

CJA TRAINING PROGRAM FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF OKLAHOMA

The CJA Training Program is a training and mentoring program for attorneys who want to apply to the CJA Trial Panel, but lack the necessary experience or eligibility requirements. The Federal Public Defender's Office sponsors the program, which is led by the Criminal Justice Act Administrators. Over the course of 18 months, the program provides monthly seminars that cover all phases of a federal criminal case and the sentencing guidelines. These training sessions address substantive federal criminal law, skills development, and practical points for effective representation. Additionally the participants learn about the agencies specific to federal practice. Attendance at these sessions is mandatory for continued participation in the program.

Each participant will also be assigned a mentor attorney to shadow on cases. We believe the mentor aspect is a vital part of the program. Mentees are assigned a mentor from the Federal Public Defender's Office and the CJA Trial Panel. The mentee participates in all phases of the case, including initial client interviews, hearings, jail visits for detained clients, motion preparation, plea negotiation, trial prep, trial and sentencing issues. Mentees are compensated for only their in-court work at a rate determined by the Court. Participants should plan to commit approximately 10 hours a month to be successful in the program.

In addition to the valuable training provided, participants have the opportunity to build networks that strengthen their practice. Class members build relationships with each other and, through their exposure to members of the federal criminal defense bar, the federal bench and other federal court participants, broaden their base of resources, contacts and knowledge. Additionally, due to the significant amount of writing involved in federal practice, the program provides opportunities to work with the mentor to improved legal writing skills.

The selection process for the Training Panel is competitive. Each class is limited to 10 participants. A commitment to devote the time and effort necessary to succeed is a basic expectation. The attorneys chosen by the Federal District Judges must attend the mandatory monthly training sessions, participate in the regular training seminars presented by the CJA Administration office, and work with a mentor on cases over the 18 month time frame.

For more information about this program please contact the CJA Supervising Attorney, Kim Taylor, 405-609-5969. Applications for the Training Panel can be found at www.okwd.uscourts.gov and www.okw.fd.org