



# 2025 Family Defense Conference

**APRIL 24-25**

Empire State Plaza Concourse  
100 South Mall Arterial  
Albany, NY 12242

## 9.0 MCLE Credits

4.5 Areas of Professional Practice, 3.0 Skills, 1.5 Ethics  
7.5 CEU credits

This program is transitional and is suitable for all attorneys including those newly admitted.  
This program is open to all Family Defense team members.

New York State Bar Association

**Registration  
now open!**



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## Thursday, April 24, 2025

- 11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. **Sign In & Registration**
- 12:45 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. **Welcome & Introduction (Room 6)**  
Domenick Napoletano, President, New York State Bar Association  
Hon. Rowan D. Wilson, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals
- 1:30 p.m. – 1:40 p.m. **Break**
- 1:40 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **Plenary One – Family Law Update - Appellate Decisions January 2024 to April 2025 (Room 6)**  
Faculty:  
Adele Fine, Attorney at Law  
*1.5 MCLE Credits in Areas of Professional Practice*
- 3:00 p.m. – 3:10 p.m. **Break**
- 3:10 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. **Breakouts**  
**Family Policing Abolition Movement Update: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Path Forward (Rooms 3&4)**  
Faculty:  
Angela Burton, Founder, Repeal CAPTA Workgroup  
Dawn Westfall, LMSW, Cattaraugus County Public Defender's Office  
*1.5 MCLE Credits in Ethics, 1.5 CEU credits*  
**Representing Non-Citizen Clients in Family Court: Cultural Sensitivity & Your Ethical Obligations (Room 5)**  
Faculty:  
Daniel E. Jackson, Deputy Director of RIAC, Region 2  
Shana Pughe Dean, Associate Director of Social Enterprise, The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees  
*1.5 MCLE Credits in Ethics*

## Friday, April 25, 2025

- 8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. **Breakfast**
- 8:30 a.m. – 9:50 a.m. **Keynote Introduction (Room 6):**  
Joyce McMillan, Founder and Executive Director of Just Making a Change for Families (JMACforFamilies)  
Faculty:  
Professor Dorothy Roberts, 2024 MacArthur Fellow  
*Special thanks to the NYS Unified Court System Office for Justice Initiatives for sponsoring this keynote address.*
- 9:50 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. **Break**
- 10:00 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. **Breakouts**  
**The Power of Narrative: Storytelling as Advocacy in Trial and Appellate Practice (Rooms 3&4)**  
Faculty:  
Kate F. Woods, Attorney at Law  
Cynthia Feathers, Attorney at Law  
*1.5 MCLE Credits in Skills*  
**Defending Clients against Substance Use Allegations in Article 10 Proceedings (Room 5)**  
Faculty:  
Esiena Ekwofia, Interim Acting Director of Social Work, Brooklyn Defender Services' Family Defense Practice  
Jenny Ruymann, Staff Attorney, Brooklyn Defender Services' Family Defense Practice  
Carmen Tellez, Senior Attorney, Brooklyn Defender Services' Family Defense Practice  
*1.5 MCLE Credits in Areas of Professional Practice, 1.5 CEU Credits*

11:20 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Buffet Lunch (Room 6)**

12:30 p.m. – 1:50 p.m. **Breakouts**

**“You’re Not the Boss of Me”: Legal Defense Team Strategies for Effective Interdisciplinary Practice (Rooms 3&4)**

**Faculty:**

**Stephanie Hale**, Assistant Public Defender, Cattaraugus County Public Defender’s Office

**Savannah Kieper**, Senior Caseworker, Family Defense Unit, Monroe County Public Defender’s Office

*1.5 MCLE Credits in Areas of Professional Practice, 1.5 CEU credits*

**Family Court Counsel’s Responsibilities Regarding Appeals: Preserve, Protect, Pause (Room 5)**

**Faculty:**

**Carolyn Walther**, Appellate Counsel, Parent Representation, ILS Statewide Appellate Support Center

**Emily Wall**, Litigation and Appeals Supervisor, Center for Family Representation

*1.5 MCLE Credits in Skills*

1:50 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. **Break**

2:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m. **Breakouts**

**Family Court: Where the Rules are “Made up” and “Nothing Makes Sense” (Room 5)**

**Faculty:**

**Karen Caggiano**, Family Court Bureau Chief, Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County

**Sara Behuniak**, Assistant Public Defender, St. Lawrence County Public Defender’s Office

*1.5 MCLE Credits in Skills*

**Reimagining Interdisciplinary Practice: Using Out of Court Advocacy to Inform Legal Strategy (Rooms 3&4)**

**Faculty:**

**Sarah Goldstein**, Social Work Team Leader, Brooklyn Defender Services’ Family Defense Practice

**Daniela Mancini**, Supervising Attorney, Brooklyn Defender Services’ Family Defense Practice

**Sabrina Calloway**, Social Work Supervisor, Brooklyn Defender Services’ Family Defense Practice

*1.5 MCLE Credits in Skills, 1.5 CEU credits*

3:20 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. **Break**

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m. **Recognizing Trauma Response in our Clients and Ourselves: Strategies and Solutions for the Family Court Practitioner (Room 6)**

**Faculty:**

**Sarah Holt**, Conflict Defender, Monroe County Conflict Defender’s Office

**Erin Scoon**, Gender Violence Prevention Specialist 1, New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

*1.5 MCLE Credits in Areas of Professional Practice, 1.5 CEU credits*

4:50 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. **Closing Remarks (Room 6)**

**Patricia Warth**, Director, New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services

# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



New York State Office of  
Indigent Legal Services



New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services (ILS), especially members of the Family Representation Unit (FRU), are profoundly grateful for the support of Trista Borra, Director of the Child Welfare and Family Justice Division, as part of the NYS Unified Court System Office for Justice Initiatives (OJI). Thank you, OJI, for sponsoring our keynote address by Professor Dorothy Roberts.

Additionally, the FRU is indebted to the Second Department Attorney for the Child program for conferring continuing education credits for social workers, a first for a statewide conference for those engaged in Family Defense pursuant to Family Court Act § 262. We thank Sarah Tirgary, Deputy Director, and Peter Manzo, Support Services Coordinator.

Finally, FRU and ILS could not have orchestrated this event without our wonderful partners in the New York State Bar Association's Committee on Families and the Law, the Committee on Continuing Legal Education, and the dedicated New York State Bar Association staff who were crucial for planning and executing this conference: Kathy Suchocki, Senior Director for Continuing Legal Education & Law Practice Management, Lena Faustel, Government Relations Policy Manager, and Tara Lana, Program Manager, Law Practice Management.



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