



## LOUISIANA DISTRICT ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

### 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Support Staff Training Conference

Golden Nugget Casino in Lake Charles, LA

April 30 - May 2, 2025

### AGENDA

(Subject to Change)

#### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30

- 11:00-5:30 REGISTRATION**
- 1:00-1:15 Welcome & Announcements**  
*Honorable Kristine Russell, LDAA President  
District Attorney, 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Lafourche Parish, LA  
Honorable Stephen Dwight, District Attorney  
14<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Calcasieu Parish, LA*
- 1:15-2:00 SESSION #1 Thriving, Not Just Surviving: Mastering the Work-Life Wellness Dance**  
*Dr. Krista Nelson, Department Chair and Associate Professor of Psychology  
Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia, AR*  
Join us for an insightful session on exploring practical strategies to manage stress, set boundaries, and maintain mental well-being while navigating the demands of your professional and personal life. Take away tools to help you foster a healthier work-life integration and thrive both at work and at home.
- 2:00-2:15 BREAK**
- 2:15-3:00 SESSION #2 Empathy in Action: Navigating the Challenges of Supporting Victims with Compassion and Care**  
*Mrs. Leone Fitzgerald, President of the Victims Assistance Coordinators Board  
Director, Victim Assistance Program, 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District, Shreveport, LA*  
Support staff are often the first people in the office that a victim/witness speaks with - you have the power to influence their first impression of your office and impact a victim's willingness to cooperate going forward. This presentation will provide an overview of what VAC's do, how we can work together, and how to better respond to difficult victims.
- 3:00-3:15 BREAK**
- 3:15- 4:00 SESSION #3 New Tools, New Tactics: The Latest in Investigative Courtroom Programs**  
*Mr. Scott Elfert, President of the DAI Board  
District Attorney Investigator, 32<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District, Houma, LA*  
This session will showcase the most recent investigative tools being used to solve

cases, discuss their benefits, and give insight into how these tools work.

**4:00-4:15**      **BREAK**

**4:15-5:00**      **BREAKOUT SESSION #4a Understanding Bond Forfeitures: A Step-by-Step Guide**

*Mr. Andrew Shealy, Bail Bond and Drug Asset Forfeiture Attorney  
Assistant District Attorney, 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, New Iberia, LA*

Learn the basic rules for obtaining and enforcing criminal bail bond forfeiture judgments and the need for strict compliance with those rules.

**BREAKOUT SESSION #4b Chronic, Catnip, and Cabbage: Same Drug, New Laws on Cannabis in 2025**

*Ms. M. W. Smith, Assistant District Attorney  
20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Clinton, LA*

Learn updated sentencing guidelines for possession of marijuana and paraphernalia, discover which THC gummy and beverage products can be sold and where they may be sold, understand drug court treatment options, and review medical marijuana and marijuana growing operation regulations in this session.

## **THURSDAY, MAY 1**

**8:00-2:00**      **REGISTRATION**

**9:00-10:00**      **SESSION #5 Stop Barking Up the Wrong Tree**

*Ms. Julie Couret, Strategic Planning and Executive Business Coach  
Couret Leadership Lab, New Orleans, LA*

In a fast-paced work environment, communication can make or break productivity. This session equips you with the tools to collaborate seamlessly, make clear requests, share critical information, and gain necessary clarifications—ensuring efficiency and alignment while managing constant deadlines. Learn how to get your message across quickly and effectively to drive results and keep work moving forward.

**10:00-10:15**      **BREAK**

**10:15-11:00**      **SESSION #6 On the Record: A Guide to Handling the Media with Confidence**

*Mr. David Melancon, Chief Investigator  
17<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Thibodaux, LA*

In today's social media age, opting out of conversation is not an option that organizations have. The challenge then becomes how to navigate the ever-changing sea of options, while staying professional, managing the message, and ensuring the narrative reflects the dedication poured into the fight for justice. In this session, we'll explore the best strategies and practices for those ready to take on this crucial responsibility.

**11:00-11:15**      **BREAK**

**11:15-12:00**      **SESSION #7 Behind the Scenes: How Support Staff Can Be the ADA's Secret Weapon**

*Mr. Hugo Holland, Assistant District Attorney  
26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Shreveport, LA*

Some prosecutors, especially new ones, don't know what they don't know. Pick up a few tips on helping your prosecutors get ready for trial in this presentation.

**12:00-1:00**      **LUNCH - PROVIDED**

**1:00-2:00**      **SESSION #8 Locked and Loaded: Practical Tips for Gun Safety and Self-Defense**

*Trinity Graves, Lieutenant, St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office  
22<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District, Slidell, LA*

