



Public Advocates Inc. is a nonprofit law firm and advocacy organization that challenges the systemic causes of poverty and racial discrimination by strengthening community voices in public policy and achieving tangible legal victories advancing education, housing and transit equity. We spur change through collaboration with grassroots groups representing low-income communities, people of color and immigrants, combined with strategic policy reform, media advocacy and litigation, “making rights real” across California since 1971.

We Welcome Deferred and Volunteer Attorney Applicants

Public Advocates welcomes applications from firm attorneys who have been deferred or granted fellowship or sabbatical arrangements with public interest organizations. We believe we could provide an excellent experience and supervision for lawyers interested in our practice areas and our multipronged approach to advocacy. Attorneys who join us under these arrangements will have a chance to do challenging cutting edge work on education, housing, community development and/or transit equity, on behalf of low income communities, taking on a mix of litigation, policy and legislative, coalition, and strategic communications work.

Our current roster of projects ranges from advocacy for affordable housing and transit policies that address climate change, to legislative advocacy on education funding, accountability and federal student aid policy, to federal and state litigation concerning teacher quality, English language learners, and zoning. The specific assignments and mix of substantive work and skills for an attorney will depend on the status of matters, current staffing, and the skills each lawyer brings and wants to develop. Attorneys may also have the opportunity to help develop new program areas.

- We welcome interest from lawyers with diverse interests and experience, including litigation, transactional, land use, administrative, and legislative law. We have done pro bono projects with lawyers from practice areas as varied as trial and appellate litigation, tax, antitrust, environmental, land use and real estate finance in order to meet the needs of our clients and multifaceted projects.
- We also encourage applications from lawyers who would be interested in helping tell the story of our work, through advocacy, legal, historic, analytic and training materials for general audiences and law reviews, and reach new audiences among clients, allies, policy makers and others.

- We are proud of the diversity of our staff and also of our effectiveness in working respectfully and collaboratively with community organizations; applicants should share similar values.
- Fluency in Spanish or other language spoken by large numbers of Californians would be a plus, as would work with community organizations.
- It may be possible for interested attorneys to focus on a specific project that advances one of our priority areas; we are open to hearing about projects of interest to an applicant or to shaping the year around a project that we have identified as significant and promising.

Application information:

- Applicants should submit a substantive cover letter, resume, writing sample, and names of two references, who may be from the law firm. Direct your applications and inquiries to info@publicadvocates.org.
- We will conduct a complete but expedited selection process and will try to accommodate the schedules under which attorneys and firms are working.
- Please consult our website for updated information before you contact us.

Arrangements:

- Full time, year-long placements are likely to be most attractive to us, but we will consider other plans on a case-by-case basis. Our current thinking is that we can provide a good experience for one or two full-time lawyers, and possibly additional people with special shorter stints.
- Public Advocates has space for additional staff in our comfortable, well-located offices in San Francisco, near the Ferry Building.
- We hope that applicants will be fully compensated by their firms, including health insurance coverage. We are open to considering a variety of arrangements, including volunteers and people who come on as staff at Public Advocates for the period of the fellowship or posting.
- We would appreciate firm consideration of support for the costs of the program, the most significant of which will be for supervision, along with administration of the special arrangements for additional personnel and direct expenses (such as technology).

Background Information about the Organization & Our Work

Our Vision

Communities that were once excluded and marginalized are energized by their collective power to shape public decisions and achieve justice. As a result of that engagement, all Californians have the building blocks to thrive and to create vibrant communities – excellent public schools, affordable housing, reliable public transportation, quality health care, good job opportunities, and economic security.

Our Theory of Change

We believe that by engaging in strategic partnerships, policy and media advocacy and litigation, we will increase the capacity of grassroots organizations to shape public policy and discourse, and that we can also positively influence

public opinion, the media, policy makers and courts to hold institutions accountable. We do this to promote the expansion of civil rights and resource equity and create a mobilized community base to ensure that all Californians have the fundamental rights and equitable allocation of resources they need to build vibrant communities. We choose to address areas such as education, housing, transportation and health that are fundamental to enabling individuals and communities to fulfill their potential, and we choose to challenge systemic problems in ways that will achieve maximum impact.

Addressing Systemic Problems

Across all our work we address:

- Inequitable distribution of public resources
- Public policies and laws that stifle or fail to advance the rights or address the needs of our clients and their communities
- Ineffective implementation of programs designed to serve or protect our clients
- Lack of accountability to the public and especially to our client communities
- Limited access to public forums and decision making processes for marginalized communities, including people with limited funds and few political contacts, and non-English speakers

Focus Areas

Our current programs priorities focus on housing, transit and education equity. We have also worked on consumer, insurance, and telecommunications issues.

○ **Housing**

As urban areas are redeveloped, low-income residents and people of color are displaced when commercial projects or expensive condominiums and townhouses are favored over affordable housing. At the same time suburban communities often zone residential land for expensive single-family homes instead of higher-density, more affordable multi-family housing in an effort to “preserve local character.” Low-income families are squeezed between these two dynamics, pushed out of urban centers because of rising housing costs, but excluded from suburban areas by city policies.

Public Advocates is pursuing affordable housing in cities like Oakland and Concord and challenging injustices in local policies and planning in suburbs like Pleasanton. Our goal is to achieve equitable and sustainable development and growth that protects low-income communities and communities of color from displacement, while dismantling barriers to housing near quality jobs, education and services in affluent communities.

○ **Transit**

Equal access to every kind of opportunity depends on transportation. In the East Bay, bus service provided by AC Transit is crucial to meeting the needs of low-income people of color. AC Transit funding is controlled by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), whose institutional dynamics manufacture discriminatory funding outcomes, to the detriment of minority bus riders in and around Oakland.

In *Darensburg v. MTC*, we are challenging this discriminatory under-funding of urban bus service to compel more equitable allocation of federal funds for neighborhoods and riders of color, which will also benefit low-income and transit-dependent riders. We are also working with coalition partners to advocate for transit funding fairness and begin developing a bus riders union. Our goal is to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color in California have access to affordable and reliable transit services.

- **Education**

Every California child has a right to a quality education and equal opportunities to learn. But significant systemic barriers exist for many students across California. The state's school finance system is archaic and fails to provide resources where they are most needed. Low-income students and students of color disproportionately lack access to highly-qualified teachers, one of the most important factors in academic success. No Child Left Behind and other efforts at accountability are often implemented without adequate attention to providing students the resources they need to be successful. Parents, communities and policymakers need data about school quality and student progress so they can track and make decisions about their schools and hold them accountable for providing results.

We are a recognized leader in advancing equitable opportunities to learn for all California public school children, focusing on school finance reform, teacher quality, implementation of our landmark *Williams v. California* settlement, school and student data, English language learners, and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

- **Health**

We find health issues cutting across program areas and are exploring new strategies in this field. In the past we won victories to require medical testing for lead poisoning and to guarantee access to prenatal and emergency care for undocumented residents. Today we are addressing the relationship of obesity to physical education and school lunch programs, of transit services to access to health services and food markets, and of unhealthy school facilities to academic achievement.

Public Advocates Provides Effective Development for New Lawyers

Public Advocates has a well-established fellowship and law clerkship program. We are proud of our record of identifying, nurturing, and challenging new lawyers. We give our law fellows and clerks the training, mentoring, and combination of independence and support that has proven successful. New attorneys at Public Advocates will be engaged in the full range of our work to promote equity and systemic change including assisting managing attorneys in existing major civil rights impact litigation from development through trial and appeal, legislative, administrative, and policy advocacy, project development, and coalition-building with grassroots organizations.

Public Advocates provides training for our new attorneys, in accord with a professional development plan tailored to individual needs and goals. New attorneys will also benefit from training experiences, including litigation skills and also legislative and community advocacy training. New attorneys have opportunities to participate in, observe, and reflect on Public Advocates' work as seen through bi-weekly Legal Team strategy and project development meetings, judicial and legislative proceedings, coalition, community and grass roots organizing meetings, and work with policy experts. In short, new attorneys are part of a supportive, collaborative team that loves to teach.

Our commitment to providing a learning environment and positive experiences for our students is demonstrated by law students' feedback.

"The projects were very rewarding yet challenging, the people are warm and easy-going, and the environment was positive. I have definitely grown professionally and personally due to my time spent at Public Advocates."
(Tivonna Jones, UC Berkeley- Boalt Hall, Class of '08)

"It's an ideal public interest law placement. The internship program is highly organized and nurturing, and the supervisors will employ you as an integral member of the team." (Daniel Chin, Columbia University School of Law, Class of '09)

"I liked that the organization is engaged in various types of cases and that it has a legislative supplement to its work." (Nicholas Durham, New York University School of Law, Class of '08)

"[My supervisor] was GREAT! She was very receptive to my input, treated me as an equal, and made me feel like a valuable participant in the work. She always took the time to talk with me and took an interest in my professional development." (Elizabeth Morris, Stanford Law School, Class of '08)

"People at Public Advocates are great to work with. They are intelligent, caring, understanding, and supportive of your growth, future, opinions. It was a wonderful work environment and I was glad to be part of the PA family." (Taina Gomez, UC Berkeley- Boalt Hall, Class of '08)

Public Advocates Staff

See short bios of our distinguished staff on our website
www.publicadvocates.org.