

Managing Director, Community Holistic Defense

Lawndale Christian Legal Center

Chicago, IL

Salary: \$120,000-\$150,000

The Organization

Lawndale Christian Legal Center (LCLC) is a community-rooted, justice-centered organization serving North Lawndale through holistic legal defense, restorative justice, housing, and wraparound support. With an annual operating budget of approximately \$10 million and a multidisciplinary staff of about 70 people, LCLC works at the intersection of public safety, community stability, and human dignity.

LCLC is deeply embedded in the neighborhood it serves. Approximately 70 percent of staff live in or have strong ties to North Lawndale, bringing lived experience, long-term relationships, and cultural fluency to the work. This proximity shapes how LCLC shows up in the community and how it builds trust with clients, partners, and supporters.

The organization is at an important moment of transition and opportunity. Following a successful \$25 million capital effort tied to new housing and facilities, LCLC is shifting from a period of expansion to a focus on sustainability, impact, and institutional strength. As part of this next phase, LCLC is advancing a justice innovation model that pilots new approaches, evaluates outcomes, and scales what works.

You can learn more on the organization's website, www.lclc.net.

Our North Lawndale Community

North Lawndale is central to LCLC's identity and work. The organization is committed to serving the community with respect, consistency, and accountability, and to building solutions alongside the people most impacted by the justice system.

The community is rich in local leadership, long-standing relationships, and neighborhood-based organizations working together to strengthen safety, stability, and opportunity.

For the Managing Director of Community Holistic Defense, community engagement is not about residency, but about presence and partnership. The successful candidate will take the time to listen, learn, and build authentic relationships with community members, clients, staff, and local partners, and will be able to speak about North Lawndale with care, fluency, and respect.

What We Do

LCLC reaches over 350 minors and emerging adults in the criminal justice system annually with the following services and pilots:

- **Community Holistic Defense (CHD):** Free legal representation for juvenile and emerging adult clients grounded in holistic defense practices which acknowledge that quality of representation and criminal legal outcomes are improved for youth when their unique developmental needs are simultaneously addressed by an integrated, interdisciplinary team of attorneys and social service providers. LCLC is one year from completing a Randomized Control Trial evaluation with the University of Chicago Inclusive Economy Lab comparing the legal and social impact of our CHD model with our local public defender's model of defense. LCLC envisions building a specialized youthful defender unit serving all juveniles and emerging adults in Cook County in partnership with our local public defender's office one day.
- **Deer Housing Pilot:** LCLC owns and operates 20 units of studio style housing for emerging adult men, 18-25 years old, to complete terms of probation inside the Dr. Dennis Deer Community Justice Center as an alternative to incarceration. Our vision is to build more Deer Housing programs and fewer prisons for emerging adults. The Managing Director of CHD works closely with the Managing Director of Deer Housing to coordinate services and representation.
- **Restorative Justice Community Court:** LCLC was the lead agency that gathered numerous community members and cook county court stakeholders together to design and launch the first Restorative Justice Community Court (RJCC) in the country in North Lawndale in September 2017. This court is based upon the tradition of restorative justice circle keeping and other restorative justice practices to enable repair and community integration for emerging adults, 18-25, facing qualifying felony criminal legal charges. Three new RJCC's for emerging adults have been created throughout Cook County since we launched the RJCC in North Lawndale. LCLC plans to expand the RJCC for emerging adults and add a juvenile RJCC to serve juveniles 17 and younger under the same model. The Managing Director of CHD works closely with the Managing Director of Restorative Justice to coordinate services and representation.
- **Juvenile Diversion Pilot:** Since 2020, LCLC has worked with the mayor's office and the Chicago Police Department to close the Juvenile Intervention and Support Center (JISC) and create a new model of juvenile diversion for Chicago. Under this new diversion model, LCLC is one of eight local service providers for juveniles in Chicago and focuses on serving youth from the west side diverted from the courts by the Chicago Police Department. The Managing Director of CHD works closely with the juvenile diversion team to coordinate services and representation.
- **Policy:** LCLC is championing two bills currently pending in Illinois. One bill is the Emerging Adult Task Force bill that will authorize a task force of interdisciplinary professionals, community groups, government agencies, and elected officials to explore restorative justice practices and policies across the nation to inform the creation of an Emerging Adult Court Act in Illinois. Similarly, the second bill is the Emerging Adult Sentencing Act, which provides judges and state's attorneys with the option of sentencing an emerging adult to a residential workforce development program like Deer Housing on probation instead of prison. The Managing Director of CHD works closely with LCLC's policy team to draft and pass policies and legislation that further LCLC's vision.

LCLC looks to continuously innovate our program portfolio to build upon new best practices for serving juveniles and emerging adults that better serve our communities.

ROLE OVERVIEW

The Managing Director of Community Holistic Defense (CHD) is a senior leader responsible for the quality, consistency, and impact of LCLC's core defense model. This role oversees an interdisciplinary team of attorneys, case managers, outreach workers, and community partners, ensuring that every client receives high-quality, culturally responsive representation grounded in holistic and restorative justice practices.

The Managing Director is also responsible for building and leading a high-performing team. This includes setting expectations, providing coaching and supervision, and fostering a culture of accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Success in this role will require a leader who is both strategic and hands-on, able to set direction while staying closely connected to the day-to-day realities of legal practice and client experience.

Immediate priorities for this role include establishing clear standards for:

- A CHD framework consisting of 5–10 observable practices that reflect high-quality legal representation, effective mitigation, and community violence intervention best practices
- The role of Case Managers and Outreach Workers in shaping legal strategy and supporting mitigation efforts
- In-person investigative work to ensure legal representation is grounded in, and responsive to, the communities we serve

Leading and Overseeing Defense Services

- Set the vision for Community Holistic Defense: zealous legal representation, community advocacy, and interdisciplinary teamwork that puts the client first.
- Develop a CHD framework of 5–10 observable practices reflecting high-quality legal representation, effective mitigation, and community violence intervention.
- Define and codify the role of case managers and outreach workers in shaping legal strategy and supporting mitigation efforts.
- Design and implement LCLC's CHD strategic plan, including program standardization, continuous improvement, and alignment to organizational goals.
- Hire, supervise, evaluate, and develop CHD staff. Build a team culture grounded in excellence, accountability, and care.
- Establish training standards and written policies and procedures that reflect LCLC's community-based holistic practice.
- Execute all grant deliverables; build processes to strengthen performance on existing grants and manage additions as the portfolio grows.

Advocacy and External Relations

- Build and maintain national expertise in community holistic defense and the specialized representation of juveniles and emerging adults.
- Position LCLC as the leading voice for specialized youthful defender units grounded in restorative justice values, for public defense offices in Cook County and across the country.
- Develop and maintain relationships with community members, court stakeholders, partner organizations, and funders.

Advocacy and External Relations (cont.)

- Represent LCLC through media, speaking engagements, panels, and public events.
- Lead regular community outreach efforts; maintain deep knowledge of North Lawndale and the surrounding neighborhoods LCLC serves.
- Work closely with LCLC's policy team on legislation and policy advocacy that advances the organization's vision.

Fundraising, Data, and Finance

- Lead and support fundraising efforts for Community Holistic Defense and LCLC as a whole.
- Collaborate with the research and data team to develop metrics and monitor progress against strategic plans, program goals, and funder requirements.
- Support development of data systems that accurately reflect client impact, programmatic activity, and reporting requirements.
- Manage the CHD budget; participate actively in LCLC's annual budgeting process.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate for the Managing Director position possesses the following competencies:

Holistic Defense Practice Deep understanding of and commitment to holistic defense: The belief that quality of legal representation improves when a client's full developmental, social, and legal needs are addressed together.	Criminal Law Expertise Substantial experience as a criminal law practitioner in juvenile and adult courts. Familiarity with Cook County's court system and stakeholders is a strong advantage.	People Leadership A track record of building and sustaining high-performing, values-driven teams. Skilled at supervision, coaching, honest feedback, and developing staff at all levels.
Standards and Systems Has codified a practice model before. Has turned what works in the courtroom or community into documented standards that others can learn from and build on.	Policy and Advocacy Can speak credibly in policy conversations. Experience with legislation, public testimony, media, or field-building is welcome.	Data and Learning Comfortable working with researchers and data systems. Understands how to use evaluation results to improve programs and tell LCLC's story to funders and partners.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE (CONT.)

Required Qualifications

- Juris Doctorate required
- Licensed to practice law in the State of Illinois and in good standing
- 10 or more years of experience as a criminal law practitioner in juvenile and/or adult courts
- 6 or more years of management and leadership experience in a nonprofit criminal justice organization
- Demonstrated experience with restorative justice practices, including peace circles
- Strong supervisory and team-building track record
- Valid driver's license and reliable transportation

Preferred Qualifications

- Deep familiarity with North Lawndale; willingness to live in the community
- Experience with holistic defense models, mitigation practice, and community violence intervention
- Prior work with researchers or evaluators (e.g., RCTs, logic models, program evaluation)
- Track record in fundraising, grant writing, or donor relations
- Knowledge of the Cook County court system and its stakeholders
- Experience in public speaking, media engagement, or policy advocacy

WHO WE ARE

Work Environment

Hybrid of onsite and remote office setting conditions may apply. Travel and evening and weekend work may be required.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Lawndale Christian Legal Center is an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, marital status, age, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, pregnancy, genetic information, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran status, or any other status protected under federal, state, or local law. All aspects of employment including the decision to hire, promote, discipline, or discharge, will be based on merit, competence, performance, and organizational needs. Our goal is to be a diverse workforce that is representative of those we serve.

North Lawndale residents and minorities encouraged to apply.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Salary: \$120,000-\$150,000

Benefits: LCLC offers a competitive compensation package designed to support employee well-being, financial security, and work-life balance.

Health & Wellness

- Medical insurance through Blue Cross Blue Shield, with multiple plan options; LCLC covers 75% of the employee premium
- Dental and vision insurance through Principal, with 75% of the employee premium covered
- Employer-paid life insurance policy of \$50,000, including accidental death and dismemberment coverage
- Long-term disability insurance, 60% employer-paid, providing income replacement after 60 days
- Health Savings Account (HSA) and Flexible Spending Account (FSA) options

Retirement

- 401(k) retirement plan available on the first day of employment
- Employer match of 100% on the first 3% of employee contributions and 50% on the next 2%
- Roth 401(k) option available

Time Off & Leave

- Unlimited PTO for full-time employees after 60 days
- Paid sick leave and paid leave in accordance with Illinois law
- 16 paid holidays annually
- Bereavement leave for immediate family
- Up to 8 weeks of paid medical leave for eligible family or personal health needs
- Up to 8 weeks of paid parental leave for birth, adoption, or foster placement

Additional Benefits

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offering counseling, legal support, and wellness resources

TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

If you are interested in this position, please click [here](#). All applicants will receive an email confirming receipt of their application.

We encourage candidates of all backgrounds to apply even if you do not meet all of the qualifications outlined above. If you are selected to move forward for an initial screening call, we expect you to hear from us by June 2026.

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[Submit an application](#)

