



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

**PERSUASIVE WRITING WORKSHOP**  
Atlanta, Georgia

June 25-27, 2026

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AGENDA

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**Thursday, June 25, 2026**

**7:30 – 8:30 a.m. Registration – Continental Breakfast**

**8:30 – 8:50 a.m. Welcoming Remarks**  
Craig Crawford, *Attorney Advisor, Training Division, Defender Services Office, Washington, DC*

**8:50 – 9:00 a.m. Introduction to Workshop**  
Craig Crawford, *Attorney Advisor, Training Division, Defender Services Office, Washington, DC*

**9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Plenary Session: Issue Spotting Using a Fact-Based Approach**  
Susan Lin, *Partner, Kairys, Rudovsky, Messing, Feinberg & Lin, Philadelphia, PA*  
Fredilyn Sison, *CJA Panel Attorney, Asheville, NC*

Wouldn't you like some facts with that law? Knowing the law is great, but it only gets us halfway to a persuasively-written document. In this interactive session, we will use the mock case to learn a fact-based approach to spotting legal issues and organizing your persuasive pleading.

**10:00 – 10:15 a.m. Refreshment Break**

**10:15 – 11:45 a.m. Workshop Session I: Issue Spotting Using a Fact-Based Approach**

**Room locations for the small groups will be provided in a separate document available at the registration desk. All small groups will meet in the same rooms throughout the workshop.**

Participants will meet with their small group facilitators to issue spot their cases using a fact-based approach.

**11:45 a.m. –**

**1:00 p.m. Lunch – on your own**

**1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Workshop Session I: Issue Spotting Using a Fact-Based Approach (cont'd)**

**2:30 – 2:45 p.m. Break**

**2:45 – 3:45 p.m. Plenary Session: Discovering and Telling the Story**  
Fredilyn Sison, *CJA Panel Attorney, Asheville, NC*

Now that you have extracted the facts and identified the legal issues, you must develop the story of your case. This session will discuss the elements of the story; demonstrate how to craft the story using these elements; and discuss how to tell your client's story in the most persuasive manner by developing characters, structuring and sequence, and identifying the key emotions and themes. By the end of the session, you will understand the importance of summarizing the key factual, legal, and emotional aspects of your case that convey your story, before you begin to write.

**3:45 – 4:00 p.m. Refreshment Break**

**4:00 – 5:30 p.m. Workshop Session II: Discovering and Telling the Story**

Participants will meet with their small group facilitators to apply storytelling techniques to the facts of their cases.

**5:30 p.m. Adjourn for the day**

**Friday, June 26, 2026**

**7:30 – 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast**

**8:30 – 10:00 a.m. Workshop Session II: Discovering and Telling the Story (cont'd)**

Participants will meet with their small group facilitators to apply storytelling techniques to the facts of their cases.

**10:00 – 10:15 a.m. Refreshment Break**

**10:15 – 11:15 a.m. Plenary Session: Strategies for Writing Persuasively**

Johanna Christiansen, *Assistant Federal Defender for the Central District of Illinois, Peoria, Ill*

Writing a legal document can be a daunting task. In this session, we will address how to break down the writing process into more manageable pieces and approach each section of a legal document as an opportunity for zealous advocacy. Participants will receive instruction on writing with purpose, developing themes, structuring arguments, and effective editing.

**11:15 – 11:30 a.m. Break**

**11:30 a.m. –**

**12:30 p.m. Plenary Session: The Art of Storytelling in Writing  
*TBD***

[Description to follow]

**12:30 – 1:45 p.m. Lunch – on your own**

**1:45 – 3:00 p.m. Workshop Session III: Persuasively Writing the Facts**

Participants will meet with their small group facilitators to draft and re-write the facts in their cases using the principles learned in the preceding plenary sessions.

**3:00 – 3:15 p.m. Refreshment Break**

**3:15 – 4:45 p.m. Workshop Session III: Persuasively Writing the Facts (cont'd)**

**4:45 p.m. Adjourn for the day**

**Saturday, June 27, 2026**

**7:30 – 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast**

**8:30 – 9:30 a.m. Plenary Session: Integrating the Facts and the Law  
*TBD***

This session will cover the principles of crafting a fact-driven legal argument, instead of an argument that reads like a law review article. We will discuss how to summarize and distill the crucial facts, how to blend the facts and the law so that they exist harmoniously, and how to find the right balance of facts and law for the particular document you are writing.

**9:30 – 9:45 a.m. Refreshment Break**

**9:45 a.m.**

**– 12:00 p.m. Workshop Session IV: Writing the Argument**

Participants will meet with their small group facilitators to draft and revise the first few paragraphs of the legal argument in their cases.

**12:00 p.m. Adjournment**

**CLE Accreditation**