

# Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services



Strengthening the Delivery of Civil Legal Help to Vulnerable Tennesseans

[www.tals.org](http://www.tals.org)

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## SMLS Seeks Staff Attorney

### JOB ANNOUNCEMENT STAFF ATTORNEY

Southern Migrant Legal Services (SMLS) – (Nashville office)  
A Project of Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. (TRLA)

#### Background:

Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. (TRLA), a non-profit law firm, seeks an employment-law attorney for its Southern Migrant Legal Services (SMLS) office in Nashville, Tennessee. Our SMLS office provides high quality legal services to agricultural workers throughout the middle south. Created in 2001 by combining the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) migrant grants of six states (Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee), SMLS is a well-known for highly-skilled and impactful representation across the region. This 7-person (4-lawyer) office enjoys strong financial and organizational support from its parent organization, TRLA, including from TRLA's Texas-based farmworker advocacy project. Our SMLS office continues in TRLA's tradition, since TRLA's inception in the 1970s, as one of the premier migrant legal services programs in the country, with a distinguished history of strategic, principled litigation on behalf of marginalized farmworkers. In its first decade, SMLS developed a significant presence across the region, and a particular expertise in representing H-2A temporary foreign workers and victims of human trafficking. It has an experienced and dedicated staff. Nashville, itself, is equally alluring. Often called the "Athens of the South," Nashville is a pleasant and diverse city of more than 600,000 people. It has a vibrant music scene, great food and is a good environment for raising a family. It is the home of numerous educational and entertainment institutions, including Vanderbilt University.

More information about SMLS and TRLA may be found at [www.trla.org](http://www.trla.org).

#### Position Description:

SMLS seeks an experienced attorney who can immediately step into litigating SMLS' cases, which include "impact" cases in multiple federal jurisdictions. All applicants are encouraged to apply, but preference will be given to applicants with at least 3 years of federal litigation experience. The staff attorney will carry an individual farmworker legal services caseload, which includes complex wage and hour litigation, and litigating multi-party employment discrimination

and human trafficking cases. The cases handled by SMLS aim to protect the rights of extremely vulnerable populations in the South, and many address novel areas of the law. The attorney will also have an opportunity to collaborate with a wide-variety of federal agencies and private counsel, and assist in mentoring SMLS and other TRLA colleagues with their farmworker caseloads, as needed. The attorney must be a “team player” who wants the overall organization to succeed.

The project’s focus is on providing employment-related legal assistance to low-wage temporary and immigrant workers throughout the six states in its service delivery area. The project emphasizes enforcement of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers’ core employment rights, including (but not limited to) workers’ rights under the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the H-2A Regulations of Immigration and Nationality Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, and contract law. The project also enforces various state and federal workplace anti-discrimination acts, and addresses occupational safety, workers’ compensation and workplace retaliation. To redress workplace victimization, SMLS also files immigration petitions on behalf of workers who were victims of trafficking or other workplace crimes.

#### Applicant Qualifications:

Applicants should have proven litigation skills, a commitment to workers’ rights and the ability to establish trusting relationships with low-income clients. The attorney must be culturally competent, including understanding the unique needs of low-wage workers. The ideal applicant would further meet the qualifications listed below.

- Membership in good standing in any state bar; willingness to become licensed in Tennessee (Tennessee has comity with several states and an “attorney bar”)
- Proficiency in spoken and written Spanish strongly preferred
- At least 3 years of federal litigation experience in employment law preferred
- Excellent and independently-driven case development, legal research and writing skills
- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability advocate with governmental and other non-profit or social service agencies
- Ability to effectively manage an aggressive individual caseload
- Ability to think creatively, systemically and with a willingness to implement unconventional strategies; preferred experience with large-scale impact advocacy
- Experience working with diverse populations, including non-English-speaking and migrant communities
- Demonstrated commitment to social justice; preferred knowledge of the SMLS service delivery area.

#### How to Apply and Related Timelines

For consideration, applicants should promptly email a cover letter, résumé, legal writing sample and references, with “Staff Attorney – SMLS” in the subject line, to the following two individuals:

To: Monica Bustamante, Recruitment Manager, at [employment@trla.org](mailto:employment@trla.org) and Caitlin Berberich, Branch Manager, at [cberberich@trla.org](mailto:cberberich@trla.org)

The consideration of candidates is ongoing and will continue until the position is filled.

TRLA is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage applicants who will contribute to our diversity to apply.

#### Salary

Salary is dependent on experience and commensurate with salaries paid by other LSC-funded legal services programs. TRLA offers a generous benefits and retirement package, including assistance with law school student loan repayment.

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