

RESEARCH ATTORNEY

DEFINITION

Under limited direction, this professional level position independently performs complex legal research on behalf of the Court by examining, analyzing, and interpreting available information and submitting recommendations for resolving issues before the Court.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

A person in this position performs complex legal research work demanding a high degree of resourcefulness, legal research and writing experience.

TYPICAL TASKS

- Researching difficult legal questions and preparing memoranda, documents, and summaries of alternatives for consideration by a judicial officer
- Reviewing and summarizing evidence, procedural history, and legal contentions in civil matters, and when needed in probate, appellate, criminal, juvenile, and family law matters
- Researching and analyzing legal authorities, including statutory and case law of California, other states, federal and foreign jurisdictions, treaties, and other international laws, and legislative history using traditional and computerized legal research methods
- Preparing memoranda as appropriate for each matter, including summarizing background information, identifying and analyzing factual and legal issues, and recommending a disposition
- Orally briefing judicial officers on research and analysis pertaining to matters in Court cases
- Drafting rulings, minute orders, formal orders, tentative decisions, statements of decisions, and judgments
- Responding to queries by judicial officers on procedural and substantive issues during trials and pre-trial hearings, including in limine motions, law and motion matters, evidentiary objections, jury instructions, and status of case authorities cited by counsel
- Researching, analyzing, and formulating recommended policies, procedures, and forms related to specific Court proceedings and recurring issues at the request of judges, judicial committees, and Court administration
- Reviewing appealed cases; researching pertinent issues and law; preparing preliminary opinions for the Court's consideration
- Serving as hearing officer or Judge Pro Tempore for selected calendars
- Covering duties of other staff research attorneys as needed during absences
- Performing other related work as required by business needs or as assigned

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Knowledge of:

- Principles, practices, methods, and materials of legal research, analysis, and writing
- Government Code and other California statutes related to California Trial Court processes and Rules of Court
- Principles of civil, probate, family, constitutional, and administrative law
- Legal terms, procedures, forms and documents used in Court cases
- Proper English usage, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling
- Appropriate legal citation

Ability to:

- Establish and maintain cooperative working relationships
- Use traditional and computerized legal research methods
- Apply legal principles, facts, and precedents to specific legal problems
- Analyze and appraise a variety of legal documents
- Research and analyze legal issues and present clear and logical arguments and statements of fact and law
- Organize and prioritize work assignments in a fast-paced environment, including assignments with short deadlines and/or due concurrently
- Communicate effectively both orally and in writing with people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds and temperaments
- Use personal computers including word processing, spreadsheet software, and Court case management databases
- Maintain confidentiality of information

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Strength, dexterity, coordination and vision to use a keyboard and video display terminal on a daily basis
- Hearing sufficient to communicate effectively in an office, a Courtroom environment, and with the public and Court staff
- Dexterity and coordination to handle files and single pieces of paper
- Personal mobility to:
 - work in various office and Courtroom locations
 - move objects weighing up to 20 pounds such as files, stacks of papers, reference and other materials
 - move from place to place within an office
 - sit and/or stand for prolonged periods of time

EXPERIENCE/EDUCATION

- Graduation from an accredited school of law AND
- Active membership in good standing with the State Bar of California AND
- Three (3) years of work experience as a practicing, licensed attorney with particular emphasis on legal research, analysis, and writing skills. Five (5) years desirable.

OTHER CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

- May require a valid California driver's license
- Must be willing to work at any Court location
- May be required to work outside normal business hours with or without advance notice