



POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Restore Justice, Policy Director

Posted January 12, 2021

[Restore Justice](#) seeks a full-time **Policy Director** to support the organization's ambitious agenda. We are a 501 c 3 non-profit organization founded in 2015. Based in the River North neighborhood of Chicago, we currently get things done with a staff of seven (6 FT, 1 PT) and an active corps of volunteer board members.

Restore Justice

Our mission is to advocate for fairness, humanity, and compassion throughout the Illinois criminal justice system, with a primary focus on people convicted to extreme sentences in their youth or young adulthood and their families. We create and support policies that allow those who are rehabilitated to go home, and that ensure the families of incarcerated individuals and victims have opportunities for justice. We engage currently incarcerated individuals and their families, formerly incarcerated people, victims and their families, and concerned Illinoisans in advocacy and service in the criminal legal system.

Position Summary

The Policy Director will lead policy development and promotion activities for the organization, utilizing a combination of their own experience and that of our diverse board, staff, and partners. The Policy Director will also work with our Policy Associate to actively shape and influence sentencing and prison reform policy. When COVID-19 is no longer holding us back, our Policy Director will be as comfortable on the rail in Springfield as they will be during a drafting session with a cadre of former public defenders and incarcerated people.

Because we are a small shop, each staff member must be comfortable working outside the lines, punching above their weight, and generally laughing their way through the occasional tedious task.

We prioritize collaboration with people directly affected by the criminal legal system (including currently and formerly incarcerated people, lawyers, family members, and a wide and diverse cast of supporting characters). Everyone who is involved with Restore Justices needs to be able to draw deeply from their personal wells of compassion, versatility, tenacity, and patience.

While the Policy Director will primarily work from our office, they will pitch in for "all hands" activities such as advocacy trainings, board meetings, special court dates, advocacy days, coalition meetings, and prison visits; and, they will be present in Springfield for a significant portion of every legislative session. This is a new position and it will report to the Executive Director.

Core Areas of Work



Policy Development

- With guidance from the Policy Committee of the board, work to determine our annual policy agenda, understand opposition to that agenda, and develop supporting arguments and materials to mitigate that opposition and to build support.
- Set priorities for research and content development, conduct research, and work with team members to ensure all priorities are met.
- Use research on national trends, comparable policies in other states, and relevant local data to ensure recommended policy solutions are feasible.
- Work with board members, colleagues, opponents, and other stakeholders to vet possible policy solutions and to strengthen policy proposals.

Issue-Based Campaigns

- Develop expertise and a voice on our issue areas: Illinois's sentencing policy (particularly Class M and X and sentencing enhancements), meaningful opportunities for release policies (such as Truth in Sentencing or parole policy), and policies related to conditions of confinement.
- Develop an annual plan for each of our priority issues.
- Develop new issue areas in partnership with people most directly affected, working closely with members of our Returning Citizens Network and Communities and Relatives of Illinois's Incarcerated Children.

Other Stuff

- Represent Restore Justice in public fora, media, and in Springfield when necessary.
- Work with Policy Associate to develop data and research for all policy related matters.
- Assist with "all hands" activities, such as advocacy days or training sessions.
- Participate in fundraising activities as requested, which may include drafting language for proposals, meeting with donors, or attending events.

To apply, a candidate should...

- Have a Bachelor's degree and perhaps a graduate or law degree, **or** have had an equally effective and relevant alternative educational experience (such as non-credentialed education during incarceration or significant time spent working in government affairs).
- Have had **at least** two significant, continuous paid work experiences lasting well over one year; preferably more.
- Be a confident writer with excellent personal communication skills. Be able to write well, quickly; and, be willing to take the time to work with colleagues on writing for our audiences.
- Be comfortable creating and maintaining relationships with legislators, legislative staff, colleagues, and constituents.
- Demonstrate a deep commitment to issues related to long-term incarceration.

In our wildest dreams, a total unicorn of a candidate might...

- Have experience working in Springfield as a lobbyist or legislative staff.



- Have been incarcerated for a significant number of years, or have a loved one who has experienced incarceration.
- Have experience in a public defender or state's attorney's office.
- Fit right in with our team, which today feels a lot like this: irreverent, loving, connected, present, passionate, patient, thoughtful, willing. Three of our team members have been deeply personally affected by long-term incarceration in Illinois.

Restore Justice believes in:

- Affirming the DIGNITY & HUMANITY of all, regardless of age, income, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, national origin, or criminal history.
- The idea that PEOPLE COME FIRST. People matter more than any agenda or abstract success, and we strive to make sure that what we do creates real change for real communities.
- DOING NO HARM. Restore Justice maintains rigorous checks to ensure our policies do not negatively affect the people we serve or prevent individuals from accessing services.
- PRACTICAL STRATEGIES that can achieve ASPIRATIONAL GOALS. We dream big while also recognizing the dynamics of the system as it is.
- The possibility for TRANSFORMATION. All individuals are capable of dramatic change within themselves and people united together are capable of creating dramatic change in systems and institutions.

Important details

- We are targeting an individual who is comfortable with a salary of \$70K, with some wiggle room based on experience and stage of career.
- Our benefits package currently includes paid time off, health insurance, dental insurance, a 401K plan, and a long-term disability plan.
- We aspire to be a workplace that promotes balance and health.
- We are an equal opportunity employer and encourage all to apply; we especially encourage BIPOC to apply.
- If you would like assistance with any aspect of the hiring process, please elaborate in an email to jobs@restorejustice.org. Because we are stretched thin, **we can't take phone calls about the position in advance of the deadline**. We will do our best to respond to queries and acknowledge your application in a timely manner.

Send resume, cover letter, and three references*, by Friday, January 29:

Jobi Cates, Executive Director (pronouns: she/her)
jobs@restorejustice.org

Or by mail:

Jobi Cates, Executive Director (pronouns: she/her)
Restore Justice Foundation
PO Box 101099
Chicago, IL 60610

*References will not be contacted without your advance approval.