

ACDP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NASSAU COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION ASSIGNED COUNSEL DEFENDER PLAN[©]



Putting the Pieces Together: Experts and Effective Advocacy

Every case tells a story, but some stories require specialized knowledge to fully understand and effectively present. Whether the issue involves forensic science, mental health, digital evidence, accident reconstruction, medical causation, false confessions, or eyewitness identification, expert witnesses can provide critical insight that helps level the playing field and ensure that a client's constitutional rights are protected.

Too often, attorneys view experts as a luxury reserved for the most serious or complex cases. In reality, the strategic use of qualified experts can strengthen a defense

at every stage of litigation—from pretrial motions and plea negotiations to trial and sentencing.

Experts can help identify weaknesses in the prosecution's evidence, educate the court on technical issues, and provide juries with the information they need to make informed decisions.

One of our areas of focus in recent years has been to encourage the use of the wide array of experts that are available to you as an 18b attorney. We've introduced you to experts practicing in fields of increasing importance, such as cell site analysis and

Experts continued from Page 1

jury consultation. We've presented CLEs that have run the expertise gamut, from primers on DNA, to how to build a psychiatric defense. And we've made it easier than ever to retain experts like Mitigation Specialists.

As much as we've done, we know we can, and must, always strive to do more. We know that the very basic necessity of communicating with your client can be a challenge when there is a language barrier between you. And we know that when a particular area of expertise is only served by one member of our Expert Panel, and that person is on vacation or otherwise engaged, you are left to scramble for a backup.

We know the issues. We understand the problems. And we're very happy to say we are starting to make a dent! In the past month, we've added 11 Experts to our panel! We wanted to introduce you to the newest members of our Expert Panel, give you a little bit of information about who they are and what they do, and let you know how to contact them should you need their assistance.

Matthew Bertron is a retired FBI Supervisory Special Agent with 27 years of investigative experience involving complex criminal investigations, national security matters, and high-profile cases. He supervised investigative squads, led sensitive investigations, and worked extensively with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. Matt is the owner of Diesel Investigations, a private investigations agency, and is available for a wide range of criminal and civil defense assignments, including witness location and interviews, mitigation investigations, due diligence inquiries, background investigations, and trial preparation support. You can contact Matt at: dieselinvestigations.com, 646-321-2431.

Benjamin Cohen is a technology consultant professional, and business strategist with 30 years of experience in digital forensics, eDiscovery, Microsoft 365, cloud platforms, cybersecurity, and enterprise infrastructure. Benjamin advises on the identification, preservation, collection, and management of electronically stored information (ESI). His experience supporting litigation and investigative matters provides a practical perspective on the technical challenges surrounding modern discovery and data governance. You can reach Benjamin at: 646-660-0155, Ben@benjamincohen.com.

With more than 30 years of combined experience in public forensic DNA laboratories, Jaime Rodrigues and Maria Tsocanos have worked on thousands of criminal cases involving evidence examination, forensic biology and DNA analysis, complex interpretation, and expert testimony. As co-founders of ExpertDNA Solutions, LLC, they provide legal teams with forensic DNA and serology case reviews, expert witness services, and customized training. Both remain actively engaged in the forensic science community through continuing education and professional memberships in organizations including the Northeastern Association of Forensic Scientists, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and the International Society for Forensic Genetics. You can reach Jaime and Maria at: 201-588-5334, Jaime@ExpertDNASolutions.com & Maria@ExpertDNASolutions.com.

Ronan Blackbird is a Digital Technology Specialist experienced in the forensic decoding of computers, mobile phones, tablets, wearables, drones and automotive infotainment systems. He is well versed in the complexities associated with data extraction, analysis, forensics (Cellebrite), and management. Ronan is experienced with the forensic analysis of audio and video data (e- discovery) and preparing trial evidence for attorneys. You can reach Ronan at: (646) 833-9563, Ronanblackbird@hotmail.com.

Roy Wright served with the U.S. Marshals Service from 1996 to 2024, rising to Senior Inspector with the NY/NJ Regional Fugitive Task Force and the Sex Offender Investigations Branch. He managed key national programs including Sex Offender Apprehension under the Adam Walsh Child Protection Act, International Megan's Law, and Missing Child Recovery. On four separate occasions, Roy was selected to represent the USMS as a liaison to INTERPOL in Washington, D.C., and Lyon, France.

And we're so excited to introduce you our newest Interpreters/Translators:

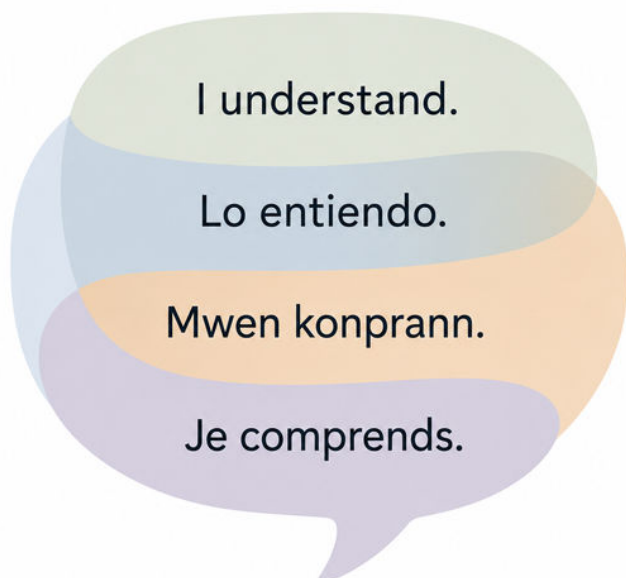
Marie Bayonne - Creole/French/English
(631) 626-2371 / Mariebayonne1@gmail.com

Elsy Melgar - Spanish/English
(516) 428-4540 / elsymelgar23@gmail.com

Eunaude Clermont - Creole/French/English
(347) 341-2186 / eunaude@gmail.com

Raquel Dominguez - Spanish/English
(516) 967-1801 / rdominguez3711@gmail.com

Bedys Perez - Spanish/English
(646) 330-1615



WELCOME VERONICA FRANCO, OUR NEW BILINGUAL PARALEGAL!



As so many of you can attest, Adelle Herrera has become an essential part of the 18b operation in District Court. Whether she is helping clients get proof of insurance prior to their Arraignment B appearances, reaching out to Spanish speaking families to arrange for bail to be posted, or making referrals to LIRIAC, the services she provides to our Panelists and your clients are invaluable. It is undeniable that the need for these services is just as great in Family Court as it is in District Court.

Seeing this need, we got about addressing it. We are so excited to introduce you to Veronica Franco, the new Family Court Spanish/English Paralegal!

Veronica, who is a Certified Paralegal, joins 18b after having worked as a Senior Paralegal for 9 years at the Safe Center LI. In her capacity there, she provided support to the Legal Director and staff attorneys, trained and supervised

Welcome Veronica

continued from Page 3

other paralegals on staff, assisted staff attorneys with drafting and filing legal documents as well as with case management, and translated conversations and documents.

Veronica is fluent in Spanish and English, she is a licensed NYS Notary, has experience with Immigration Law in addition to Family Law, and is fluent with the full Microsoft suite. In addition, Veronica has a Lexis account so if you need assistance with legal research, she will be able to help you on that front as well.

Veronica will be available to assist the 18b Family Court attorneys every day. She will be stationed in the Attorney Room on the first floor of the Family Court building where she will have her 18b cell phone and laptop.

If you have meetings, calls, Zooms, or projects you would like Veronica to assist with, including document translation, please reach out to her, her contact information is below. And when you see her at Family Court, please introduce yourself and welcome her to the 18b team!

Veronica Franco
Veronica.Franco@nassau18b.org
516-788-4397



Administrative Tips & Tricks

There are so many moving parts to your day as an 18b Attorney. You have to coordinate court schedules, client meetings, conferences with opposing counsel. You need to make time for witness interviews, expert debriefing, CLE completion. And of course, you have to worry about the administrative side of being an 18b Attorney, timekeeping, vouchering, 722(c) orders, and the list goes on.

In order to make that part of your life a bit easier, we've collected some tips and tricks we think could be helpful. Did you know:

- Neither you nor your support staff should be entering any cases or clients into the Case Management System! You have enough to do! In order to ensure that every client's information is entered completely, accurately, and uniformly, the 18b Office staff creates every single case in the CMS. That means that every time you get a case, however, wherever, or whenever you get that case, you should be completing a Case Information Form or a Family Court Information Form and emailing it to us. The forms are fillable PDFs and you don't have to print a thing! Just fill in the information and send it our way. Please remember, this is not optional!
- Both Adelle and Veronica can translate documents from Spanish to English! If you have text messages, emails, legal documents, any materials written in

Tips & Tricks continued from Page 4

Spanish that you need translated to English for your cases, you can reach out to them directly for assistance. There's no need to get a 722(c) Order! They are also available to help you translate on phone calls, virtual conferences, and in meetings. Again, just reach out to them directly to arrange logistics with them. If you need assistance on a criminal matter, please contact Adelle at adelle.herrera@nassau18b.org, or at 516-780-2004 and if you need help on a Family Court matter, please contact Veronica at veronica.franco@nassau18b.org, or at 516-788-4397.

- When you are submitting vouchers for an Attorney of the Day assignment, remember that you need to select the court **PART** where you served as the Attorney of the Day rather than selecting "District" in the Court field. Each Attorney of the Day position is funded by a different line in our State Distribution budgets so we must be able to attribute the cost of the vouchers to the appropriate line. Selecting "District" will cause a delay in the processing and payment of your vouchers which will have to be unsubmitted and corrected.
- You should not be completing Closing Forms on any cases that are still open. That means anytime you are submitting an Interim Voucher or a Relieved as Counsel Voucher, you should not be completing a Closing Form. If your client has warranted and that's why you're submitting a voucher, the case is technically still open, so there shouldn't be Closing Forms on those cases. Please remember, Closing Forms should only be completed by the Primary Attorney at the time a case is fully disposed.
- Don't short-change yourself! We've been seeing several vouchers with 0-minute timesheet entries. Please double check your vouchers before you submit them to make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to!
- There's been some confusion lately about what qualifies as a Major Felony for purposes of case assignments. Major Felonies are ONLY A and B **non-drug** offenses, so if you are in Arraignment A and there's an A felony CSCS, even if you are not on the Major Felony Panel, you can be assigned to that case.
- If you're looking through your vouchers and you see one that's marked "Needs Revision," don't worry! Those are vouchers that the Court has some sort of an issue with but the issues are almost always resolvable without any intervention on your part (a date of service is one day off, there is an incorrect digit in a docket number, etc.). We review all of the "Needs Revision" vouchers every other day and 9 times out of 10, we can fix any problems and send them back to the Court for final approval. If there's ever an issue with a voucher that requires your attention, the voucher will be "Unsubmitted" and you will receive an email.
- If you do receive an email letting you know one or more of your vouchers has been unsubmitted, please remember to check both your Assignment as well as your Attorney of the Day vouchers to find the one that's been returned to you for correction.



New Resource Spotlight: Families Rising Comes to Nassau County!

Every attorney hopes to identify services that can help a client move forward while also strengthening their advocacy in court. We are pleased to share that Families Rising, a state-funded program with a long history of success in New York City, is now available to eligible clients in Nassau County.

Families Rising provides Functional Family Therapy (FFT)—an evidence-based, home-based intervention designed to address many of the underlying issues that can contribute to justice system involvement, including family conflict, negative peer influences, substance use, school truancy, behavioral concerns, and mental health challenges. Therapy focuses on strengthening family relationships, improving communication, developing problem-solving skills, and building healthier support systems that promote long-term success. Because the program addresses many of the factors that may contribute to justice system involvement, it

can also provide you with meaningful information to present in support of mitigation, rehabilitation, and individualized sentencing advocacy.

For attorneys representing eligible clients, Families Rising may provide an important opportunity to demonstrate a client's commitment to rehabilitation and positive change. Participation in the program can offer valuable information for plea negotiations, sentencing advocacy, and other dispositional discussions, while connecting clients with meaningful services at a critical point in their lives.

In addition to Functional Family Therapy, Families Rising offers a range of supportive services based on individual needs, including substance use treatment, school and curfew monitoring, referrals for education and employment resources, psychiatric evaluations for eligible participants, and ongoing progress updates. Program representatives also

New Resource Spotlight continued from page 6

attend court appearances and provide you with reports regarding a client's participation and progress.

The program serves eligible clients ages 16-27 in Nassau County who are charged with misdemeanor or felony offenses, including violent felony offenses, and who may be eligible for a non-jail disposition, Youthful Offender treatment, or a reduced incarceratory sentence. **Services are provided at no cost to eligible participants through state funding.**

Since its launch in 2012, Families Rising has helped hundreds of younger clients avoid incarceration while supporting healthier family relationships, continued education, employment, and reduced recidivism.

Clients must meet the following eligibility criteria to receive services:

- Must be between 16-27 years old, and have been charged with a Misdemeanor or Felony, including VFOs;
- Must be YO eligible, eligible for a non-jail disposition (i.e. probation, dismissal, or removal to family court), or eligible for a lesser incarceratory sentence;
- Live in New York City (all 5 boroughs) or in Nassau County for in-person services. Cases must originate in a court in the County of Nassau;
- Cannot be actively suicidal or homicidal;
- Cannot be deemed to meet clinical criteria for a “sex offender” (“sex offenders” with co-occurring antisocial behaviors are eligible);

- Cannot be deemed to meet clinical criteria for a “sex offender” (“sex offenders” with co-occurring antisocial behaviors are eligible);
- Must be able to participate in therapy with primary caregiver (if age 16-17) or any family member or partner (if over 18) (a family member can be a spouse, a child, a significant other, etc.).

If you believe a client may benefit from Families Rising, we encourage you to learn more about the program and consider whether it may be an appropriate resource to incorporate into your advocacy.

Interested in making a referral?
Scan the QR code below:



General Information:
Info@NYFoundling.org
www.nyfoundling.org | @TheNYFoundling
212-633-9300

Families Rising at a Glance

- State-funded and free to eligible participants
- Available in Nassau County
- Clients ages 16-27
- Evidence-based Functional Family Therapy
- Additional support services available
- May assist with sentencing advocacy and favorable dispositions
- Program representatives provide progress reports and attend court appearances



Do You Know About the ILS Statewide Support Center?

Trial Lawyers, This is For You Too!

The ILS Statewide Appellate Support Center has been established to provide support, free of charge, to counsel providing mandated representation **at all stages of a case, trial, appellate, and post-conviction, including on 440.47 motions!**

Do you need assistance with a brief or motion?

They can offer templates, statements of law on many frequently encountered issues, and guidance on how to use these materials.

Do you need assistance with DVSJA advocacy under 440.47 or 60.12?

The Center can provide support! They are available for case consultations and can provide resources and templates for your DVSJA claims.

They can brainstorm with you and, where appropriate, explore your issues with the DVSJA Statewide Defender Task Force. Contact Elizabeth Isaacs at 518-881-6451 or Elizabeth.Isaacs@ils.ny.gov to explore the resources available to you!

Do you seek to advocate for a favorable disposition?

They can consult with you on how to use a social worker, case manager, or mitigation specialist; strategies for using these resources to connect clients to appropriate treatment services; and how these services can assist you in discovering and highlighting mitigating history. Please remember you still need to obtain a court order to employ these experts' services.

Is there a critical issue you wish to present and preserve for appellate review?

The Center can consult with you about how to do so effectively.

Want to be mooted for your next appellate argument?

Send them the briefs, and they will put together a panel for a virtual moot court session.

Contact them today at SASC@ils.ny.gov to find out how they can help you!



Decisions of Note

People v Raly | July 15, 2026

CPL 30.30 | prosecution's appeal | coc/sor illusory | affirmed

The prosecution appealed from a Queens County Supreme Court order granting Raly's motion to strike the certificate of compliance (COC) and supplemental COCs, and to dismiss the indictment on statutory speedy trial grounds. The Second Department affirmed. The prosecution failed to be ready within 6 months of the commencement of this felony action. The COCs were "improper" and the statement of readiness (SOR) "illusory" because the prosecution "failed to establish that they exercised due diligence with respect to disclosure of...police memo books, property vouchers, and chain of custody reports." Since the prosecution's "contention that they did not exceed the applicable period under CPL 30.30(1) was dependent on their contention that the COC and supplemental COCs were valid," the court's dismissal order was affirmed.

https://www.nycourts.gov/reporter/current/3dseries/2026/2026_04434.shtml

Matter of Olang v Keels | July 8, 2026

child support | insufficient proof of willful violation | reversed & remitted

Father appealed from an Orange County Family Court order finding that he had willfully violated a child support order and committing him to the custody of the Orange County Jail unless he paid a purge amount of \$11,811.19 plus additional arrears. The Second Department reversed and remitted for further proceedings. The father was "deprived of a meaningful opportunity to be heard," since the only witness at the hearing was a senior support investigator from the Orange County Support Collection Unit. "Additionally, there was a question as to whether the father unequivocally requested to proceed pro se." The Second Department remitted to Family Court for a new hearing, as well as assignment of new counsel if warranted. Samuel Coe represented the father.

Matter of Olang v Keels (2026 NY Slip Op 04307)



Contact Us

Do you have colleagues who are interested in joining an 18B panel? Do you have questions about filling out the vouchers? We're here for you! Email or call us with any questions or concerns.

Lindsay.Boorman@nassau18b.org

Ingrid.Villagran@nassau18b.org

Debbie.Ally@nassau18b.org

Judith.Kabashi@nassau18b.org

Roberta.Costanza@nassau18b.org

Adelle.Herrera@nassau18b.org

Stefanie.Giangregorio@nassau18b.org

Jessica.Pascuzzi@nassau18b.org

516-747-8448