




NLADA

National Alliance of Sentencing
Advocates & Mitigation Specialists

PRESENTS:

 **NLADA**
National Legal Aid &
Defender Association
nlada.org

**The Fundamentals of
Mitigation Certificate Program**

Presented by NLADA and the National Alliance of
Sentencing Advocates & Mitigation Specialists

Nov. 16, 2021 12pm - Nov. 18, 2021 3pm
Virtual Training

PROGRAM OF EVENTS

All times are Eastern Time.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The November 2021 NASAMS Fundamentals of Mitigation Certificate Program will be an all-virtual event. All sessions will take place live over the internet on our conference platform, Sched. All sessions will be set up in Zoom Pro to allow for full audience participation and small group discussion.

EVALUATIONS

Evaluations are all online through the event app to save paper and improve participation. We want to hear your feedback on the overall training and the individual sessions.

- Overall Conference Evaluation – click the “Overall Conference Evaluation” link on the Sched home page.
- Individual Session Evaluations – click the “Feedback Survey” box at the top of each session’s description in Sched.

Your input will help us improve this training experience for everyone.

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT

This activity is pending approval from the National Association of Social Workers. If approved, we will provide information and instructions before and during the training.

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

12:00 noon-12:15 p.m. **Welcome and Introductions**

[No CE requested for this session]

Presenters: Denise Smith, LCSW-C; and Megan Leschak, LMSW

The program organizers will provide an overview of the training, general instructions for participation in the online platform, review CEU requirements, and answer attendee questions before we get started.

12:15 p.m.-1:00 p.m. **History and Significance of the Profession**

[0.75 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenters: Cessie Alfonso, LCSW; and Betsy Biben, LCSW

As our certificate program opens, learn about the history of our national organization – the National Alliance of Sentencing Advocates & Mitigation Specialists – and the importance of the practice and your ongoing involvement with NASAMS. By the end of this session, you'll have a better understanding of our profession and understand how NASAMS can support your professional development.

1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. **Interviewing with Awareness**

[1.0 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenter: Anupama Vishwamitra, LCSW

Interviewing is the cornerstone of mitigation investigation. While it's hard to cover such a broad and significant topic in an hour, we will cover some key factors to keep in mind when interviewing our clients, their families, and other lay witnesses. You'll leave this session with concrete ideas on how to plan and conduct your interviews to ensure you obtain the information you need.

2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. **Trauma 101: Identification, Exploration, and Presentation**

[1.0 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenter: Megan Leschak, LMSW

During this session, we will discuss common causes - and symptoms - of psychological trauma, including interpersonal, environmental, and socially engineered forms of stress. We will explore ways to gather trauma histories to reduce harm and promote healing. Additionally, we will consider compelling presentations intended for courtroom proceedings and negotiations with the state or government.

3:00 p.m.-3:15 p.m. **BREAK**

3:15 p.m.-4:15 p.m. **Competency to Stand Trial–The Basics**

[1.0 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenter: Julie Brovko, Ph.D., LLC

In this session, we will define competency to stand trial, discuss when to raise competency, and discuss the roll of forensic professionals in competency to stand trial evaluations. By the end of the session, attendees will be able to:

- *define competency to stand trial,*
- *summarize when to raise competency, and*
- *summarize the roll of forensic professionals in competency evaluations.*

4:15 p.m.-5:30 p.m. **The Role of Neuropsychology in Forensic Work**

[1.25 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenters: Dr. Lynette Abrams-Silva; and Julie Brovko, Ph.D., LLC

In this session, we will discuss the similarities and differences between a forensic psychologist and neuropsychologist and will focus on when a neuropsychologist should be consulted for cases. By the end of the session, attendees will be able to:

- *discuss the similarities and differences between forensic psychology and neuropsychology,*
- *summarize why it is important to choose the right expert, and*
- *summarize how to know which type of expert is right for their particular case.*

Wednesday, November 17, 2021

12:00 noon-1:00 p.m. **Investigation, Collection, and Organizing Records**

[1.0 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenters: Sarah Forte, Investigator and Paralegal; and Charity Laister, LCSW

This session will explain how record collection fits into standard criminal defense strategies, why records are so important, where to start, what records to collect, and how to organize everything you've gathered. We'll help you consider the types of records to collect, show how records paint the picture of our clients' lives, provide samples of various types of record requests, provide tools on how to collect records, and discuss various ways to organize and summarize records.

1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. **What's in a Story: Understanding Race and Culture**

[1.0 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenter: Lori James-Townes, LCSW-C

Familiarity and sensitivity to culture is key to effective client rapport-building and representation. Cultural backgrounds can affect communication with clients or witnesses, who may have critical information, and will affect what they are willing to tell the defense teams. This session will explore some of the various components of culture and how to explore them in a sensitive manner and navigate differences. This is an interactive session, which includes small-group discussions, providing an opportunity to learn from the experiences and challenges of others. By the end of the session, you will:

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- *be able to define and identify multiple components of culture;*
- *be able to verbalize the importance of culturally competent lived experience of your clients;*
- *have an increased awareness of how racial and cultural differences affect all aspects of representation – from relationship-building to telling the client's unique story; and*
- *have techniques for gathering the story in a culturally informed manner.*

2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. **Telling the Lived Experiences of Our Clients: Mitigation Writing for Beginners**

[1.0 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenter: Shannon Keyes Woodward, LCSW

This session will examine the various types of mitigation writing for beginners to include interview memos, social history narratives, court reports, and letters of support. Attendees will learn tips for structuring the different documents and using them as a tool to prepare compelling mitigation narratives for counsel, defense experts, or the court. The importance of including images, collateral sources, themes, and impressions to support the writing will also be discussed and examples will be provided.

By the end of the session, you will:

- *understand the nature and differences among a few critical types of mitigation writing for beginners,*
- *know how to use available information to prepare more compelling narratives, and*
- *leave with skills and tools to be a better writer*

3:00 p.m.-3:15 p.m. **BREAK**

3:15 p.m.-4:30 p.m. **Working with Experts and Providing Testimony**

[1.25 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenters: Rachel Johnson, Esq.; and Ava Marie Reid, LCSW

Rachel Johnson, Esq., and Ava Marie Reid, LMSW, have worked together on juvenile transfer cases for the Office of the Public Defender since 2019. They offer a unique perspective on working together as a defense team, utilizing expert witnesses, and preparing for court experiences. In this session, they will offer some insights regarding their work so that you:

- *understand the process of attorney and expert collaboration for case and testimony preparations,*
- *know the distinct roles/expectations for each professional,*
- *leave with helpful tactics for question and theme development and team building, and*
- *have tips for effective communication and timelines for referrals/reports.*

4:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m. **Breakout Groups (self-selected)**

[1.0 CE hours requested for this session]

* **Private Practice** – Presenter: Rebecca Bowman-Rivas, LCSW-C; Katherine Mayer, M.A., CCDI, Mitigation Specialist

This is an opportunity for private practitioners and those who are considering it to discuss the possibilities, risks, and challenges that come with private practice as a sentencing advocate/mitigation specialist. The facilitators both have thriving practices, but they have very different business models. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions about creating and maintaining a practice and to discuss issues such as billing, advertising, workload, employees, and cash flow. In this session, participants will:

- *identify potential types of business structures and entities,*
- *identify three benefits and three challenges of private practice, and*
- *will have an opportunity to ask questions and get feedback about starting and maintaining a private practice.*

* **Working on Defense Teams** – Presenter: Sam Dworkin, Dworkin Investigations

This session will focus on the Mitigation Specialist's experience with working on defense teams, such as educating attorneys on the role of a mitigation specialist, working with experts, being a bridge between clients and attorneys, and other related factors. The Mitigation Specialist often assumes many and varied roles on the team, but it can also be one of the most under-utilized or mis-utilized team members. Big picture and small scale examples will be discussed.

This session will:

- *clearly establish the role of the mitigation specialist on a defense team, and*
- *establish the varied tasks and examples of value the mitigation specialist provides to the defense team.*

* **Navigating a Law Office and/or Government Organization** – Presenter: Stephanie Thornton, LCSW

Working in a multidisciplinary setting has its strengths and challenges when performing mitigation work. Add in performing mitigation work in the structure of an office or government setting, and you introduce another layer to consider when performing your professional duties. In this breakout session, we will discuss the strengths that come from working in a law office or government agency as a mitigation specialist and also explore the challenges that exist related to process, ethics, communication, and more. Bring examples to share and questions to explore!

* **Self-Care and Wellness** – Presenters: Denise Smith, LCSW-C; and Megan Leschak, LMSW

This is an interactive session with colleagues sharing and exploring self-care routines as well as discovering new ways to decompress and take care of ourselves. You'll leave with ideas and concrete measures you can make part of your own personal self-care regimen.

Thursday, November 18, 2021

12:00 noon-12:15 p.m. **Questions from Days 1 and 2**

[No CE hours requested for this session]

Presenters: Denise Smith, LCSW-C; and Megan Leschak, LMSW

The program organizers will answer any lingering questions from attendees before we get started.

12:15 p.m.-1:30 p.m. **Safety in the Field**

[1.25 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenter: Sarah Forte, Investigator and Paralegal

This session will discuss basic safety protocols and tips for sentencing advocates, mitigation specialists, and investigators who conduct interviews in the homes of clients and witnesses. We will cover steps an investigator should take before entering the field to maximize the likelihood of a safe and successful outcome, and review best practices for safety at a field location. We will also discuss safety when conducting an interview in a correctional facility.

Participants will learn how to conduct research before engaging in fieldwork to identify potential safety concerns and take action to mitigate risks. Participants will leave this session feeling more empowered and confident when working in the field.

1:30 p.m.-1:45 p.m. **BREAK**

1:45 p.m.-2:45 p.m. **Healing from Harm: The Power of Integrating Restorative Practices into Our Work**

[1.0 CE hours requested for this session]

Presenters: Craig Acorn, Esq.; Eva Buchwald, LCSW; and Denali Wilson, Esq.

This session will talk about the power of incorporating restorative practices into criminal defense work. Eva will give a brief description of the scope of restorative practices in mitigation work and describe ways that addressing harm can be integrated into our work. Craig will talk about how to utilize restorative practices in a client-centered model. Denali will talk about post-conviction restorative practices as an important part of client advocacy.

People will come away with a decrease in their fear around really digging into the harm that clients may have caused, how it affected their clients as well as those who were hurt. They will be challenged to move away from the current dichotomy that exists in our juvenile and criminal legal systems.

2:45 p.m.-3:00 p.m. **Program Closing**

[No CE hours requested for this session]

Presenters: Denise Smith, LCSW-C; and Megan Leschak, LMSW

The program organizers will offer closing remarks and take any last questions.

Training Ends

Presenter Bios

Dr. Lynette Abrams-Silva

Dr. Lynette Abrams-Silva is a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist licensed in both New Mexico and Illinois. She is the Director of the Psychology Department Clinic at the University of New Mexico, overseeing clinical training experiences of graduate students as well as teaching several core and elective classes through the Psychology Department. Dr. Abrams-Silva also provides comprehensive clinical and forensic neuropsychological evaluations for adults in private practice in Albuquerque. Her areas of particular interest include epilepsy, traumatic brain injury, complex medical conditions, and cultural issues in the field. Dr. Abrams-Silva earned her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of New Mexico and completed her pre-doctoral internship and 2-year fellowship in Chicago, at the University of Chicago and University of Illinois at Chicago, respectively. Prior to her current positions in New Mexico, Dr. Abrams-Silva held the position of Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, serving concurrently as Director of Assessment for the Parkland Hospital Psychology Service. She is chair of the Ethnic and Minority Affairs committee of APA Division 40 (SCN), though which she continues to pursue mentorship opportunities for developing neuropsychologists.

Craig Acorn

Craig Acorn is a felony attorney at the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, where he has been since January 2021. Previously, he was the statewide director of the Major Crimes Defense Unit at the Law Offices of the Public Defender, where he was since January 2014. He describes public defense as “the best f%@\$!?!ing job in the world.” After working as a carpenter and in social services for many years, he earned his law degree from the City University of New York

in 2000. Since then, he has practiced legal services and human rights law with an emphasis on impoverished and excluded populations. In New York City, Craig directed the legal clinic for Urban Justice Center’s Mental Health Project and was associate general counsel at the Community Service Society of New York. In the Bay Area, he was supervising attorney at the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley’s Mental Health Advocacy Project. Before re-inventing himself as a criminal defense attorney, Craig was senior attorney at the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty.

Cessie Alfonso

Cessie Alfonso, LCSW, is a nationally recognized expert in forensic social work, domestic violence and organizational development in the area of cultural competence and valuing diversity. She is founder and president of Alfonso Associates. For the past 27 years, Alfonso Associates has provided social work and psychosocial assessments to the clients of civil and criminal attorneys throughout the United States, as well as internationally. As a mitigation specialist, she and her associates have conducted more than 1,000 mitigation investigations since she began providing services. Ms. Alfonso has testified as an expert social worker in the penalty phase of capital cases in state and federal courts throughout the United States. Cessie Alfonso has a Bachelor’s of Arts in Psychology and Sociology from Hood College. Ms. Alfonso earned her Master’s Degree in Social Work from Rutgers University in 1977. Ms. Alfonso is a member of the National Academy of Social Workers, licensed clinical social worker in the State of New Jersey, and a certified social worker with her R in the State of New York. Ms. Alfonso is a bilingual (Spanish speaking), bicultural (Afro-Puerto Rican-Cuban) social worker who has trained attorneys and professionals to appreciate and integrate into their practices and organizations

the ethnic diversity and cultural aspects of their clients' lives. She is also a nationally recognized domestic violence/battered woman's expert who has appeared on national television and BBC radio. She has conducted training in this area to professionals in the criminal justice system. As a valuing diversity/cultural competence trainer and consultant Ms. Alfonso has worked with large corporations like New Jersey Bell, Bell Laboratories, the New York City Legal Aid Society, The New York State Defender's Association, and Social Security Administration. Ms. Alfonso's appreciation and knowledge of group dynamics and perspective on how biosocial factors create barriers to effective communication, combined with her experience as a bicultural individual, make her uniquely qualified to design and implement cultural competence training for large and small organizations. She recently received the NLADA Life in the Balance Achievement Award. She was recognized by the Governor of New Jersey as a leading mitigation specialist and one who significantly contributed to the ultimate abolition of the death penalty in the state. Alfonso Associates custom-designs training programs using focus groups, one on one interviews, and training materials that can be utilized by key staff members at an organization who have been trained by Alfonso Associates for continuing cultural competency training for other staff members. Recently, Ms. Alfonso designed and implemented an Advanced Clinical Training for Mitigation Specialists, Investigators, and Attorneys for the state of Colorado Alternative Defense Counsel.

Betsy Biben

Betsy Biben is a Forensic and Clinical Social Worker and serves as the chief of the Office of Rehabilitation and Development (ORD) for the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (PDS), where she has been employed since 1982. Betsy was awarded the chief position in 2002. She has prepared sentencing reports and/or testimony before courts in Washington, D.C. (local and federal), Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. She is a founding

member of the National Association of Sentencing Advocates, renamed NASAMS (National Alliance for Sentencing Advocates & Mitigation Specialists), and recently retired as a member of the executive committee. Betsy also served on the NLADA Defender Council and Client Council. Until 2017, she was a board member of the Southern Center for Human Rights, where she remains active. She recently resigned from the board of the DC's Voices for a Second Chance (VSC), a 50-year-old reentry support program, after sitting on the board for more than 25. Currently, she is a board member of Negotiations Work, Inc. She has worked in the criminal justice system since 1974. In the last three years and since the start of COVID-19, her practice has turned to creating reentry plans for persons who have served 20 or more years of prison. In 2018, she and a colleague who served 26 years started a reentry support group named "15-30-Life" for those who have served at least 15 years in prison. Betsy received her Masters in Social Work from the University of Connecticut in 1982 and a postgraduate certificate from the Washington School of Psychiatry in 1986. She is a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW) and is a licensed social worker in D.C. (LICSW).

Rebecca Bowman-Rivas

Rebecca Bowman-Rivas is a clinical and forensic social worker, who has run the Law & Social Work Services Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore's Carey School of Law for the past 18 years. The program provides social work services and support for the Law School's Clinical Program, providing law and social work students the opportunity to collaborate and provide holistic services to their clients. Areas of practice include criminal justice, immigration, low-income tax payers, gender violence, and healthcare and HIV/AIDS. The program provided support and case management for individuals being released under Unger v. Maryland (2012), after serving decades in prison. Ms. Bowman-Rivas has also been in private practice for more than a decade through Bowman-Rivas Consulting, providing mitigation and sentencing advocacy in capital cases and other felonies, juvenile LWOP and

transfer of jurisdiction cases. She is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland School of Social Work.

Dr. Julie M. Brovko

Julie M. Brovko, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist. She obtained her Masters and Doctorate degrees in clinical psychology from the University of New Mexico. She completed a forensic-focused internship at the US Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri. From there, she moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, to complete a postdoctoral fellowship at the Forensic Evaluations Unit. Dr. Brovko returned to New Mexico in 2017 to focus on her private practice in forensic psychology. She is currently adjunct faculty in the Department of Psychiatry at UNM, where she helps to develop and build its forensic psychology postdoctoral training program. She also supervises graduate students in the Department of Psychology and teaches at the UNM Law School.

Eva Buchwald

Eva Buchwald is an LCSW in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She has spent the majority of her career working in juvenile defense as well as in other child-serving agencies. Eva also contracts with attorneys to provide mitigation for people preparing for parole and for juveniles facing transfer hearings. She is a strong believer in the power of restorative practices.

Sam Dworkin

Samuel Wiita Dworkin is a mitigation specialist and investigator with more than 15 years' experience in capital and criminal defense, working on sentencing and merits investigations as well as juvenile re-sentencing cases, at the state and federal levels in all stages (pre-trial, habeas and post-conviction, re-sentencings, etc.). He is published as the lead co-author of the chapter "Capital Case Sentencing Evaluations" in the textbook *Inside Forensic Psychology*, and, from the Fall of 2013-2017, he was an adjunct professor, co-teaching the course "The Death Penalty and Mitigation" to

graduate level students at Marymount University's department of Forensic and Legal Psychology. Sam has worked on more than 40 capital murder cases, as well as numerous serious felony cases and juvenile re-sentencing cases. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sarah Forte

Sarah Forte is the senior investigator at the Southern Center for Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia. She joined SCHR in June 2006 upon graduating from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism where she worked for the Medill Innocence Project investigating possible wrongful murder convictions and other miscarriages of justice. At SCHR, Sarah investigates death penalty cases at the trial level and in post-conviction proceedings. Sarah has been on the faculty of numerous national trainings for public defenders and other legal professionals engaged in criminal defense work. In July 2015, Sarah became a member of the Executive Committee of the National Alliance of Sentencing Advocates and Mitigation Specialists.

Lori James-Townes

Lori James-Townes is the executive director of the National Association for Public Defense. Lori assumed this leadership position after three years as assistant training director for NAPD and more than 25 years of working on defense teams representing indigent defendants. Lori has more than 25 years of clinical practice, leadership, and management experience. At NAPD, she led the creation and planning of NAPD's Women's Conference, which shifted (due to COVID-19) from a 200-person live event to an 800-person virtual event headlined by Stacey Abrams. In 2021, she co-led NAPD's first-ever National Virtual Conference for Gideon Week – bringing more than 6,500 attendees together for the largest public defense training in history. She is the principal owner of Expand-NOW, a consulting firm specializing in speaker coaching and teaching. Through Expand-Now, LLC, she is able to fulfill her lifelong passion for adding value to others. Prior experience

includes serving as the director of social work, leadership and program development at the Maryland Office of the Public Defender. She also led the agency's social work staff, consultants, and interns. She has held teaching positions at Morgan State University, the University of Maryland School of Social Work, and most recently Towson University. Lori has developed programs that are now national models for other agencies. In 2015, The Daily Record Newspaper named her as one of Maryland's Top 100 Women. As a speaker, her presence is requested both nationally and internationally to speak about: leadership, storytelling, mitigation, culturally mindful representation, team building, implicit bias in the criminal justice system, secondary trauma, and other clinical areas. Lori maintains an active role in the National Alliance of Sentencing Advocates & Mitigation Specialists (NASAMS) and NLADA. She is also a founding board member of the Black Public Defender Association (BPDA) and is active on many community boards, including serving as the alumni board president for the University of Maryland School of Social Work. Lori also serves as a faculty member for national and regional leadership development, trials skills, and trainings such as Gideon's Promise. She earned her master's degree in clinical social work from the University of Maryland School of Social Work and her B.A. in Social Work from Morgan State University. She completed all coursework in the Dr.Ph Public Health at Morgan State University. One of Lori's favorite motivational quotes is by Maya Angelou: "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

Rachel Johnson

Rachel has been a juvenile defense attorney her entire legal career. She has represented children charged in delinquency court, adults in post-conviction cases who were sentenced as children to life imprisonment, and children charged as adults. Most of her current cases are children charged in adult court, with the focus on returning these cases to the juvenile court as Maryland is a national hot spot for the

prosecution of children in adult court. Rachel received a J.D. from American University Washington College of Law in 2015 and a B.A. from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2010.

Shannon Keyes-Woodward

Shannon Keyes Woodward, MSW, LCSW, received her BA from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and her MSW from the University of Maryland. Her areas of specialization are capital mitigation development, interviewing, mental health defense strategy, and community networking/outreach. Ms. Woodward has previously held positions in the Maryland Public Defender's Felony Trial Unit (Baltimore); Capital Trial Assistance Unit (Chicago); and the Virginia Indigent Defense Commission (Alexandria). In 2016, Ms. Woodward started her own firm for mitigation and sentencing advocacy. She is currently working with public and private counsel in the development and integration of mitigation evidence and themes in state and federal capital cases, JLWOP resentencings, and other felony matters. Ms. Woodward was appointed to the NASAMS executive committee in 2014 and has presented at several local and national conferences.

Charity Laister

Charity Laister is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker in the State of Alabama. Ms. Laister has more than 10 years of social work experience. Throughout her social work career, she has practiced directly with individuals, served as a social work supervisor, and served as an administrator for social work and behavioral health programs. Ms. Laister earned a Juris Doctirate from the Birmingham School of Law, a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Alabama, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work from the University of Montevallo. Ms. Laister previously served as the lead social worker at the Jefferson County Public Defender's Office in Birmingham, Alabama. She now develops mitigation and sentencing advocacy for capital cases in her private practice.

Megan Leschak

Megan is the co-owner of Context Mitigation, a firm that provides mitigation services for clients in both state and federal courts. Megan began her forensic social work career at the Maryland Office of the Public Defender in Baltimore City where she was awarded a Soros Open Society Institute Fellowship to highlight for the courts the impact of structural racism, poverty, and violence on defendants. She subsequently worked as a mitigation investigator in the Delaware Federal Defender Capital Habeas Unit and as the social work supervisor for the New Mexico Law Offices of the Public Defender. Megan earned her MSW from the University of Maryland where she co-created the course Racism and Racial Equity in Social Work Practice. Megan has trained attorneys, investigators, and social workers at forensic conferences across the country.

Katherine Mayer

Katherine Mayer is a death penalty mitigation specialist and Board Certified licensed private investigator in Austin, Texas. In 2012, Katherine established Mayer Consulting, which has grown to become a criminal defense consulting firm that employs social workers and licensed investigators in an effort to create a holistic approach and bolster communication within the defense team. She and her colleagues advocate for the appointments of both fact investigators and sentencing advocates in all criminal cases to ensure that the cohesiveness of their firm will improve the communication among the team. Katherine teaches an online criminal defense investigations course and serves as a mentor/career counselor for students trying to gain experience in the field of criminal defense. Katherine received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with an emphasis in Behavioral Forensics and a Masters of Arts in Forensic Psychology from Marymount University.

Ava Marie Reid

Ava Marie Reid has worked as a social worker for the Office of the Public Defender with the Youthful Defendant Unit since July 2019. She works

primarily on transfer and waiver cases involving youth and children charged as adults. She provides psychosocial evaluations, client interviews, court reports, court participation, and testimony. She is experienced in post-conviction, felony, and juvenile cases. She also works part time for Johns Hopkins School of Medicine as a Women's Health Teaching Associate. She has provided trauma sensitivity examination training and post sexual assault forensic examination training to medical providers since fall 2012. Before her career as a social worker, Ava worked full-time as a Baltimore City educator, which is where she first acquired an interest in the Office of the Public Defender. Many of her students suffered from attachment trauma related to their parents' incarceration and experiences of police brutality. It became clear in her work through Baltimore City Schools that systemic racism, mental health needs, and poverty were deeply connected to mass incarceration. This work inspired her to pursue a career as a mental health professional. While obtaining her master's degree in social work, Ava interned with the Baltimore City Felony Division for the Office of the Public Defender (2016-2017). After graduating from the University of Maryland School of Social Work, she worked as a clinical therapist for Johns Hopkins Bayview Community Psychiatry (2017-2019). She treated many trauma survivors and refugees through individual and family counseling. She also facilitated therapeutic groups/interventions for parents and children suffering attachment trauma through the Intensive Outpatient Program. Many of these families had experienced incarceration or displacement trauma. Ava was inspired to return to the Office of the Public Defender with the clinical skills she had developed while working at Johns Hopkins Bayview.

Denise Smith

A 2002 graduate of the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW), Denise Smith has refined her clinical practice in the areas of forensic social work, mental health treatment, and social work education. Denise launched Smith Consulting Group LLC in 2011, providing forensic social work and mitigation services

focused on defended-based advocacy—giving a voice to truth and restoring dignity to the accused. She is also a field liaison with UMSSW Office of Field Education as well as a mental health therapist, primarily serving persons struggling with substance use disorders. Additionally, Denise partners with the Maryland Office of the Public Defender as a social work field education instructor. As a teacher and mentor, Denise devotes her work to shaping and influencing student professional growth in the areas of understanding systemic oppression and cultural humility as they relate to the criminal justice system and mass incarceration. Social justice, defended-based advocacy, social work education, and launching new social workers into the field inspire and highlight her practice.

Stephanne Thornton

Stephanne Cline Thornton is the criminal justice specialist for Public Defender Services' Public Defender Corporation Resource Center in West Virginia, where she assists public defenders across the state with research and mitigation, conducts trainings, and writes grants on behalf of Public Defender Corporations to further the holistic mission of indigent criminal defense. Ms. Thornton has been clinically licensed as a social worker and addictions counselor since 2004 and currently holds a Master Addiction Counselor certificate, is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker, a Certified Addiction Counselor Level III, Certified Sex Offender Treatment Provider, and Certified Clinical Trauma Professional. Ms. Thornton is also trained in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and somatic treatment for trauma. Ms. Thornton sits on the National Association for Public Defense Steering Committee and serves on various community boards. She serves as an appointee to the West Virginia State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights and was appointed by Governor Jim Justice to the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse, Prevention, and Treatment where she co-chairs the subcommittee on Courts and Criminal Justice-Involved Populations.

Anupama Vishwamitra

Anupama Vishwamitra is the director of mitigation at the Office of the Georgia Capital Defender. She oversees all trial-level death penalty cases in the State of Georgia. She trains, supervises, and mentors mitigation investigators, consults with capital defense teams around the nation, and presents on a variety of mitigation issues at professional conferences. Anu teaches the Forensic Social Work course at Georgia State University-Andrew Young School of Policy Studies and manages interns from several colleges and universities. She has been dedicated to capital defense work since 2006, a year after earning her Master in Social Work.

Denali Wilson

Denali Wilson is a Soros Justice Advocacy Fellow working to end excessive and extreme youth sentencing practices in New Mexico. As a fellow, she serves youth charged in adult courts in the state by litigating unconstitutional sentences, ensuring fair and constitutional parole hearings, and fighting for fair and age-appropriate sentencing reform.

NOTES

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