



National District
Attorneys Association

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Beating the backlog:

A more productive prosecutor's office

This CLE webinar is designed for prosecutors, paralegals, and other members of the prosecution team, plus legal technology professionals, judges, and court administrators.

The pandemic has exacerbated the strains that prosecutors were already facing and added to the challenges of recruiting and retaining talent. Join our online panel of prosecutors, judges, court administrators, and legal technology experts to discuss how prosecutors' offices are building capacity to tackle their heavy caseloads.

WHAT

Webinar

CLE: 1.5 Credit Hours

WHEN

Thursday, March 31, 2022

1:00–2:30 p.m. EST / 10:00–11:30 a.m. PST



“The current court system infrastructure, inclusive of prosecutor, public defender and judicial offices, is woefully inadequate to adapt to a post-pandemic world that incorporates a heavy focus on technology.”¹

Nelson Bunn, Executive Director, National District Attorneys Association

1. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/crime-law/2021/11/18/guest-post-courts-crisis/>

Beating the backlog: A more productive prosecutor's office

The event will approach the issues from a holistic point of view, looking at how different judicial disciplines can work together to solve common problems. Discussion topics will include:



Coping with staffing shortages

Offices across the nation are struggling to handle more cases with fewer prosecutors. Where can we find efficiencies to help process cases faster and prevent unnecessary delays to justice?



Smarter use of data

Having access to good data is vital for prosecutorial decision-making, but expectation does not always meet reality. What baselines should we expect of our profession, what benefits can we expect from technology, and how can we achieve them?



Cooperation without complexity

The flow of information between law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, and courts is not always smooth. We explore some of the procedural and technical solutions currently being trialed.



Actions for immediate results

Technology is part of the solution to the capacity crisis, but rollouts can drag on, consuming time and resources and causing unwanted disruption. How can we realize the benefits in weeks rather than years?

Guest presentations

Setting the scene: Handling digital evidence

Every office is faced with at least two pressing issues: the backlog of cases since March 2020 and the increase in digital (and especially video) evidence. Patrick Muscat, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney in Wayne County, MI, explores how to alleviate these issues by modernizing critical systems, including digital intake, case management, and digital evidence management.

Justice delayed is justice denied

Noting that delays to cases rarely work in the favor of the prosecution, Jennifer Webb-McRae, a prosecutor in Cumberland County, NJ, shares how to effectively communicate a sense of urgency to the court. She will also examine whether, when facing backlogs, it is better to tackle the oldest and most serious cases first or to start on the front end with a process of review.

Improving access to justice in New Hampshire

Superior Court Administrator Karen Gorham explains how her background as a public prosecutor has helped her deliver significant change at the New Hampshire Judicial Branch. She shares the key systems and processes that have helped the branch overcome its backlogs and kept cases flowing during the pandemic.

Improving discovery for remote hearings

Judge Deborah J. Nicastro shares how Garfield Heights Municipal Court in Ohio overcame its discovery delays. The court oversees multiple municipalities and law enforcement agencies, and the exchange of evidence between prosecutors and defense counsel was not always smooth. In this webinar, Judge Nicastro outlines a new process and the benefits to the court and all its users.

Lessons from the modernization of the UK Ministry of Justice

The Crown Courts of England and Wales have operated paperless criminal trials since 2015. Thomson Reuters' Andrea Kilby charts how the modernization was achieved in just 12 months, the outcome of which are fewer trials due to improved discovery leading to more early guilty pleas, and a 50% reduction in the number of hearings needed to conclude a case.

AGENDA

Welcome & introduction of panelists

Allysa Gambarella

Setting the scene: Handling digital evidence

Patrick Muscat

Justice delayed is justice denied

Jennifer Webb-McRae

Improving access to justice in New Hampshire

Karen Gorham

Improving discovery for remote hearings

Judge Deborah J. Nicastro

Lessons from the United Kingdom's Ministry of Justice

Andrea Kilby

Live Q&A

Closing remarks

Allysa Gambarella

Meet the panel (1 of 2)



Allysa Gambarella

Program Director, NDAA

HOST

In her role as Program Director, Allysa Gambarella provides support to prosecutors and law enforcement by managing the development and implementation of training courses for the NDAA. Before joining the association, she worked as a prosecutor in New Jersey and New Mexico for 17 years. She is a graduate of the University of Delaware and holds a JD from Seton Hall University School of Law.



Karen Gorham

Superior Court Administrator, New Hampshire Judicial Branch

Karen Gorham has been the Superior Court Administrator in New Hampshire since 2015 and was a prosecutor in New Hampshire and California for 25 years. A member of the American College of Trial Lawyers, she has focused on operational efficiencies, leading to criminal and civil e-filing and electronic warrant submission projects over the last five years.



Andrea Kilby

Director of Business Development for Case Center, Thomson Reuters

Andrea Kilby works with prosecutors, courts, government organizations, and law firms implementing digital working practices to create collaborative environments that drive productivity. Previously, Ms. Kilby spent over 10 years in child protection prosecutions. She holds a postgraduate qualification in collaborative transformation, which she applies to public purpose projects.

Meet the panel (2 of 2)



Patrick Muscat

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney,
Wayne County, MI

Patrick Muscat has served in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office for nearly three decades. He has served as a subject matter expert in the fields of authenticating digital evidence, body-worn cameras, litigation technology, courtroom technology, trial advocacy, and video evidence. Mr. Muscat also helped draft *Video Evidence: A Primer for Prosecutors*, a resource guide published by the Department of Justice's Global Information Sharing Toolkit.



Deborah J. Nicastro

Presiding Judge, Garfield Heights
Municipal Court, OH

The Garfield Heights Municipal Court is a fast paced, multi-district court in northeast Ohio which is completely digital and on-line at ghmc.org. From 2004, when Judge Nicastro went paperless, to 2020 when she adopted Zoom for remote hearings, and 2021 when she adopted a web-based system for the exchange of discovery, Judge Nicastro has created a completely digital environment for all court users.



Jennifer Webb-McRae

Prosecutor, Cumberland County, NJ

Since January 2010, Jennifer Webb-McRae has served as the first African American, first female prosecutor of Cumberland County. In 2017, she became the county's first full-time prosecutor to serve a second term. A graduate of Rutgers Law School, Ms. Webb-McRae also serves on the NDAA board and has been active in the community as a past member of the Vineland Planning Board and Vineland Board of Education.



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Continuing Legal Education (CLE)

NDAА will seek 1.5 CLE credits in Illinois, Kansas, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia based on state requirements and guidelines. All other attorneys seeking CLE credit should contact their state bar for more information. At the conclusion of the course and after completion of the electronic evaluation survey, all attendees will receive a uniform continuing education certificate that they may use to report their continuing education hours to their state bar or reporting agency.

Questions regarding CLE can be directed to Senior Project Coordinator Courtney Jan at cjan@ndaajustice.org.

About the NDAА

The NDAА is a national, non-partisan, non-profit membership association that provides training, technical assistance, and services to prosecutors around the country.



THOMSON REUTERS

The NDAА gratefully acknowledges Thomson Reuters for its support in delivering this webinar.

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