



# Melissa Kupferberg NDIA Scholarship

## I. Introduction

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 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.

## II. Selection Criteria

- A. The scholarship recipient must be a member of NDIA.
- B. 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:
  1. The applicant is involved in sentencing advocacy, a.k.a. sentencing mitigation work on behalf of indigent criminal defendants.
  2. 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 impact a client's incarceration.

3. The applicant is involved in working with clients who have mental health or intellectual disabilities.
4. The applicant is involved in capital mitigation work.

### III. Application

- A. To apply for the scholarship please provide the following information:
  1. Fill out the attached application form and certify that the information you have provided is true and accurate.
  2. Provide a personal statement, (1,000 words) describing (1) how you are dedicated to improving the lives of your clients, and (2) how attending the training will improve your ability to do so.
  3. Provide at least one letter of support from a professional colleague (e.g., current or former boss or co-worker), describing in what ways your indigent criminal defense work is client-centered, and why you are deserving of this scholarship. Reference to your work in a specific case is optional, but may be helpful.
  
- B. Send the completed application and all supporting documents to Beverly Davidson, Executive Secretary of NDIA, 460 Smith Street, Ste. K, Middletown, CT 06457 or email to: [nationaldefender@gmail.com](mailto:nationaldefender@gmail.com)

→Applications must be received by **MARCH 8, 2017** for the National Conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL

→Applications must be received by **AUGUST 1, 2017** for the Regional Conference

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Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Statement:

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