

Seeking Counsel for Child Welfare Appeals

We're looking for you! Come join the Committee for Public Counsel Services Children and Family Law (CAFL) Division appellate panel. CAFL appeals are appeals of final judgments in care and protection, termination of parental rights, guardianship of a minor, contested adoption, and other child welfare proceedings. Most cases concern intervention by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families in family life.

As a CAFL appellate panel attorney, you will interview and visit clients, conduct legal research, write motions and briefs, and argue cases before the Massachusetts Appeals Court and Supreme Judicial Court. No matter the experience level, CAFL appellate panel attorneys write their own briefs and argue their own cases, and *all* CAFL appeals get oral argument.

Private panel attorneys handle the vast majority of CAFL appeals; other CAFL appeals are handled by the CAFL Appellate (staff) Unit. This posting is *not* for a staff position; it is for private attorneys to obtain certification to receive, and be compensated for, CAFL appellate appointments. Compensation is \$95/hour.

New CAFL appellate attorneys work with our highly experienced mentors for several years after certification. During the first year after completing the mandatory training, newly certified attorneys must take at least one appellant and one appellee assignment. Panel members should expect to spend about 100-250 hours on each CAFL appeal. Private panel attorneys submit bills to CPCS and must agree to follow all billing and other requirements set forth in the CPCS Assigned Counsel Manual, available at:

<https://www.publiccounsel.net/assigned-counsel-manual/>

Kindly direct any questions to Dawn Messer, Supervising Staff Attorney, CPCS/CAFL Appellate Panel Support Unit, at: dmesser@publiccounsel.net or Abigail Salois, Supervising Staff Attorney, CPCS/CAFL Appellate Panel Support Unit, at: asalois@publiccounsel.net.

Qualifications:

Applicants must have the following minimum qualifications:

- (a) Demonstrated proficiency in legal research and writing; and
- (b) At least one of the following:
 - i. Two years of child welfare trial experience; or
 - ii. Primary authorship of two or more appellate briefs in other subjects; or
 - iii. A recent appellate clerkship, substantial editing experience for a law journal, publication of a law journal article, *or* other substantial research and writing experience.

If you have any questions about whether you meet these requirements, please contact us.

Applicants must be admitted to the Mass. bar or be eligible for admission by December 1, 2025 (unless the fall 2025 admission process goes later).

Admission into the training is competitive and not all applicants will be admitted. All admitted applicants must attend the four-day CAFL appellate training program scheduled for **January 27, January 29, February 3, and February 5, 2026**. The training, which will be conducted by Zoom, will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. each day. There will also be an orientation by Zoom on **January 13, 2026** from 4:00-5:00 p.m. The agency actively seeks to diversify its private attorney panel membership.

Applications:

Applications are due on **December 1, 2025**, but will be accepted on a rolling basis until the training is filled. Applications are available at:

CPCS Private Counsel Application Portal: <https://www.publiccounsel.net/ppa/> or contact us at CAFLAPPEALS@publiccounsel.net.