



Senior Supervising Attorney, Children's Rights (Alabama)

Montgomery, Alabama

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a leader in the fight against hate and bigotry in the United States, is seeking nominations and applications for the role of Senior Supervising Attorney (SSA), Children's Rights in Alabama. Joining a legal team that uses impact litigation and policy advocacy as its primary tools to relentlessly pursue justice and equal rights, the Senior Supervising Attorney will lead the development and implementation of SPLC's children's right work in Alabama and build and manage a highly-talented team in using all possible tools, including litigation, legislative campaigns, and public advocacy to advance the rights of children across the state.

As fear, political and cultural division, hatred, and economic uncertainty persist in the American consciousness and manifest in discriminatory policies, speech, and actions, individuals across the country are reigniting their commitment to justice for all. Southern Poverty Law Center's Legal Department is growing in response to the increased demand to protect Americans whose civil rights are being threatened in cities and states across the country. Over the last 12 months, the growth of this team has been unprecedented. Under the direction of Legal Director Rhonda Brownstein and Deputy Legal Director Zoe Savitsky, the Children's Rights practice area is growing to meet the increased demands for justice for children across the south and nationally, with a clear focus on ensuring that vulnerable children in the Deep South have access to the resources they need—particularly education and health services—to grow and thrive, and that they are neither excluded from nor denied such resources due to their background or characteristics. Vulnerable children in SPLC's states are pushed into the school to prison pipeline at disproportionate rates, attend school in under-resourced education systems, and often have little or no access to vital health services. And in SPLC's states, the forces of deregulation and privatization are working to destroy the most important institution for building a democratic society, public schools.

The Senior Supervising Attorney, Children's Rights (Alabama) works in collaboration with the Deputy Legal Director to execute the SPLC's vision and strategy for children's rights work in the state. With the DLD, the SSA will build and supervise a dedicated team of staff attorneys, policy counsel, advocates, support staff, and others as they use every possible tool to challenge the privatization of public education and the structural inequalities that disproportionately direct vulnerable children from the classroom and toward prison, educate them in unjustly inadequate schools, and prevent them from accessing the services they need to flourish in their communities.

Specifically, the Senior Supervising Attorney will be responsible for developing and litigating impact cases in Alabama state courts and in federal courts, at both trial and appellate levels. The SSA will engage in litigation and public advocacy related to children's rights issues, particularly relating to the school to prison pipeline, educational equity, and children's health services (focusing on mental health care). This may include but will not be limited to: addressing disproportionality and discrimination in school discipline, referrals to alternative school, suspensions, expulsion, and school-based arrest; curbing seclusion and restraint; pushing back against school-imposed fines and citations; addressing a variety of



equity issues (school funding, deregulation, privatization, school vouchers, segregation/re-segregation); and improving children's access to Medicaid and other vital health services.

The ideal candidate will be an exceptionally talented impact litigator, strategist, and manager with a deep personal passion for pursuing justice on behalf of vulnerable children. He/she/they will have an understanding of the challenges facing children in Alabama or states with similar demographic, social, and legal contexts and a natural intellectual curiosity to pursue new learnings and knowledge. He/she/they will bring at least seven (7) years of litigation experience and two (2) years successfully managing and leading a highly-talented team and be barred or willing to sit for the next bar exam in Alabama.

This search is being conducted by Katherine Jacobs, Callie Carroll, and Erica Nicole Griffin of Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group. Please find application instructions at the end of this document.

HISTORY AND MISSION

Southern Poverty Law Center was founded in the late 1960s by Morris Dees and Joe Levin to secure the promises of the Civil Rights movement through impact litigation. While landmark court decisions of the 1950s and 1960s had set precedents to usher in widespread racial equality, states and local jurisdictions were reluctant to implement changes to ensure all people had equal access to public resources and equal protection under the law. Instead, vulnerable communities, especially Blacks in the South, were subject to discrimination in the workforce, in schools, in state legislatures and the criminal justice system and hate-driven terror in their communities. Dees and Levin committed their careers at SPLC to pro bono litigation, taking on cases that few were willing to pursue and aggressively pushing for decisions that would have widespread implications.

In 1971, civil rights activist Julian Bond was named as SPLC's first president and the organization began to campaign for and win national financial support. As SPLC grew and expanded, it restructured its work to focus on four crucial areas of programming in the fight for justice. These include:

- ***The Intelligence Project***, (formerly known as KlanWatch) a team dedicated to monitoring, infiltrating, reporting, and shutting down the activity of domestic hate groups.
- ***Teaching Tolerance***, which combats prejudice among our nation's youth while promoting equality, inclusiveness, and equitable learning environments in the classroom.
- ***Civil Rights Memorial Center***, located across the street from SPLC and near other historic sites, features the names and stories of martyrs of the Civil Rights Movement, a theater, classrooms, and the Wall of Tolerance.
- ***The Legal Department*** continues to seek justice and advocate for the rights of all people, just as Morris Dees and Joe Levin did at SPLC's founding.

With critical wins over the years against discriminatory practices by individuals, the private sector, the government, educational systems, and criminal justice systems, SPLC's legal team has inspired hope and brought justice to individuals in the farthest reaches of our society. Landmark cases against the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nation significantly bankrupted elements of those groups and the Intelligence Project's sophisticated tracking of these groups continues to support the ongoing work of the legal team.



The Children's Rights practice area is one of five related but unique practice groups, which also include Economic Justice, Immigrant Justice, LGBT Rights and Special Litigation, and Criminal Justice Reform. More information can be found at: <https://www.splcenter.org/>.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Everyday institutions deny vulnerable children across the South access to public education and mental health services. Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi all rank at or near the bottom of the country in terms of poverty, education, health care, and other indicators of children's well-being. Children of color and children with disabilities are the ones who are harmed the most by these failures — particularly as states slash funding for education and social services or privatize those services.

The Children's Rights team works across the region – using litigation and other forms of legal advocacy – to dismantle the school to prison pipeline and ensure that all children have equal access to a high-quality education and health services. This work is organized by three priorities:

- **Stopping the “school-to-prison pipeline”:** The school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) is the harsh cycle of policies, practices, and procedures that, directly or indirectly, pushes children out of their schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. SPLC is working to stop that cycle by pushing back against the unnecessary or biased use of exclusionary discipline (suspension, referral to alternative school, expulsion) and school-based arrest that cut short a child's education and have life-long negative consequences.
- **Fighting for educational equity:** SPLC works to ensure that no matter a student's background and characteristics, he/she/they has access to a high-quality, well-resourced education in an integrated environment and can gain the tools and skills to succeed. Among other things, this means pushing back against forces working to deregulate and privatize public education.
- **Protecting children's access to mental health service:** All children deserve access to the services necessary to ensure their emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and to receive those services in the most integrated environment appropriate to their needs. To this end, SPLC working to improve access to effective, community-based mental health services and to reduce the overreliance on institutionalized care.

SPLC is expanding its Children's Rights work into Alabama, and there is much work to do to ensure equality, fairness, and opportunity for all children in the state and across the country.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACING THE SSA

Work at the Southern Poverty Law Center is both a great privilege and responsibility. SPLC's mission to fight hate and bigotry and to seek justice for the most vulnerable members of society is a clarion call to professionals who are willing to commit their professional skills to the defense of a greater nation for all.

The Senior Supervising Attorney, Children's Rights in Alabama will work closely with Deputy Legal Director, Zoe Savitsky, to execute a compelling vision and strategy and build and manage the Alabama team to effectively deploy tools to relentlessly pursue systemic justice on behalf of the most vulnerable children for the greatest possible impact in the state. He/she/they will:



Lead the development and implementation of SPLC’s children’s rights work in Alabama, using all possible tools including litigation, legislative campaigns, and public advocacy to advance the rights of children across the state. The Children’s Rights team understands that successful litigation often means looking at the relationships between privatization, federal and state school policy, and politics with new eyes. The SSA will need to be particularly strategic as he/she/they identifies otherwise overlooked policy and legal avenues and arguments to weaken and eventually eliminate policies and practices that disproportionately harm children from poor and vulnerable communities.

Effectively grow and manage a highly talented litigation, policy, organizing, and support team for children’s rights work across Alabama. The SSA will build and supervise a team of exceptionally talented team members, including Policy Counsel, Senior Staff Attorneys, Staff Attorneys, Law Fellows, and other legal staff and will assist in managing the work of the regional data analyst and regional researcher/policy specialist.

Develop strategic children’s rights related cases and lead cutting-edge litigation across Alabama. The new SSA will build a team to execute an agenda that includes litigation, advocacy, and policy work on behalf of children across the state. He/she/they will lead cases and delegate work to senior staff attorneys, overseeing each stage of the process and providing support and consultation.

Develop and lead public advocacy and awareness campaigns related to Children’s Rights priority areas in Alabama. The SSA will collaborate with the Deputy Legal Director, Policy Counsel, and Communications Department to identify and support the advancement of state and local policy priorities through public awareness and advocacy campaigns and targeted testimony to legislative bodies. The SSA will supervise outreach activities related to cases and campaigns in the state.

Represent SPLC’s Alabama Children’s Rights work to a diverse array of internal and external stakeholders. The SSA will work collaboratively with other SSAs across the Children’s Rights team, other practice areas, and the entire legal team to coordinate, collaborate, and align resources and strategy on key issues. The SSA will represent SPLC in various forums, including before community groups, legislatures, state agencies, and the press. He/she/they will also build partnerships with other impact litigation nonprofits, municipalities, state agencies, and universities to advance various projects and with other law firms to secure and collaborate with co-counsel when necessary.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate will be an exceptionally intelligent and effective litigator, strategist, and manager with an unrelenting commitment to justice on behalf of vulnerable children. While no one candidate will have all the qualifications enumerated below, the ideal candidate will be a trained attorney and have the following skills, qualifications, and abilities:

- A sincere commitment to social justice and a keen awareness of the indelible relationship between impact litigation, policy advocacy, and social change;
- Exceptional litigation skills and at least seven (7) years of federal court civil impact litigation or comparable legal experience;



- At least two (2) years of demonstrated success inspiring and leading highly talented and diverse teams, preferably of legal staff; proven success hiring, training, conducting performance evaluations, and mentoring teams;
- Initiative, vision, creativity, and a demonstrated willingness to take calculated risks in crafting and executing strategies; the absolute drive to succeed and the understanding the personal commitment to going above and beyond in service to mission and success;
- A deep personal commitment to diversity and inclusion; proven success in engaging with diverse communities; lived experience that informs an authentic understanding of the challenges faced by vulnerable communities and a sophisticated understanding of the historical nature of structural power differences with a lens into how that impacts social justice efforts today;
- Demonstrated knowledge of at least two of the following areas is a plus: the school to prison pipeline (e.g., classroom management, exclusionary discipline, restraint, corporal punishment, alternative schools, school-based law enforcement); educational equity (e.g., school funding, education models differing from traditional public schools, desegregation); and/or children's mental health (e.g., EPSDT/Medicaid Act, Olmstead/integration mandate policy, home and community-based services);
- Experience applying highly analytical skills to public policy issues, including an ability to synthesize and summarize large amounts of information and to focus quickly on the essence of an issue;
- Excellent communication skills, including research and writing, interpersonal and public communication skills, and an ability to translate vision and strategy into external messaging;
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including maturity, keen judgment, the ability to facilitate challenging conversations and quickly read interpersonal dynamics, and the ability to work with people from a wide array of backgrounds and perspectives and across projects;
- Ability to create a positive atmosphere in a high-energy, fast-paced work environment; excellent and consistent attention to detail and the ability to prioritize and meet deadlines;
- A natural intellectual curiosity and personal drive for self-reflection, improvement, and learning;
- Patience, a sense of humor, gravitas and a high tolerance for ambiguity; the ability to adapt quickly to change; an optimistic outlook, a natural orientation towards collaboration with the self-confidence to move forward in areas of uncertainty or where there is not necessarily agreement;
- The ability and willingness to travel regionally;
- Spanish or other language skills relevant to the Southeast are desired; and
- Admission to the Alabama Bar or willingness to sit for the next Bar Exam is required.

TO APPLY

This search is being conducted with assistance from Katherine Jacobs, Callie Carroll, and Erica Nicole Griffin of Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group. Candidates are encouraged to apply as soon as possible, and applications will be reviewed as they are received. Please send nominations and/or applications including cover letter describing your interest and qualifications, your resume (in Word format), and where you learned of the position to: SPLC-ChildRights@nonprofitprofessionals.com. **Southern Poverty Law Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Candidates of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.**

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