



NATIONAL DEFENDER INVESTIGATOR ASSOCIATION
2026 REGIONAL CONFERENCE
Scottsdale, AZ



“Defend with Purpose: Magnificence in Maricopa”

2026.08.06 – DRAFT AGENDA (Session Topics/Dates/Times are Subject to Change)

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm		REGISTRATION		TUESDAY, September 8	
8:00 am – 9:15 am		REGISTRATION and COFFEE BAR (Orangedale CD / Patio)		WEDNESDAY, September 9	
9:15 am – 9:30 am		WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS			
9:30 am – 10:45 am		PLENARY			
AI on Trial Brian Chase, Managing Director, Digital Forensics & eDiscovery, ArcherHall, Tucson, AZ Orangedale ABEF This session will focus on the challenges of dealing with AI generated/falsified evidence (photos, videos, audio, etc.) and also talk about the use of AI by law enforcement.					
10:45 am – 11:00 am		Networking Break, Exhibits			
11:00 am – 12:15 pmCONCURRENT SESSIONS					
Social Media Related –Title Pending Maria Sapene, Chief of Litigation Support, Federal Public Defender Central District of California, Los Angeles, CA Room TBD Session Description Pending 2 Sessions, likely Part 1, Part 2		Interviewing with Emotional Intelligence Lubna Debbini, Investigator, Orange County Associate Defender, Santa Ana, CA Room TBD Investigations often succeed or fail based on the quality of human interaction. This course equips defense investigators and paralegals with the tools and communication techniques required to navigate high-stakes interviews. Participants will learn to leverage emotional intelligence (EI) to read subtle cues, manage intense interpersonal dynamics, and defuse volatile situations. Through practical frameworks and tactical communication strategies, you will master the art of uncovering pertinent details for the case. Recognize non-verbal behavior, and manage your own emotional triggers during encounters. Craft sophisticated, open-ended lines of questioning that minimize defensiveness. Master the skill of validation without confirmation, and pivot strategies when facing deflective, aggressive, or evasive responses. Build rapid, authentic trust with diverse subjects without compromising investigative boundaries or legal integrity.		Video Evidence and Law Enforcement: Best Practices vs Real World Josh Cohen, Principal, Fat Pencil Studio, Portland, OR Room TBD In a world awash with AI generated images and video, attorneys and investigators are forced to ask, "How can I be sure this evidence is authentic?" It is possible to answer this question when law enforcement follows best practices for collecting digital media. Unfortunately, this rarely happens. In the real world, law enforcement often relies on unqualified parties to collect and submit video clips of their choosing without verifying that all relevant footage was collected at the native camera resolution, and submitted in its original form without alteration. This session will cover a range of common problems with video evidence, and strategies for pushing back against unsupported charges. We'll also cover 3d reconstruction including methods for mapping what can be seen in video footage and visualizing the scene from a different perspective. Repeat Session on Day 2	
New Session Format: Paralegal Focused Breakout Room – but all are welcome to attend! Trial Notebooks That Make a Difference Elizabeth Coss, Paralegal, Maricopa County Office of the Public Defender, Phoenix, AZ Brittany Martin, Paralegal, Capital Unit, Maricopa County Office of the Public Defender, Phoenix, AZ Room TBD This session is designed for legal professionals who want to streamline their trial preparation using organized and efficient trial binders. The essential components of a trial binder, including document organization, effective indexing methods, and the inclusion of key exhibits and evidence will be discussed, as well as helpful tools and software for assembling digital trial notebooks.					
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm		LUNCH BREAK			
1:15 pm – 2:30 pmCONCURRENT SESSIONS					
Social Media Related –Title Pending Maria Sapene, Chief of Litigation Support, Federal Public Defender Central District of California, Los Angeles, CA Room TBD Session Description Pending 2 Sessions, likely Part 1, Part 2		Difficult Situations / De-Escalation Jules Gagnepain, Investigator, Federal Public Defender, District of Arizona, Phoenix, AZ Room TBD Official Description Pending – Having spent years as a Sheriff's Deputy / Hostage Negotiator, this session will cover the behavioral change stairway and how to effectively build rapport, with everyone from a client, to a witness or probation officer, or even someone in an active crisis. In our jobs, we often have to communicate difficult information, which is not always well received. This session will highlight the power of empathy and rapport building, as well as the dos and don'ts of successful de-escalation.		Awaiting Speaker Confirmation Name, Title, Agency/Office, City, State Room TBD Session Description Pending	
New Session Format: Paralegal Focused Breakout Room – but all are welcome to attend! Acrobat Pro 101: The Essential PDF Toolkit Elizabeth Coss, Paralegal, Maricopa County Office of the Public Defender, Phoenix, AZ Sunset Room This session covers Adobe Acrobat Pro's tools with a live demonstration. The presentation includes how to create PDF portfolios, redact, bate stamp, edit, secure files, make images readable, as well as covering other tools. This session is beginner friendly, so all skill levels are welcomed.					
2:30 pm – 2:45 pm		Networking Break, Exhibits			
2:45 pm – 4:00 pmCONCURRENT SESSIONS					
Investigation Essentials: The Nuts and Bolts of a Mitigation Excavation Matt Silverman, Mitigation Specialist/Investigator, Silverman Mitigation, Phoenix, AZ Room TBD This session breaks down the practical mechanics of a mitigation investigation that meets the standard of care. Topics will include best practices focused on interview protocols, fieldwork tips for locating people, the do's and don'ts of mitigation investigation, witness and client interview strategies, and secondary document practices (witness lists, chronologies, etc.). Participants will leave with concrete guidance for making initial contact, maintaining witness relationships over the life of a case, and memorializing work product in ways that best serve the client.		Investigating Police Witnesses and Tracking Official Misconduct Summer Farrar, M.S., Director of Partnerships & Outreach, Techtivist, Inc., Kansas City, MO Room TBD If you're not investigating the police witnesses in your cases, then you could be missing out on critical evidence that changes the story of your case. This session will teach you how to investigate police officers' history and start tracking police misconduct using tools you already have. Attendees will learn how to collect information for pre-trial through post-conviction investigation and impact litigation. After this session, you'll feel equipped to investigate the police witnesses in your cases and contribute to holding powerful officials accountable. This training will also share practical examples of how these tools are improving defense practices across the county and how to build participation within your agency.		Best Practices: Safety in the Community Seana Holland, Director of Investigations, Levy Firestone Muse LLP, Washington, DC Room TBD Session Description Pending	



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partner to the defense attorney under high-stress trial conditions.		reconstruction including methods for mapping what can be seen in video footage and visualizing the scene from a different perspective. Repeat Session from Day 1
New Session Format: Mitigation/Visual Advocacy Focused Breakout Room – but all are welcome to attend! Equipment, Filming, and Interviewing Techniques (Production) Doug Passon, President & Creative Director, Doug Passon Law, Scottsdale, AZ Room TBD Session Description Pending.		
2:30 pm – 2:45 pm Networking Break, Exhibits		
2:45 pm – 4:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS		
Collaborative Mitigation: How the Whole Team Contributes to Developing a Client’s Story Matt Silverman, Mitigation Specialist/Investigator, Silverman Mitigation, Phoenix, AZ Room TBD Mitigation investigation is a team discipline, not a solo assignment. This session explores how investigators, mitigation specialists, paralegals, attorneys, and experts function as co-strategists rather than a hierarchy of tasks. Participants will examine how the full defense team, not just the mitigation specialist, builds the client’s life history and shapes a persuasive, evidence-grounded narrative for sentencing.	Best Practices: Video Surveillance Acquisition Matt Hanna, Training Director, NDIA, Washington, DC Room TBD This session will cover the 101s of acquiring video surveillance footage in the community for your cases, from business entities to private homes. The discussion will include preparation, what to look for on-site, navigating proprietary players and how to work with your office’s IT Department to get what is needed downloaded, converted, etc. to use for any presentation in Court.	Discovery Organization, OneNote & Templates McKayla Moran, Supervisory Investigator, Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, Washington, DC Room TBD OneNote can be much more than a place to take notes; it can become your go-to tool for organizing cases, managing discovery, and keeping all information needed in one place. This session will cover practical ways to build an organized case file, create reusable templates, and develop workflows that save time and make information easier to find. However, this is not a session solely dedicate to OneNote, as other templates, record trackers, and discovery organization tips and tricks will be discussed. Attendees will leave with ideas they can immediately apply to their own cases.
New Session Format: Mitigation/Visual Advocacy Focused Breakout Room – but all are welcome to attend! Editing (Post-Production) Doug Passon, President & Creative Director, Doug Passon Law, Scottsdale, AZ Sunset Room Session Description Pending.		