



Executive Director

Assigned Counsel Program of Erie County

Buffalo, New York

Salary: \$218,000 (plus benefits)

The Organization

The Assigned Counsel Program of Erie County helps ensure that people who cannot afford counsel receive high-quality representation in criminal and family matters. The Program coordinates access to experienced private panel attorneys and equips them with training, mentoring, case conferences, legal research, investigative and forensic support, and social work assistance.

Founded in 1962, the Program has deep roots in Buffalo and Western New York's indigent-defense community. Its work protects constitutional rights, supports families, and helps clients navigate courts while facing poverty, mental health needs, family disruption, and the power of the State. Staff and panel attorneys bring strong commitment to the mission and to the people the Program serves.

The Position

The Executive Director will lead the Program in partnership with the Board of Directors, building on operational reforms underway under interim leadership. The next leader will sustain stronger billing and assignment practices, earn staff trust, and strengthen relationships with panel attorneys, courts, Erie County, and the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services (ILS). This is an opportunity for an experienced manager to improve access to counsel, support excellent representation, and guide the Program's next chapter with a lasting commitment to Buffalo and Western New York.

Role Overview

Strategic and Organizational Leadership

- Lead the Program in partnership with the Board, translating its mission into clear priorities and measurable goals for service quality and organizational performance.
- Build on reforms underway under interim leadership, assessing remaining gaps and sustaining effective practices through the transition.
- Keep the Board informed about progress, financial performance, and emerging risks, supporting sound governance and timely decisions.
- Guide change thoughtfully, drawing on staff and panel expertise and communicating clear expectations for implementation.

People and Culture

- Maintain a visible, accessible presence in Buffalo and build staff trust through listening, consistent decisions, and dependable follow-through.
- Support deputy attorneys, the Chief Financial Officer, and other managers; clarify responsibilities and strengthen collaboration across legal and administrative functions.
- Recruit, retain, and develop staff, providing constructive feedback and addressing performance concerns fairly and directly.
- Create a respectful workplace that values attorney and non-attorney expertise and engages employees in organizational improvements.



Program Quality and Operations

- Oversee criminal defense and Family Court services with experienced deputies, supporting high-quality representation and improved access to counsel.
- Strengthen panel recruitment, training, mentoring, and access to investigative, social work, and expert support while respecting attorneys' professional independence.
- Ensure fair case assignments and timely, rigorous voucher review, sustaining billing safeguards and responding appropriately to concerns.
- Use data to monitor workloads, payment turnaround, and service gaps; improve processes and follow through on corrective actions.

External Leadership and Stewardship

- Partner with the Chief Financial Officer on budgets, public contracts, grants, and internal controls, aligning resources with priorities and reporting obligations.
- Strengthen confidence and productive relationships with Erie County, ILS, the judiciary, panel attorneys, and the broader legal community.
- Represent the Program in local and statewide discussions, advocating for sustainable funding and resources that improve access to counsel.
- Collaborate with other providers and regional partners, pursuing practical opportunities to strengthen services and share resources.

The Ideal Candidate

The ideal Executive Director brings the following core competencies:

Mission Leadership

Centers clients and constitutional rights while setting clear priorities and sustaining organizational focus.

People and Culture

Listens, earns staff trust, develops managers, and applies fair expectations with consistency and respect.

Legal Credibility

Brings depth in criminal defense or Family Court and the judgment to lead both practices with experienced deputies.

Operational Discipline

Sustains billing safeguards, fair assignments, timely payments, and sound financial and operational oversight.

Public Sector Acumen

Navigates government, funders, and public accountability with preparation, independence, and sound judgment.

Collaborative Influence

Builds trust across the Board, staff, panel, courts, funders, and community without avoiding candor.

Additional Qualifications

- Juris Doctor from an accredited law school.
- Admission to practice law in New York State is preferred, but not required. Candidates must be admitted to practice law and in good standing in at least one U.S. jurisdiction.
- Substantial experience in criminal defense or Family Court, paired with exceptional management experience; experience in both practice areas is preferred.
- Proven experience managing people and operations, with sound financial judgment and responsibility for results.
- Public-defense, law-firm leadership, government, or nonprofit management experience relevant to this role.
- Ability to work with a governing board and build relationships with judges, public officials, funders, and independent attorneys.
- Visible leadership presence in Buffalo and a genuine, long-term commitment to Western New York; candidates from outside the region are welcome.
- Commitment to indigent clients, ethical independence, and collaborative leadership; familiarity with ILS-funded programs is valued.

Who We Are

Work Environment

The Executive Director will lead a dedicated staff and work with independent panel attorneys who represent the Program's clients. Deputy attorneys provide training, advice, and quality support; investigators and social workers support casework. The role requires active, on-site leadership, thoughtful change management, and respect for staff expertise and panel attorneys' professional independence. Early priorities include listening, sustaining reforms, improving timely payments, and strengthening access to counsel, including in Family Court.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Program serves clients whose lives are shaped by poverty, disability, mental health needs, racial inequity, family disruption, and unequal access to power. The next Executive Director must bring cultural humility and a demonstrated commitment to fair treatment, inclusive leadership, and high-quality counsel for every eligible client.



Compensation

The anticipated annual salary is \$218,000, subject to confirmation of final compensation terms. The DRG search team will discuss details with candidates.

Benefits

Benefits are expected to include health coverage and a 10% employer retirement contribution, subject to applicable plan terms. Final details will be shared with candidates.

Timeline and Next Steps

If you are interested in this position, please click [here](#). All applicants will receive an email confirming receipt of their application.

We encourage candidates of all backgrounds to apply even if you do not meet all of the qualifications outlined above. If you are selected to move forward for an initial screening call, we expect you to hear from us by December 2026.

Recruitment Fraud Notice: DRG is the exclusive partner for this search. Legitimate communications will come directly from DRG using @drgconsulting.com email addresses or their LinkedIn profiles. If you are unsure whether a communication is authentic, please contact the consultant(s) listed in this posting.

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[Submit an application](#)

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