



2026 Deep South Capital Defense Conference
Hollywood Casino – Gulf Coast
Bay St. Louis, Mississippi
March 4-6, 2026



Agenda

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

8:00 am – 9:45 am
Pre-Conference Area

Registration

8:00 am – 9:45 am
Cypress A

Breakfast

9:45 am - 10:00 am
Cypress B

Welcome

*Andre' de Gruy, State Public Defender
Kelsey Rushing, Capital Defender
Erin Briggs, Training Director*

10:00 am – 11:00 am (1hr)

Building Expert Teams

*Claudia Van Wyk, Senior Staff Attorney
ACLU Capital Punishment Project*

11:00 am – 11:05 am

Evaluations

11:05 am - 12:05 pm (1hr)

**Mitigation Reports: Legal and Ethical Issues
(ETHICS)**

*Russ Stetler, Retired National Mitigation Coordinator
Federal Death Penalty Resource Counsel*

12:05 pm – 1:15 pm
Cypress A

Evaluations & Lunch

1:15 pm – 2:20 pm (1hr)
Cypress B

**McCoy v LA - Working with Clients with Significant
Mental Illness**

*Richard Bourke, Director
Louisiana Capital Assistance Center*

2:20 pm – 2:25 pm

Evaluations

2:25 pm – 3:25 pm (1hr)
Cypress B

Empirical Evidence that Mitigation Works

*Russ Stetler, Retired National Mitigation Coordinator
Federal Death Penalty Resource Counsel*



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Wednesday, March 4, 2026

3:25 pm – 3:40 pm

Evaluations & Break

3:40 pm – 4:40 pm (1 hr)

Jury Selection: Life and Death Qualification Overview

Boyd Young, Chief Attorney

South Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense

4:40 pm – 4:45 pm

Evaluations & Announcements

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Welcome Reception

Bridges Private Room



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Thursday, March 5, 2026

7:30 am – 9:00 am
Cypress A

Breakfast

9:00 am - 10:30 am (1.5hr)
Cypress B

Preserving Error Panel Discussion

Greg Spore, Asst. Capital Defender
Kelsey Rushing, Capital Defender
Krissy C. Noble, Capital Post-Conviction Counsel
David Voison, Capital Habeas Resource Counsel

10:30 am – 10:35 am

Evaluations

10:35 am – 11:35 am (1hr)

Defending Shaken Baby Syndrome/ Abusive Head Trauma Cases

Katherine H. Judson, Executive Director
Center for Integrity in Forensic Sciences

11:35 am – 11:40 am

Evaluations

11:40 am – 12:40 pm (1hr)

Developing Theme and Theory of the Case

Boyd Young, Chief Attorney
South Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense

12:40 pm – 1:45 pm
Cypress A

Evaluation & Lunch

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm (1hr)
Cypress B

Strategic Motion Practice

Danalynn Recer, Co-Founder
GRACE - Gulf Region Advocacy Center

2:45 pm – 2:50 pm

Evaluations

2:50 pm – 3:50 pm (1hr)

Settling the Case: Lessons Learned from the Callihan Case

Kerry Cuccia, Director
Michael A. Fiser, Trial Counsel
Katie Carter, Fact Investigator and Mitigation Specialist
Capital Defense Project of Southeast Louisiana

3:50 pm

Evaluations & Announcements



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Friday, March 6, 2026

7:00 am – 8:30 am
Cypress A

Breakfast

8:30 am – 10:00 am (1.5hr)
Cypress B

Working Cohesively as a Team with Our Clients and Experts from a Developmental Trauma Lens

*Kelsey M. Harrington, Owner
KHarr Investigations, LLC*

10:00 am - 10:05 am

Evaluations

10:05 am – 11:05 am (1hr)

Autism Spectrum Disorder and Why it Matters

*Doug Passon, President and Creative Director
Doug Passon Law &
Laurie Sperry, Ph.D., Founder
Autism Services and Programs*

11:05 am – 11:20 am

Evaluations and Break

11:20 am – 12:20 pm (1hr)
Cypress B

Jury Selection – Race and the Death Penalty

*Tucker Carrington, Director
Innocence Project and Professor of Law
University of Mississippi School of Law*

12:20 pm

Closing Announcements & Conference Check-Out