



**NATIONAL DEFENDER INVESTIGATOR ASSOCIATION  
2026 NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
New Orleans, LA**



**“Defend with Purpose: Best Practices in the Bayou”**

**2026.03.11 – DRAFT AGENDA (Session Topics/Dates/Times are Subject to Change)**

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm		Registration / Check-In	TUESDAY, April 21
8:00 am – 9:00 am		Registration / Check-In & Coffee Bar	WEDNESDAY, April 22
9:00 am – 9:15 am		Welcome and Opening Remarks	
9:15 am – 10:30 am		<b>PLENARY</b>	
		<b>Ethics (Title TBD)</b> Kevann Gardner, Founding Partner, K. Gardner Law, Washington, DC Room	
Session Description Pending			
10:30 am – 10:45 am		Networking Break, Exhibits	
10:45 am – 12:00 pm		<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>	
<b>Defending Gang, Enterprise, RICO, and VICAR Prosecutions: Evidence Architecture, Expert Challenges, and Mitigation Strategy (Part I)</b> Victor Torres, VMT Investigations, CA Room Session Description Pending Part 1 is introduction, Part 2 is more in-depth	<b>Ethics/Scenarios Breakout (Title TBD)</b> Kevann Gardner, Founding Partner, K. Gardner Law, Washington, DC Jordan Crunkleton, Assistant Public Defender, Juvenile Division, Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Upper Marlboro, MD Kelsey Robinson, Assistant Public Defender, Juvenile Division, Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Upper Marlboro, MD Room Session Description Pending	<b>Mitigation/Trauma Informed Interviewing (Session 1) (Working Title)</b> Dana Cook, MSW, Director of Social Services Training and Recruitment, Philadelphia, PA Room Session Description Pending	
12:00 pm – 1:15 pm		Lunch Break	
1:15 pm – 2:30 pm		<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>	
<b>Defending Gang, Enterprise, RICO, and VICAR Prosecutions: Evidence Architecture, Expert Challenges, and Mitigation Strategy (Part II)</b> Victor Torres, VMT Investigations, CA Room Session Description Pending Part 1 is introduction, Part 2 is more in-depth	<b>Single-Pass Discovery Review: A Case Analysis Framework (Working Title)</b> Amber Kaset, Owner/Private Investigator/Mitigation Specialist, AK Investigations, TN & KY Room Working Session Description – This session will cover clear methods for reviewing and analyzing discovery to build an investigation plan, including creating investigative work product that tells a coherent story-- witness lists, timelines, records logs, identifying missing discovery, outlining possible case theories, and more.	<b>Mitigation/Trauma Informed Interviewing (Session 2) (Working Title)</b> Dana Cook, MSW, Director of Social Services Training and Recruitment, Philadelphia, PA Room Session Description Pending	
2:30 pm – 2:45 pm		Networking Break, Exhibits	
2:45 pm – 4:00 pm		<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>	
<b>Best Practices: Interviewing Session</b> Chris Pipe, Supervisory Investigator, Military Commissions Defense Organization, Washington, DC Room Session Description Pending Part of the ongoing NDIA Best Practices series, which runs virtually and at National/Regional Conferences	<b>Investigating Sex Assault Cases (Working Title)</b> Jan Fennell, Senior Solutions Specialist, Grand River Solutions, Washington, DC Room Session Description Pending	<b>Immigration Related Topic</b> Awaiting Speaker Confirmation Room Session Description Pending	
4:00 pm – 4:15 pm		Networking Break, Exhibits	
4:15 pm – 5:30 pm		<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>	
<b>Advanced Social Media (Title TBD)</b> Carolyn Mehrstens, Capital Defense Investigator, Military Commissions Defense Organization, Washington, DC Room Session Description Pending	<b>Making the Move to Private Investigations (Working Title)</b> Amber Kaset, Owner/Private Investigator/Mitigation Specialist, AK Investigations, TN & KY Katari Lundy, Private Investigator, Good Faith Investigation, Painesville, OH Lauren VonWiegen, Investigator, VonWiegen Investigations, Washington, DC Room Session Description Pending	<b>Storytelling in Death Penalty Cases</b> Heather Holmes, Ph.D., Forensic Psychologist, Principal Consultant, Psychological Consultants, Fort Lauderdale, FL Room Session Description Pending	

8:00 am – 9:25 am		Coffee Bar / Opening Remarks (9:25 am)	THURSDAY, April 23
9:30 am – 10:45 am		<b>PLENARY</b>	
		<b>Angola Farm Line Litigation (Working Title)</b> Samantha Pourciau, Senior Staff Attorney, <a href="#">Promise of Justice Initiative</a> , New Orleans, LA Michael Allen, Civil Litigation Staff Attorney, <a href="#">Promise of Justice Initiative</a> , New Orleans, LA Room	
Session Description Pending (Placeholder) - The Angola Farm Line class-action lawsuit will determine if forced prison labor is unconstitutional. The ‘farm line’ is an agricultural work assignment involving labor in the fields around the Louisiana State Prison at Angola, which is on the site of a former plantation.			



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<b>10:45 am – 11:00 am</b>			<b>Networking Break, Exhibits</b>		
<b>11:00 am – 12:15 pm</b>			<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>		
<p align="center"><b>Veteran and Special Circumstances Representation (Working Title)</b></p> <p align="center">Nick Place, Staff Attorney, Partnership for Civil Justice Fund, New Orleans, LA</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description Pending</p>	<p align="center"><b>Working with Children, Investigating, Mitigation Narratives (Working Title)</b></p> <p align="center">Jordan Crunkleton, Assistant Public Defender, Juvenile Division, Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Upper Marlboro, MD</p> <p align="center">Kelsey Robinson, Assistant Public Defender, Juvenile Division, Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Upper Marlboro, MD</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description Pending</p>	<p align="center"><b>Cell Phone Records (CDRs) Part 1 (Intro) (Working Title)</b></p> <p align="center">Joseph Sierra, Director, Forensic Services, Cornerstone Discovery, Philadelphia, PA</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description Pending</p>			
<b>12:15 pm – 1:15 pm</b>			<b>Lunch Break</b>		
<b>1:15 pm – 2:30 pm</b>			<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>		
<p align="center"><b>Celebrite Session (Part I)</b></p> <p align="center">Name, Title, Agency/Office, City, State</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description</p>	<p align="center"><b>Records Collection (Title TBD)</b></p> <p align="center">Lela Hubbard, Mitigation Specialist, Federal Public Defender, District of Mississippi, Jackson, MS</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description Pending</p>	<p align="center"><b>Joseph Sierra Cell Phone Records (CDRs) Part 2 (Advanced) (Working Title)</b></p> <p align="center">Joseph Sierra, Director, Forensic Services, Cornerstone Discovery, Philadelphia, PA</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description Pending</p>			
<b>2:30 pm – 2:45 pm</b>			<b>Networking Break, Exhibits</b>		
<b>2:45 pm – 4:30 pm</b>			<b>KEYNOTE</b>		
<p><b>Bone Valley</b></p> <p>Gilbert King, Author, Agency/Office, City, State</p> <p><b>Room</b></p> <p>Mr. King is the author of <i>Bone Valley: A True Story of Injustice and Redemption in the Heart of Florida</i>, and the host and producer of <i>Bone Valley</i>, a groundbreaking podcast series that takes listeners on an investigative journey through the swamps and courtrooms of Florida in search of truth and justice in the wrongful conviction of Leo Schofield. Mr. King is also the author of <i>Devil in the Grove</i>, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction in 2013 and has written about race, civil rights, and the death penalty for the New York Times, the Washington Post, and The Atlantic.</p> <p>@gilbertkingpics and <a href="http://www.gilbertking.com">www.gilbertking.com</a>.</p>					
<p><b>President’s Reception</b></p> <p><b>Grand Ballroom Gallery &amp; Balcony</b></p> <p><b>4:30 pm – 6:30 pm</b></p>					

<b>8:30 am – 9:15 am</b>			<b>Coffee Bar / Opening Remarks (9:10 am)</b>			<b>FRIDAY, April 24</b>		
<b>9:15 am – 10:30 am</b>			<b>PLENARY</b>					
<p><b>Best Practices: Social Media</b></p> <p>Seana Holland, Director of Investigations, Levy Firestone Muse LLP, Washington, DC</p> <p>Carolyn Mehrtens, Capital Defense Investigator, Military Commissions Defense Organization, Washington, DC</p> <p><b>Room</b></p> <p>Part of the ongoing NDIA Best Practices series, which runs virtually and at National/Regional Conferences</p>								
<b>10:30 am – 10:45 am</b>			<b>Networking Break, Exhibits</b>					
<b>10:45 am – 12:00 pm</b>			<b>CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b>					
<p align="center"><b>Celebrite Session (Part II)</b></p> <p align="center">Name, Title, Agency/Office, City, State</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description</p>	<p align="center"><b>DVO-Related Session (Title TBD)</b></p> <p align="center">Lela Hubbard, Mitigation Specialist, Federal Public Defender, District of Mississippi, Jackson, MS</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description</p>	<p align="center"><b>Best Practices: Scene Investigation Session</b></p> <p align="center">Lauren VonWiegen, Director of Investigations and Internship Supervisor, Georgetown Law Center, Washington, DC</p> <p align="center"><b>Room</b></p> <p>Session Description Pending</p> <p>Part of the ongoing NDIA Best Practices series, which runs virtually and at National/Regional Conferences</p>						
<b>12:00 pm</b>			<b>CONFERENCE END</b>					