

OCTOBER 2019

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THURSDAY
JULY 22

LAW SCHOOL HOSTS 2010 PUBLIC DEFENDER TRIAL SKILLS PROGRAM

From July 28 to July 31, a select group of public defenders from across Pennsylvania will have the opportunity to hone their trial advocacy and persuasion skills in Penn State University Dickinson School of Law's new state-of-the-art, digital courtroom in Lewis Katz Hall, Carlisle, PA.

Throughout this intensive, hands-on program, 36 public defenders from 22 counties across Pennsylvania will engage in a simulation of courtroom skills, see trial demonstrations, and hear lectures on advocacy from an experienced faculty of trial lawyers. They will learn to better perform direct and cross examinations, lay foundations, deliver opening statements and closing arguments, and carry out voir dire, with individuals from the community serving as potential jurors.

Designed to improve performance in the courtroom, the program may change the way that more experienced advocates approach trials. Each attorney will bring a real case file from his or her office and use that particular case to practice and refine their skills. From brainstorming legal strategies to presenting closing arguments, attorneys will have the chance to augment all of their trial skills.

"The brainstorming and collaboration techniques will be of tremendous value for the case selected, and the skills will be transferable to all future cases," said Mary Defusco, who serves at the Defenders' director of training and recruitment. "The constitutional promise of counsel for the accused means nothing unless defense counsel is provided the means to become effective in the courtroom. That's what this training is all about," she added.

In its ninth year of operation, the program is funded in part by a grant to the Public Defender Association of Pennsylvania from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

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