

# NATIONAL DEFENDER INVESTIGATOR ASSOCIATION

## MELISSA KUPFERBERG NDIA SCHOLARSHIP



### What is the MELISSA KUPFERBERG NDIA SCHOLARSHIP?

Melissa Kupferberg was a nationally recognized investigator with the Tampa, Florida Federal Public Defender office when she passed away. Only 32 years old, she was a skilled investigator, capital mitigation specialist, and sentencing advocate who had a wonderful ability to relate to and work on behalf of clients. Her Master's Degree in Social Work and considerable experience in both capital and non-capital cases gave her great expertise in understanding and addressing mental health issues. This expertise helped her to develop a rapport with all types of clients, even those with significant mental illnesses or intellectual disabilities.



First and foremost, Melissa was dedicated to her clients. She was a fierce advocate, always seeking the most persuasive way to demonstrate a client's humanity to judge or jury, from the mentally ill death row prisoner to a defendant facing child pornography charges. Melissa worked tirelessly to ensure thorough investigation of her clients' cases. Innocent or guilty, Melissa helped clients to open up about their pasts, including painful details they would not reveal to others, so that information could be developed that might eventually persuade a judge or jury to give a lighter sentence than they would otherwise receive. Most importantly, she respected them and appreciated their humanity.

To honor Melissa, her family has created the Melissa Kupferberg NDIA Scholarship. The goal of the scholarship is to recognize those NDIA members who have followed in Melissa's footsteps, through their client-centered approach to indigent criminal defense, by providing them with funding to attend the NDIA National or Regional Conference. **This scholarship covers the Conference Registration, Travel, and Hotel Accommodations.**

### **Selection Criteria and Guidelines:**

- The scholarship recipient must be a member of NDIA for a minimum of 18 months.
- Recipient should be employed in a full or part time position with a Public Defender office; however, consideration for those applying as an independent contractor in criminal defense will be given on a case-by-case basis.
- The scholarship recipient must have a demonstrated commitment to indigent clients and a client-centered approach to indigent criminal defense. Preference may be given to applicants who can demonstrate this commitment in one or more of the following areas:
  - The applicant is involved in alternative sentencing on behalf of indigent clients, including pre-trial release programs, alternatives to incarceration, mental health assistance, substance abuse assistance, and any other program that can affect a client's incarceration.
  - The applicant is involved in working with clients who have mental health or intellectual disabilities.
  - The applicant is involved in criminal defense investigation and/or mitigation work on behalf of indigent clients. May also include specialty courts.

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- The Melissa Kupferberg NDIA Scholarship CANNOT be awarded to the same individual for two consecutive years.

**Application:**

To apply for this scholarship please provide the following information:

- Complete the Application Form and certify that the information provided is true and accurate.
- Attach a Personal Statement, describing:
  - How you are dedicated to improving the lives of your clients, and
  - How attending the NDIA training will improve your ability to do so.
- Have a Supervisor or Professional Colleague complete a recommendation describing in what way(s) your indigent criminal defense work is client-centered and why you are deserving of this scholarship. Reference to work in a specific case is optional, but may be helpful.

**The Application and Supporting Materials (Personal Statement and Supervisor/Professional Colleague Recommendation) must be sent via email or fax by the application deadline date listed on the NDIA website.**

Email: [nationaldefender@gmail.com](mailto:nationaldefender@gmail.com)

Fax: 760-888-1903

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**APPLICATION FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Years: \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor/Professional Colleague Submitting Recommendation**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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**If selected, Applicant will be notified by the Executive Director via email and/or through a follow-up telephone call.**

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**For NDIA Use Only:**

Member in Good Standing?  Yes  No Years/Months as Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Previously Received a Conference Scholarship?  Yes  No

If Yes, List Conference(s) and Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_