

January 5, 2026

Attention: Chris Christensen, CEO
Desert Healthcare District & Foundation
info@dhcd.org

RE: Application for Vacant Zone 5 Director Seat

Dear Board Members,

I'm writing to apply for the Desert Healthcare District & Foundation Board of Directors vacancy as a Zone 5 resident. I bring a track record in public facing governance, legal and policy work, and direct systems experience across homelessness, housing stabilization, reentry, and behavioral health services.

In my current role as Staff Attorney at Starting Over, Inc., I work with community stakeholders to drive policy reforms and expand access to legal services, while providing direct legal assistance across civil rights, housing, and employment matters. Starting Over's mission focus on homelessness, recidivism reduction, and reentry services has sharpened my practical understanding of what it takes to move from crisis to stability. My earlier work includes leadership within the Coachella Valley Association of Governments Homelessness Department, where I led staff and ensured compliance while coordinating with member agencies and the public, and housing program management at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission, including supervising staff and implementing case management plans for households seeking stable housing.

I understand this is a public fiduciary role requiring disciplined governance: setting policy, approving budgets, managing risk, ensuring legal compliance, and hiring and evaluating the Chief Executive Officer while exercising independent judgment free of conflicts of interest. I'm prepared to serve at that level and to contribute fully to the District's strategic planning process, including special Board workshops and community listening sessions.

My background and experience can contribute to the District's work on behavioral health and substance use continuum, housing as health and homelessness prevention, reentry supports for justice-impacted residents, and early intervention for youth. I bring practical insight into service delivery and case management that can strengthen grantmaking strategy and outcome focused oversight, along with experience coordinating across providers, cities, and agencies in regional homelessness systems. I also bring a policy and access lens informed by legal practice and community trainings aimed at reducing barriers for underserved residents.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be honored to serve and help advance the District's mission through responsible stewardship, strong oversight, and community centered strategy.

With gratitude,



Anyse R. Smith, Esq.

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SUMMARY

Experienced legal professional with a robust background in dynamic community engagement, adept client relations, and comprehensive knowledge of civil litigation and policy advocacy. Recognized as a strong team player with exceptional skills in thriving within high-pressure environments, committed to advancing client and community interests with integrity and excellence.

EDUCATION AND CREDENTIALS

Admitted to the State Bar of California (May 2021 – Current)

California State Bar No. 337416

Juris Doctor (2020)

California Desert Trial Academy, Indio, California

Master of International Law, International Relations, and Diplomacy (2010)

Paris Sorbonne Université, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Bachelor of Arts, International Affairs (2007)

The George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs

EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Starting Over Inc.

Staff Attorney, December 2023 – Current

A nonprofit housing provider and legal aid whose mission is to alleviate the impact of homelessness, reduce recidivism, and expand reentry services for Southern California's most vulnerable populations. Starting Over Inc. empowers individuals facing poverty, substance abuse, and mental illness to break the cycle of recidivism through a multifaceted approach of service provision, legal assistance, policy advocacy, and civic engagement.

- Works with community stakeholders to initiate and drive policy reforms across local, county, and state levels to eradicate poverty and incarceration, and in their places create communities of care that support self-determination and that keep families safe.
- Identify and expand collaborative work with fellow legal aid organizations and community entities to establish programs aimed at broadening access to legal services within underserved and marginalized communities.
- Facilitates workshops and comprehensive “Know Your Rights” information and training sessions on pertinent policy matters that impact access to justice for individuals residing in Riverside, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles Counties.

- Offers personalized legal assistance to clients in a variety of areas including civil rights litigation, expungement, resentencing, housing, employment, and family law matters, catering to the unique needs of individuals in the aforementioned counties.

Pacheco and Neach PC

Associate Attorney, January 2023 – November 2023

Law firm specializing in civil litigation focusing on white collar defense, real property, contracts, construction, business litigation, with additional focus on real property transactions and general transactional work.

- Educate clients regarding their case and strategy through facilitating one on one conferences.
- Working effectively with opposing counsel for a resolution fair to all parties involved through various formats including alternative dispute resolution mediums.
- Advance client's cases through partnering with co-counsel to resolve client issues.
- Prepare complaints, answers, discovery requests, motions, memorandums of legal authorities, and other required legal pleadings necessary to advocate for client.

Coachella Valley Association of Governments

Management Analyst, October 2021 – August 2022

Program Assistant II, December 2020 – October 2021

Homelessness Department of a regional Joint Powers Authority (JPA) that functions to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness with outreach services and case management into housing they can sustain over time.

- Lead a team of staff in the broad range of program functions such as performing client intakes, assessments, development of individual service plans, and intensive case management services.
- Continuously monitored and evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery methods and procedures and identifies opportunities for improvements.
- Served as a liaison for assigned program to member agencies, public and private organizations, community groups, regulatory agencies, and the public by providing information and assistance regarding assigned programs and services.
- Ensured compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations governing assigned programs.

Dolan Law Offices, APC

Certified Law Clerk, May 2018 – May 2020

Develop drafts of a wide variety of legal pleadings and documents utilizing legal research from Lexis Nexis. Ensured accuracy in documentation and court presentation through researching case law and state statutes. Engage clients in intake meetings to develop solid understanding of their unique legal needs to construct the most effective legal strategy. Preparing legal pleadings including, but not limited to petitions and motions.

- Educated clients regarding their case and strategy through facilitating one on one conferences.
- Resolved legal and non-legal matters with opposing counsel.

- Advanced client's cases through partnering with senior attorneys to complete required tasks.
- Created documentation and compiled information required to support client's position and pleadings.

Coachella Valley Rescue Mission

Housing Manager, May 2016 – 2018

Program Administrative Assistant, July 2014 – May 2016

An emergency shelter in Indio, CA that serves people experiencing homelessness, hunger, and life challenges through emergency services, recovery programs and community outreach.

- Performed a variety of professional administrative and analytical work in support of assigned housing programs.
- Supervised and reviewed the work of assigned program support staff, including work planning, assignment review and evaluation, discipline, and the training of staff in work procedures.
- Strategized and implemented case management plans for each household seeking services, regularly monitored client progress and provided ongoing support while seeking appropriate housing solutions.

VOLUNTEER WORK

RAP Foundation, Board Member

Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest, Board Member

Jewish Family Services of the Desert, Advisory Council

The Coachella Valley Rescue Mission, New Life Program Mentor