



PARALEGAL AND INVESTIGATOR SKILLS WORKSHOP

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE U.S. COURTS DEFENDER SERVICES OFFICE TRAINING DIVISION

DRAFT AGENDA

Thursday, November 5, 2026

7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Registration and Check-in

8:30 - 8:45 a.m. Welcome and Introduction to Workshop
Michael Oppenheimer, Attorney Advisor, Defender Services Office
Training Division, Washington, DC

8:45 - 9:45 a.m. Client Centered Case and Strategy (Plenary)
LaTorya Blackwell, Chief Investigator, Office of the Federal Public
Defender, Western District of North Carolina, Charlotte, NC

Often our clients deny guilt in the face of evidence to the contrary. Or they instruct us to do (or not do) tasks in their defense that we do not think are relevant, helpful, or a priority. Sometimes what seems obvious or necessary to you and to your client are two completely different things. How do you navigate this? This plenary session will focus on how to center your client as a source of information and how to pay attention to your client's needs and perspectives. Remember that keeping your client at the center of the investigation and not discounting their story or situation can lead you to information or factors that may help reach a better outcome. As you learn more and investigate, things your client has said or done may take on different meanings and import and lead to a better resolution. We need to always be thinking about how we can better work with, communicate with, understand and validate the client's experience and what they say.

9:45 - 10:00 a.m. Break

**10:00 – 12:00 p.m. Small Group Session-1: Case Strategy and Supplemental
Discovery**

Workshop room and group assignments will be posted at the registration desk.

Participants meet with their small group facilitators to brainstorm methods for identifying and locating key documents, witnesses and records in the model case, while identifying ways to better work, communicate, understand and validate the client's experience and their story.

12:00 - 1:15 p.m. Lunch (on your own)

1:15 - 2:15 p.m. Discovery Management for the “Normal” Case (Plenary)
Kalei Achiu, Paralegal, Office of the Federal Public Defender, Northern District of California, Oakland, CA

Not every case has a paralegal assigned. Not every case has an investigator assigned. Both paralegals and investigators need to have a versatile toolbox for managing discovery when they are on a case. They need an awareness of how to handle discovery in a way that works well for other team members and manages discovery in a way that allows it to work with other litigation support tools as the case develops. In this session, we will focus on the small cases that make up the bulk of our work, e.g. felon-in-possession/922(g), small drug cases, etc. We will address initial intake/discovery download, principles of discovery management and how different team roles access/use discovery

2:15 - 2:30 p.m. Break

2:30 - 3:30 p.m. Small Group Session-2: Discovery Issues and Strategies

Participants meet with their small group facilitators and continue reviewing discovery, specifically with an eye toward creating additional discovery requests and plan for how to manage the defense generated materials regarding the investigation into the confidential informant (CI). As a group, they will create a timeline of the events in the case that can be updated, modified or imported into another litigation support tool. Also, they will discuss strategies for managing phone records in the case. Finally, they will brainstorm ideas and strategies to improve how they work with discovery in their home office.

3:30 - 3:45 p.m. Break

3:45 – 5:00 p.m. Small Group Session-3: Phones and Google Earth

Defense teams are confronted with phone records including location data in many cases. Understanding how to analyze, manipulate, and produce summaries and exhibits based on materials produced by cell service providers is an essential skill. Using a simplified set of phone records and location data, participants will practice converting, filtering, and creating tables and maps using tools that are free and readily available to all FPD staff. Participants **MUST** bring laptops that have Excel and Google Earth Pro installed, registered, activated, licensed, etc., to this session in order to benefit from the exercises. This is a hands-on session.

5:00 – 5:30 p.m. Small Group Session-4: Catch up & Wrap Up

Each group may decide how to use this short session at the end of Day One. They can choose to continue with Google Earth and Excel exercises, or they can choose to spend this time reading materials provided in Document Packets 2 and 3 in preparation for the next day's sessions.

5:30 p.m. Adjourn for the day

Friday, November 6, 2026

7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Daily Check-in

8:30 - 9:30 a.m. Guns, Regulations and Records, Oh My! (Plenary)

Matthew Schappell, Investigator, Office of the Federal Public Defender, Middle District of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, PA

This plenary session will provide participants with an overview of the felon in possession statute, possible defenses, and specific details about how firearms function. It will also review the types of records available regarding firearms, sources for obtaining various types of information, and investigative strategies for researching guns involved in 922(g) cases. Regulations governing purchase, sales and transfers of firearms will also be reviewed.

9:30 - 9:45 a.m. Break

9:45 – 10:45 a.m. Small Group Session-5: Firearms Investigation and Records

Participants meet with their small group facilitators to discuss and craft a plan to investigate firearms seized in this case. They will scrutinize all the firearms related discovery with an eye toward learning everything they can about it. They will discuss possible defenses and investigation that may support or defeat those defenses. This session should encourage them to think outside their usual roadmap and to step beyond the view that “it’s not possible in my district” to imagine new strategies for getting more and better information.

10:45 - 11:00 a.m. Break**11:00 – 12:00 p.m. Small Group Session-6: Confidential Informants – Part 1**

Participants meet with their small group to evaluate the credibility of the confidential informant (CI) in this case and to develop an impeachment strategy using documents and witnesses. Participants will evaluate the CI in the context of the following materials: CI manuals, CI file, discovery, and defense generated materials.

12:00 – 1:15 p.m. Lunch (on your own)**1:15 - 3:30 p.m. Small Group Session-7: Confidential Informants - Part 2**

Participants meet with their small group to continue the discussion of the CI in the model case. This second session is designed to explore the learning objectives through a series of hands-on exercises.

3:30 - 3:45 p.m. Break**3:45 - 5:00 p.m. Small Group Session-8: Wrapping It Up and Taking It Home**

This session is the last session of Day Two and the last session focusing on the model case materials. Throughout the previous sessions, the participants will have encountered new skills and strategies for investigation and working with case materials. It is expected that some participants will have questions about the best way to introduce or implement these new approaches upon returning to their home offices. This session provides a structured opportunity for each participant to raise an issue and ask for input and suggestions for solutions from their small group.

5:00 p.m. Adjourn for the Day

Saturday, November 7, 2026

7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Daily Check-in

8:30 – 9:45 a.m. OSINT Investigation (Plenary)

Herb Duzant, Investigator, Office of the Federal Public Defender,
District of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada

Defense teams have access to exponentially more information about clients, witnesses, law enforcement, locations, vehicles, social media, images, videos, and more than they did just fifteen years ago. We are also well past the era of relying on single-source platforms. This plenary offers concrete tips, tools, and strategies for finding, analyzing, and verifying the information that matters. Topics include effective social media searches; strategies for finding and using vehicle data; mapping and environmental analysis resources; analyzing web-based photos and videos through reverse and extrapolative image searches; determining when and where a video was first uploaded; and uncovering useful details about people, places, organizations, and more.

9:45 – 10:00 a.m. Break

10:00 – 11:30 a.m. Small Group Session-9: OSINT Scavenger Hunt

Modern criminal defense teams must be competent in finding and verifying online information about their clients, witnesses, and events related to their case. Participants will meet in their small groups to practice skills discussed in the previous plenary through a series of hands-on activities. The small group will be structured like a scavenger hunt where participants will be provided a set of OSINT challenges and asked to research or solve as many as possible in the amount of time.

11:30 - 11:45 a.m. Break

11:45 – 12:30p.m. OSINT Challenges Report

This final session will bring participants back together to report back on their successes in the OSINT Challenges Small Group. There will be prizes! Don't miss it!

12:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Michael Oppenheimer, Attorney Advisor, Defender Services Office -
Training Division, Washington, DC