

# Mitigation Sentencing Advocacy

*Telling the whole story of a life — the practice, the obstacles, and the path forward in Alabama.*

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TUESDAY, JUNE 30 • 10:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. • FEDERAL DEFENDER OFFICE, MONTGOMERY

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10:00  
to 10:15

## ○ Introductions and Welcome

Opening remarks, a welcome to participants, and a look at the day ahead.

10:15  
to 11:30

## ○ The Foundations of Mitigation

**Dr. Elizabeth Vartkessian · Executive Director, Advancing Real Change (ARC)**

An opening keynote on what mitigation is, why it matters, and how rigorous social history investigation changes outcomes for clients facing the most serious sentences.

11:30  
to 1:00

## ○ Funding Mitigation Investigation

**Danalynn Recer**

Making the case for the resources real mitigation requires — what thorough investigation costs, how to build and justify a budget, and strategies for securing funding in resistant systems.

1:00  
to 1:30

## ● BREAK

1:30  
to 2:45

## ○ WORKING LUNCH

### Panel — Doing This Work in Alabama

**Local Mitigation Specialists · Moderated Q&A**

A candid conversation about the realities of practice in Alabama: caseload pressures, geographic and cultural barriers, and the persistent challenge of funding this essential work.

2:45  
to 4:00

## ○ Building Advocacy In-Roads in the Courts

**Danalynn Recer · Aylia McKee · Elaine Burdeshaw**

Strategies for educating judges on the necessity of mitigation work and realistic funding needs — framing requests, building credibility with the bench, and creating systemic understanding rather than case-by-case battles.