



NATIONAL DEFENDER INVESTIGATOR ASSOCIATION
2025 REGIONAL CONFERENCE
Baltimore, MD



“Defend with Purpose: Charm City Champions”

2025.07.07 – DRAFT AGENDA (Session Topics/Dates/Times are Subject to Change)

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm		REGISTRATION (Maryland Suites Foyer)		TUESDAY, September 2	
8:00 am – 9:00 am		REGISTRATION and COFFEE BAR (Harborview)		WEDNESDAY, September 3	
9:00 am – 9:15 am		WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS			
9:15 am – 10:30 am		PLENARY			
<div>How to be an Effective and Ethical Investigator (Working Title)</div> <div>Marquise Findley-Smith, Assistant Federal Public Defender, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Maryland, Baltimore, MD Luna Garzón-Montano, Assistant Deputy Public Defender, New Jersey Office of the Public Defender, Newark, NJ Nate Mensah, Director of the Superior Court Program, Arnold & Porter LLP Washington, DC Columbia/Frederick/Annapolis</div> <div>Experienced trial attorneys share their perspective on how to thoroughly investigate a case and get them the information they need to zealously and effectively represent our clients. The presenters will offer guidance on everything from how to conduct the initial case meetings, to appropriate and ethical conduct while working in the community, and beyond. The presenters will share practical advice regarding the ‘do’s and don’ts,’ including their own experiences with investigation in both the pre-trial and post-conviction spaces. The presenters will continue to share real-world instructions for ways to maximize the impact of our work in the 101 Workshop Session that will immediately follow.</div>					
10:30 am – 10:45 am		Networking Break, Exhibits			
10:45 am – 12:00 pm		CONCURRENT SESSIONS			
<div>Understanding Youth Behavior and Using Positive Language in Cases (Working Title)</div> <div>Jimmonique Rodgers, Director of Operations, The Gault Center, Washington, DC Room</div> <div>Session Description Pending</div>		<div>Defending Veterans in Criminal Cases: A Deeper Dive</div> <div>Art Cody, Esq., Captain U.S. Navy (Ret.), Director, Center for Veteran Criminal Advocacy, Ridgewood, NJ Room</div> <div>Military Veterans undergo an experience far removed from the vast majority of those who sit in judgment of them in the criminal justice system. The military experience, particularly if it involves combat, indelibly shapes the veteran and often has significant causal or mitigating implications. At core, as mandated by <i>Porter v. McCollum</i>, 558 US 30 (2009), the defense team’s role and obligation in a veteran’s case is to investigate and tell that vet’s story -- to translate this uncommon experience into a human narrative that not only engenders the comprehension of a prosecutor, judge, jury but also evokes their compassion. This practical instruction will assist defense team members by exploring the veteran experience, the "typical" veteran, lawyer-veteran client interaction, acquiring and interpreting military records, interview techniques, and a discussion of an archetypical veteran mitigation brief/sentencing hearing. While covering the basics of veteran representation, it will provide lessons learned from recent veteran criminal cases.</div>		<div>Social Media Related / Title TBD Session 1</div> <div>Jennifer Merrigan, Attorney, Phillips Black, Philadelphia, PA Carolyn Mehrtens, Capital Defense Investigator, Military Commissions Defense Organization, Washington, DC Room</div> <div>Session Description Pending</div>	
<div>Investigation 101 Workshop One: Understanding Defense Theories and How They Shape Our Work</div> <div>Marquise Findley-Smith, Assistant Federal Public Defender, Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Maryland, Baltimore, MD Luna Garzón-Montano, Assistant Deputy Public Defender, New Jersey Office of the Public Defender, Newark, NJ Nate Mensah, Director of the Superior Court Program, Arnold & Porter LLP Washington, DC Columbia/Frederick/Annapolis</div> <div>New Session Format: 101 Workshop Sessions are geared towards newer investigators, but will highlight best practices and anyone is welcome to attend!</div> <div>In the first workshop, attendees will review a mock fact pattern and discuss possible defense theories. There will then be a discussion of how to create an investigative to-do list, with the presenters advising on questions they would want asked - both of witnesses and the overall case itself – and will explain what is most helpful to them, as they prepare for trial.</div>					
12:00 pm – 1:15 pm		LUNCH BREAK			
1:15 pm – 2:30 pm		CONCURRENT SESSIONS			
<div>Verbal De-Escalation</div> <div>Joshua Jannotti, Chief Investigator, Division of Mental Health Advocacy, New Jersey Office of the Public Defender, Trenton, NJ Room</div> <div>This session is designed to provide defense team members with practical tools and techniques for verbal de-escalation. Whether engaging with a distraught witness, a hostile client, or a stressed colleague, effective de-escalation can enhance credibility, preserve professional integrity, and increase the likelihood of a successful outcome.</div> <div>As Chief Investigator of the Division of Mental Health Advocacy, and chair of the NJ OPD’s Verbal De-Escalation Training Committee, the presenter has spent time collaborating with teammates across several practice areas to develop a training to enhance a defense team member’s ability to use effective communication to reduce tension, defuse anger and build rapport. The goal is to transform a potentially volatile encounter into a productive exchange.</div>		<div>Organizing Investigations</div> <div>Kaylyn Christian, Director of Mitigation, Atlantic Center for Capital Representation, Philadelphia, PA Room</div> <div>Official Session Description Pending</div> <div>Plans to cover master documents, keeping information organized and accessible across the team, including both non-capital and capital cases.</div>		<div>Social Media Related / Title TBD Session 2</div> <div>Maria Sapene, Chief of Litigation Support, Federal Public Defender, Central District of California, Los Angeles, CA Room</div> <div>Session Description Pending</div>	
<div>Investigation 101 Workshop Two: Identification Procedures & Interviewing Preparation</div> <div>Presenter Group TBD Columbia/Frederick/Annapolis</div> <div>New Session Format: 101 Workshop Sessions are geared towards newer investigators, but will highlight best practices and anyone is welcome to attend!</div> <div>In the second workshop, attendees will learn about proper identification procedures, discuss and role play potential witness scenarios, and prepare for a witness interview. Interview preparation topics will include background research, drafting questions, rapport building techniques, what to bring (or not bring) with you into the community, and more!</div>					
2:30 pm – 2:45 pm		Networking Break, Exhibits			
2:45 pm – 4:00 pm		CONCURRENT SESSIONS			
<div>Investigations Concerning Spanish-Speaking Clients and Witnesses in an Anti-Immigrant Climate</div> <div>Bruni Marrero, Director of Investigative Services, The Legal Aid Society, New York, NY</div>		<div>Scene Investigation (Working Title)</div> <div>Jacqueline Cadman, Partner, Brown, Goldstein & Levy LLP, Baltimore, MD Sean Gordon, Managing Partner, Gordon Chiara LLP, Washington, DC Room</div>		<div>Decarceration Investigation: Exploring the Roles of Investigation as a Tool to Fight Mass Incarceration</div> <div>Olinda Moyd, Director of Decarceration and Re-Entry Clinic, American University, Washington College of Law, Washington, DC</div>	



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2:45 pm – 4:00 pm			CONCURRENT SESSIONS		
Strengthen Your Case with a Life History Records Toolkit Katherine Ashton, Co-Director of Mitigation Casework, Advancing Real Change (ARC), Inc., Baltimore, MD Room “Tell me, what will you do with your one wild and precious [hour of the day to collect life history records]?” The two principal categories of evidence in any mitigation investigation are witness testimony and written records. Where we all know that client and witness interviews provide meaningful evidence and direction to our investigations, 3rd party contemporaneous written records are the unsung heroes of mitigation. Life history records substantiate our arguments, provide us leads to investigate, and fight back against that pesky 'they're just saying all mushy stuff this now as an excuse' skepticism our client's mitigation case so often faces. Whether you are collecting a ton of records every single time, or you are only finding time to collect 1 record per case, this session aims to help you expand your toolkit for collecting and using life history records. Let's make whatever valuable time you have to spend on records as efficient and effective as possible.		Session Title/Topic Pending Joseph Dean, Litigation Technology Paralegal, Federal Community Defender Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Room Session Description Pending		Cellebrite Reader Hands-On / Cellebrite Capture the Flag (Part II) (Working Title) Eric Hirst, Chief Information Officer, Groom Law Group, Washington, DC Matt Hanna, Supervisory Investigator, Public Defender Service, Washington, DC Cellebrite Team Members Room Session Description Pending	