

NATIONAL DEFENDER INVESTIGATOR ASSOCIATION 2025 REGIONAL CONFERENCE **Baltimore**, **MD**



"Defend with Purpose: Charm City Champions"

2025.06.12 - 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

How to be an Effective and Ethical Investigator (Working Title)

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

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.

10:30 am - 10:45 am

Networking Break, Exhibits

10:45 am - 12:00 pm

Understanding Youth Behavior and Using Positive Language in Cases (Working Title)

Jimmonique Rodgers, Director of Operations, The Gault Center, Washington, DC

Session Description Pending

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Defending Veterans in Criminal Cases: A Deeper Dive

Art Cody, Esq., Captain U.S. Navy (Ret.), Director, Center for Veteran Criminal Advocacy, Ridgewood, NJ Room

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 Porter v. McCollum, 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 un common 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

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

Investigation 101 Workshop One: Understanding Defense Theories and How They Shape Our Work

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

New Session Format: 101 Workshop Sessions are geared towards newer investigators, but will highlight best practices and anyone is welcome to attend!

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.

12:00 pm - 1:15 pm

LUNCH BREAK

1:15 pm - 2:30 pm

Mental Health Advocacy Related / Title TBD

Name, Title, Agency/Office, City, NJ Room

Session Description Pending

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Organizing Investigations

Kaylyn Christian, Director of Mitigation, Atlantic Center for Capital Representation, Philadelphia, PA Room

Official Session Description Pending

Plans to cover master documents, keeping information organized and accessible across the team, including both non-capital and capital cases.

Decarceration Investigation: Exploring the Roles of Investigation as a Tool to Fight Mass Incarceration

Olinda Moyd, Director of Decarceration and Re-Entry Clinic, American University, Washington College of Law, Washington, DC

Room

Official Session Description Pending

Plans to cover the importance of investigation after a person goes to prison to include support for various types of cases to include prisoner's rights (conditions cases), resentencing motions and court hearings, parole hearings, and reentry options (designing release plans to present to the court), focus on how critical an investigation can be to getting folks back to court or other avenues to earn their freedom.

Investigation 101 Workshop Two: Identification Procedures & Interviewing Preparation

Presenter Group TBD Columbia/Frederick/Annapolis

New Session Format: 101 Workshop Sessions are geared towards newer investigators, but will highlight best practices and anyone is welcome to attend!

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!

2:30 pm - 2:45 pm

Networking Break, Exhibits

2:45 pm - 4:00 pm

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Investigations Concerning Spanish-Speaking Clients and Witnesses in an Anti-Immigrant **Climate**

Bruni Marrero, Director of Investigative Services, The Legal Aid Society, New York, NY

Room Session Description Pending

Social Media Related / Title TBD Jennifer Merrigan, Attorney, Phillips Black, Philadelphia,

Carolyn Mehrtens, Capital Defense Investigator, Military Commissions Defense Organization, Washington, DC Room

Session Description Pending

Scene Investigation (Working Title)

Jacqueline Cadman, Partner, Brown, Goldstein & Levy LLP, Baltimore, MD Sean Gordon, Managing Partner, Gordon Chiara LLP, Washington, DC

Room

Session Description Pending



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101s Workshop Three: Interviewing / Statement Taking

Presenter Group

Chris Pipe, Supervisory Investigator, Military Commissions Defense Organization, Washington, DC

Columbia/Frederick/Annapolis

New Session Format: 101 Workshop Sessions are geared towards newer investigators, but will highlight best practices and anyone is welcometo attend!

In the third and final workshop, attendees will learn how to effectively document witness interviews, to include the use of written statements or memos, and a discussion of about the interviewing and a discussion of when, or if, to record.

4:00 pm - 4:15 pm

Networking Break, Exhibits

4:15 pm - 5:30 pm

PLENARY

Letters from Sing Sing

Dan Slepian, Senior Investigative Producer, NBC News, NY Columbia/Frederick/Annapolis

In December of 2002, NBC News producer Dan Slepian got a letter from a New York state prison. It was from a man serving 25 years to life for murder. And it ended with a desperate plea: look into my case. Jon-Adrian "JJ" Velazquez had been convicted of killing a retired New York City police officer, but he insisted he didn't do it. Dan was skeptical. Prosecutors said five eyewitnesses had sworn JJ was the killer. Could five people be wrong? So, Dan began to dig. As detailed in the award-winning podcast, Letters from Sing Sing, and in the book, The Sing Sing Files: One Journalist, Six Innocent Men, and a Twenty-Year Fight for Justice, what he discovered went far beyond just JJ's case.

Networking Reception – Pisces (15th Floor) 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

8:00 am - 9:15 am

COFFEE BAR (Harborview)

THURSDAY, September 4

9:10 am - 9:15 am

DAY 2 OPENING REMARKS

9:15 am - 10:30 am

PLENARY

The Gideon Blueprint: Innovating On-Prem Al for Public Defense

Robert Theis, Investigator, Federal Public Defender's Office, Eastern District of Missouri. St. Louis, MO Constellation CD

This session explores the full arc of building a secure, on-premises Al system tail ored for public defense work. From research and cost comparisons to the decision to avoid cloud-based risks, we'll walk through the practical and ethical motivations behind developing "Gideon," our internal Al system. You'll learn how we selected and tuned large language models, navigated technical and organizational pitfalls, and integrated the system into real-world defense workflows. We'll cover current capabilities, limitations, and where we are headed next. This is a transparent, behind-the-scenes look at what it took to build and lead Al innovation in the public defender space.

10:30 am - 10:45 am

Networking Break, Exhibits

10:45 am - 12:00 pm

Session Description Pending

CONCURRENT SESSIONS CV Workshop Psychology of Interviewing

Corey Thompson, Training Director, Minnesota Public Defenders, Minneapolis, MN

Room

Philip Becnel, Managing Partner, Dinolt Becnel & Wells Investigative Group LLC, Baltimore, MD Room

Official Session Description Pending

Plans to cover interviewing techniques, getting foot in the door, so to speak, touching upon behavioral analysis for

Mitigation Writing Related Topic/Exercises

Julie Hyman, Manager of SWIM Advocacy and Engagement, Public Defender Association of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA Room

Session Description Pending

12:00 pm - 1:15 pm

LUNCH BREAK

1:15 pm - 2:30 pm

Session Description Pending

CONCURRENT SESSIONS Prepare to be Crossed

Corey Thompson, Training Director, Minnesota Public Defenders, Minneapolis, MN

Session Title / Pending Speaker Confirmation Name, Title, Agency/Office, City, State Room

Session Description Pending

defense investigators

Cellebrite Reader Hands-On / Cellebrite Capture the Flag (Part I) (Working Title)

Eric Hirst, Chief Information Officer, Groom Law Group, Washington, DC Matt Hanna, Supervisory Investigator, Public Defender Service, Washington, DC

Cellebrite Team Members

Session Description Pending

2:30 pm - 2:45 pm

Networking Break, Exhibits

2:45 pm - 4:00 pm

Session Title / Pending Speaker Confirmation

Name, Title, Agency/Office, City, State Room

Session Description Pending

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Session Title / Pending Speaker Confirmation

Name, Title, Agency/Office, City, State 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