executive director plays a vital role in connecting the work of the Law Center to a multitude of stakeholders in the region. In particular, s/he must continue to sustain and foster new connections where appropriate with the broader legal community, civil rights and social justice organizations, and policymakers at the city and state level. As one of the region's premiere civil rights organizations, the executive director has a major platform from which to broaden the message and importance of high impact litigation in furthering justice and equality. S/he must enthusiastically take opportunities to educate the larger public on what the Law Center does and the important role it plays in ensuring a healthy democratic society. Within the ecosystem of civil rights organizations in the region, the executive director has the opportunity to play a convening role amongst these organizations to not only create greater solidarity but also help set a broader agenda and direction for the field.

Work collaboratively with the Board of Directors to set a vision for the Law Center

The board of the Law Center is composed of passionate, accomplished, thoughtful individuals who care deeply about rectifying injustices in society and have given their own time and resources in service of this mission. The executive director will be expected to work in close partnership with board members to ensure careful stewardship of the organization. The executive director should also leverage the board's experience and connections to strengthen its mission as well as work collaboratively in helping to set the Law Center's vision for the future.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The search committee will consider the following factors in evaluating candidates for this important leadership role. While no single individual will possess all the desired experiences and qualifications, the successful candidate should possess many of the following characteristics:

- A J.D. with experience in social justice issues is preferred;
- A deep and demonstrated commitment to the promotion and protection of civil rights;
- Ability to fundraise from donors such as private law firms, foundations, corporations, and individuals;
- A record of success in a leadership position in the not-for-profit, government, and/or private sectors;
- Experience with the array of advocacy strategies (legal, policy, political, and public education) and with a track record of achievement as an advocate;
- A management style that leads by example and articulates desired outcomes without micro-managing;
- Excellent written and oral communications skills and an ability to articulate a vision that is compelling to the public, donors, partners in advocacy, and government policymakers;
- Ability to recruit and inspire a dedicated, diverse, and talented staff and to place a high priority on the professional development of staff;
- A demonstrated ability to work with complicated legal issues and explain them to a wide range of audiences;
- Ability to work with a committed and active board or directors;
- Strong political and diplomatic skills including comfort with controversy;
- Ability to build coalitions among organizations with divergent and often competing agendas;
- A good listener who inspires trust and confidence and remains open to the ideas of others;
- Unquestionable professional integrity, self-confidence, resilience, and humility.

PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING, NOMINATING AND INQUIRING

Interested applicants are invited to submit their resume and letter of interest including a statement of qualifications to:

Tim McFeeley, Partner
Kahn Lee, Managing Associate

1300 19th Street NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 682-1504

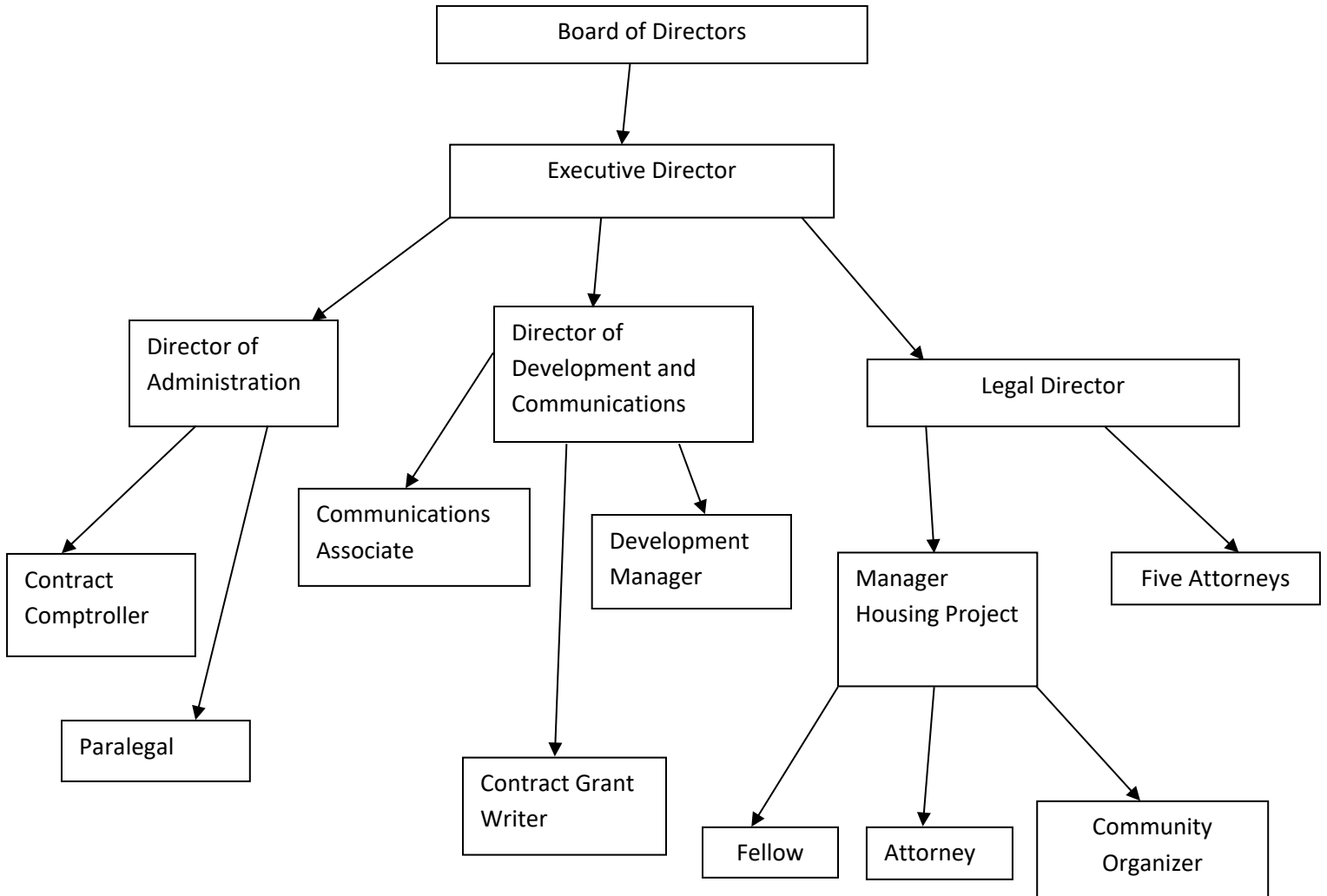
Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Electronic submissions are strongly preferred and can be made at www.imsearch.com/7662. Inquiries and nominations should also be made via the web address.

The Public Interest Law Center is an equal opportunity employer and eager to receive applications from candidates who could contribute to the diversity of the organization, including, but not limited to, people of color, people living with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ community. The Law Center is committed to protecting the safety of children with whom it comes in contact.

ISAACSON, MILLER

ATTACHMENT A

PUBLIC INTEREST LAW CENTER
ORGANIZATION CHART



ATTACHMENT B

Updated December 9, 2019 Executive Director Job Description

Executive Director: Responsible for overall operation of the organization including;

Strategic Direction:

- Together with board of directors and staff, determine and implement overall mission, goals and annual work plans for organization; facilitate board and staff working to achieve goals.
- Ensure, with board of directors, that strategic plans are implemented and updated.

Substantive work:

- Working with legal director and staff, and using board-developed rubric, decide which cases to file and other initiatives to pursue; where appropriate, assist legal director in presenting matters to board litigation committee.
- Support as needed legal director in reviewing quality of legal work, ensuring appropriate oversight and training of staff, and monitoring workloads.
- Support launch of new projects, including locating and cultivating partnerships with other organizations and individuals.
- Review legal documents, testimony, communications and other documents produced by the organization.

Finances: Responsible for overseeing all aspects of the organization's finances.

- Oversee outside accountant and comptroller in preparing monthly financial reports; review with audit/finance committee
- Ensure appropriate financial controls are in place, including written financial procedures;
- Oversee preparation of an annual budget for review and approval by audit/finance committee and the board of directors;
- Oversee preparation of annual tax filings and audits, after completion by outside accountant.
- Review bank statements, account reconciliations.
- Sign checks (Treasurer also has responsibility)
- Approve all uses of company credit card.
- Approve expenditures as required under financial procedures.
- Maintain necessary credit facility, including renewal of line of credit.

Development:

- Responsible for overseeing Development Director in creating and implementing annual development plan, in conjunction with board of directors.
- Make calls, visits and write letters to prospective donors.
- Oversee Development Director in the preparation of proposals for foundation grants and progress reports.
- Review with staff and Development Director financial and substantive progress on foundation grants.

- Oversee Development Director and events committee in planning and implementing fundraising events.
- Working with board capital campaign committee and Development Director, ensure that Capital Campaign progresses to a successful conclusion.

Human Capital:

- Create positive, supportive workplace environment.
- Work with Director of Administration to determine appropriate compensation and benefits.
- In consultation with board or staff as appropriate, determine staff configuration, (numbers and job categories)
- Oversee, with other supervisors, process for recruiting and hiring employees, yearly performance evaluations, and termination.
- Oversee staff members in creating and implementing successful internship program,
- Work with staff members to recruit and support new paid fellowship positions.
- Work with Director of Administration to create and update written policies pertaining to employment.

Board of Directors relations: Principal liaison with board of directors.

- Prepare for and participate in board meetings.
- Consult with board leadership in determining agendas for meetings and for board work.
- Consult with committee chairs in determining and implementing committee work.
- Assist board in recruiting and orienting new members.
- With Director of Development, assist board members in meeting fundraising goals.

Partnerships and communications with individuals and organizations: Principal spokesperson and liaison with community and media (all staff members expected to engage in these activities as well):

- Participate in speaking engagements and writing about the organization and its work
- Communicate with the media
- Outreach to individuals and organizations interested in the organization's work
- Maintain contacts with other public interest groups, including other Lawyers Committees for Civil Rights, the Philadelphia Bar Association and committees

Administration:

- Provide support and backup to the Director of Administration in all aspects of administration, including intervening where necessary in dealing with third party vendors.
- Conduct regular, periodic risk assessments.
- Review and approve application for professional liability insurance; ensure other necessary insurance is in place.
- With Director of Administration create and implement policies, other than employment policies, related to workplace.