

Staff Attorney

Washington Innocence Project

Location	Reports to	Status
Seattle Washington	Litigation Director	Full time exempt

About Washington Innocence Project

Washington Innocence Project provides free investigative and legal services to people with viable claims of actual innocence in Washington State. We work to identify, rectify, and prevent wrongful convictions through direct representation, support for freed and exonerated people, policy reform, education, and system change. WashIP is an independent nonprofit and a founding member of the Innocence Network.

Position Overview

The Staff Attorney maintains a small, active statewide caseload involving claims of actual innocence. The attorney develops cases from factual investigation and records review through DNA or other forensic testing, post-conviction litigation, evidentiary hearings, and appellate review. Staff attorneys work directly with incarcerated clients and collaborate with investigators, experts, paralegals, interns, volunteers, and pro bono counsel. The position offers substantial responsibility for complex matters that often have long factual and procedural histories.

How We Work

WashIP is a small, collaborative organization. Team members have meaningful responsibility for their work and are expected to communicate clearly about progress, capacity, barriers, and deadlines. We value careful work, practical judgment, curiosity, dependable follow-through, and a willingness to ask questions and receive feedback. Our work requires us to examine assumptions in police reports, trial records, prior court decisions, and other official accounts rather than treating those accounts as settled.

Primary Responsibilities

- Provide high-quality, client-centered representation to people incarcerated throughout Washington.
- Develop factual and legal case theories by reviewing trial, appellate, investigative, and forensic records; identifying further investigation; and critically assessing prior government and defense narratives.
- Research, draft, file, and argue post-conviction motions, personal restraint petitions, appellate briefs, and other pleadings in Washington trial and appellate courts and, when appropriate, federal court.
- Prepare for and conduct evidentiary hearings, including witness interviews, witness preparation, examination, exhibit presentation, and evidentiary argument.
- Identify and work with investigators and experts concerning DNA, medicine, forensic science, digital evidence, and other technical subjects.
- Maintain regular, candid communication with clients about case goals, uncertainty, progress, adverse developments, and next steps.
- Set realistic case goals and intermediate benchmarks and sustain progress across matters at different stages of records collection, investigation, testing, and litigation.

- Use paralegal and support resources effectively by providing clear assignments, context, deadlines, and appropriate notice.
- Prepare appropriate matters for placement with pro bono partners and serve as lead or co-counsel while communicating clear roles and expectations.
- Evaluate new applications for assistance and contribute to case-selection decisions.
- Consider litigation and nonlitigation pathways to relief, including remedies outside conventional post-conviction motions.
- Contribute, as assigned, to grant reporting, amicus work, training, policy initiatives, public education, and other projects connected to WashIP's litigation.

Minimum Qualifications

- Juris Doctor degree and active membership in the Washington State Bar Association, or eligibility for admission by motion within an agreed period.
- At least five years of experience practicing criminal law as a licensed attorney, including criminal defense, appellate, post-conviction, prosecution, or closely related litigation.
- Substantial legal research and writing experience and readiness to assume meaningful responsibility for complex matters.
- Experience communicating with incarcerated clients, people affected by the criminal legal system, or other clients facing trauma and institutional barriers.
- Ability to manage several long-term matters, meet litigation deadlines, and communicate promptly when capacity or obstacles threaten progress.
- Commitment to client-centered representation, public-interest law, equity, and criminal legal system reform.
- Ability to travel within Washington for client visits, investigation, hearings, and work with partners.

Experience That Would Be Useful

- Felony trial, appellate, or post-conviction litigation experience.
- Experience briefing and arguing contested criminal motions or appeals.
- Experience with factual investigation, witness interviews, or evidentiary hearings.
- Experience evaluating or presenting DNA, medical, digital, or other forensic evidence.
- Experience supervising, delegating to, or collaborating with paralegals, investigators, experts, interns, volunteers, or pro bono attorneys.
- Familiarity with Microsoft 365, Adobe Acrobat, legal research platforms, and case-management systems.

What Will Support Success

- Clear, persuasive writing and the ability to edit complex work with discipline.
- Curiosity about science and the ability to learn from experts without needing to arrive as a forensic specialist.
- Sound judgment about when additional research or investigation is necessary and when a matter is ready to move forward.
- Receptivity to editing and constructive feedback, along with a willingness to identify and pursue professional development.
- Respectful collaboration, direct communication, and an ability to navigate disagreement without avoiding it.
- Persistence through incomplete records, reluctant witnesses, institutional resistance, and unfavorable procedural history.

Work Location and Demands

This position follows a hybrid work schedule. Staff must work at least 50 percent of their time in the office and are expected to be in the office on Tuesdays. Outside that shared in-office day, staff have flexibility to establish their daily schedules based on case demands and personal circumstances. WashIP's office is in Pioneer Square, within several blocks of regional train service, light rail, and several major bus routes. Regular travel within Washington is required, including visits to prisons and courts. Occasional extended hours may be necessary around filings and hearings.

The position involves sustained use of a computer and telephone and may require moving case files or other office materials. The work regularly involves records and conversations concerning incarceration, sexual assault, domestic violence, racism, discrimination, serious injury, and death. WashIP will provide reasonable accommodations for qualified applicants and employees with disabilities.

Compensation and Benefits

Starting salary \$110,000 to \$130,000 depending on qualifications and experience.

- Medical, dental, and vision coverage
- Retirement contribution match (5%)
- Vacation and sick leave accrual
- Monthly transit or parking stipend
- Professional development CLE bar dues or licensing support
- Flexible and hybrid work arrangements

How to Apply

Email a resume and short letter of interest to work@wainnocenceproject.org with "Staff Attorney" in the subject line. The letter should explain your interest in the position and describe experience that prepares you for the work. Applications received by November 13, 2026, will receive full consideration. The position will remain open until filled.

Selected candidates will participate in two interviews. The first will take place between December 1, 2026, and December 18, 2026. Second interviews for those advancing will take place between January 4, 2026, and January 8, 2026. Finalists may be asked to complete a brief, job-related exercise and provide professional references. Candidates should be able to start no later than February 5, 2027.

Equal Opportunity and Inclusion

WashIP is committed to building a staff that reflects the clients and communities we serve. We strongly encourage applications from people who have been directly affected by the criminal legal system and from members of communities disproportionately harmed by wrongful conviction and incarceration.

WashIP is an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate in employment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, veteran status, marital status, genetic information, former incarceration, or any other status protected by law.