

Prosecutor Training Grant Program —

Reporting Period: January–December 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 Prosecutor Training Grant Program delivered a comprehensive statewide portfolio of professional development opportunities designed to enhance prosecutorial effectiveness, support statutory obligations, and strengthen public safety outcomes. Between January and December 2025, the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA) provided training to prosecutors, civil attorneys, child-protection professionals, and justice-system partners through in-person courses, multi-day institutes, and live/On-Demand webinars.

The 2025 training program emphasized:

- **Implementation of recent legislative changes**, including updates to criminal statutes, expungement processes, and juvenile protections.
- **Specialized skill development**, such as trial advocacy, expert-witness examination, vehicular-homicide reconstruction, cybercrime prosecution, competency proceedings, and child-protection litigation.
- **Emerging issues**, including artificial intelligence in legal operations, deep-fake technology, and trauma-informed practice.
- **Mental-health and wellness**, aligned with statutory ethics duties and statewide initiatives supporting attorney well-being.
- **Leadership development** for county attorney offices, including strategic planning, AI readiness, and organizational improvement.

Across all programs, participants consistently reported high levels of satisfaction with instructional quality, relevance to practice, and value to their offices. Evaluation data reflect strong demand for continued advanced training, expanded civil-law offerings, and additional guidance in implementing evolving legislation.

2025 Prosecutor Focused Training Sessions:

Deep Fakes, Sexual Extortion & Other Cyber Related Sex Crimes

Date: January 9th, 2025 | Format: Webinar Live & OnDemand

Course Summary:

Comprehensive overview of sex-based cybercrimes including sexual extortion, solicitation of minors, offenses involving minors in pornographic works, and cyber-harassment/stalking/coercion; concludes with laws involving deep fakes and recent cybercrime cases.

Evaluation Summary:

100% agreed the session met expectations; 100% said the level was understandable; 91% rated overall value Very Good/Excellent.

Participant Comments:

Karen is amazing! She is such an expert in this area. Thank you for having her speak on this critical and important topic.

Mental Health and Substance Use in the Legal Profession

Date: February 26th, 2025 | Format: Webinar Live & OnDemand

Course Summary:

Designed to help attorneys identify and understand disabilities related to mental and chemical health, address stigma and confidentiality barriers, and reduce discrimination toward impaired lawyers and clients. Focus on improving hiring, retention, professional development, and client service.

Evaluation Summary:

93% said content met expectations; 95% agreed speakers demonstrated knowledge; 83% rated overall value Very Good/Excellent.

Participant Comments:

- “Thank you for sharing one of your most vulnerable moments/stories. I hope that others take your examples to heart and address their excessive use sooner than later.”

- “Both speakers were very engaging.”
- “First MH CLE I've ever seen — woohoo!”
- “Appreciate the courage of those who share their experiences.”

Human Trafficking and the Impact on Commercial Driver's Licenses

Date: March 26th, 2025 | Format: Webinar Live & OnDemand

Course Summary:

Explains rules and regulations for CDL holders and severe forms of human trafficking, including the federal No Human Trafficking on Our Roads Act (NHTRA). Outlines Minnesota steps to ensure CDL suspensions or disqualifications are applied when appropriate and provides an overview of federal and state statutes.

Evaluation Summary:

88% agreed/strongly agreed the content met expectations; 100% agreed the speaker demonstrated knowledge; 75% rated overall value Very Good/Excellent.

Participant Comments:

- “Case studies and applying the law that way would have been more effective.”

2025 New Civil Attorney Training

Date: April 9, 2025 | Location: MCIT Training Facility | Format: In-Person

Course Summary:

Six-hour program covering: ethics for civil prosecutors; data practices & open meeting law; public employment law; contracts & bid law; child support; land use; civil commitment & Rule 20; forfeitures, expungements, name changes, gun permits & licensing.

Evaluation Summary:

Overall Value of this course was rated at 9.50 (out of 10)

Participant Comments:

- As a general overview/refresher course on all the different areas I deal with on a daily basis as a civil attorney.
- I've downloaded all the presentations and I'm sure I'll refer to often as well as reach out to presenters with questions.
- I will take the information and approaches to tackling difficult problems and implement them into my practice.

Trial Advocacy II

Date: April 21, 2025 | Location: MCIT Training Facility | Format: In-Person

Course Summary:

Advanced program for prosecutors (5+ years, multiple felony trials). Topics: Analytical Advocacy; Direct/Cross of Experts; workshops on expert prep and testimony; Meeting Defenses; Attorney mental well-being (Trauma); Ethics (611A); Closing Arguments. Included experts from BCA crime lab, SANE nursing, CSI, and a field detective. Specialty CLEs: Mental Health & Ethics.

Evaluation Summary:

Overall Value of this course was rated at 7.83 (out of 10)

Participant Comments:

- In trials I have this summer! Very helpful
- I am feeling more confident about upcoming trials. I will incorporate some of the cross and closing tips into my next case.
- I will apply what I learned in my cases/coming trials.

Newish Judges on the Minnesota Court of Appeals

Date: April 30, 2025 | Format: Webinar Live & OnDemand

Course Summary:

Panel with Judges Jon Schmidt, Keala Ede, JaPaul Harris, and Rachel Bond.

Evaluation Summary:

95% of those attended rated the value of the session Very Good or Excellent.

2025 Training for New Prosecutors

Date: May 1, 2025 | Format: In-Person

Course Summary:

Day-in-the-life orientation for new prosecutors. Topics: role of the prosecutor; “ten things” panel; professional relationships; pre-trial hearings; discovery; common defense motions & making the record; charging; pleas; trauma-informed practice; experts; competency; appeals & post-conviction; sentencing guidelines 101; evidence; probation violations (Austin factors). Specialty CLE: Mental Health.

Evaluation Summary:

The overall value of this course was rated 8.62 (Out of a possible 10)

Participant Comments:

- The CLE provided me a fuller view of the criminal law processes that will help me in my criminal appellate practice.
- I plan to use it to begin an “outline” of info I need to know as a prosecutor, so I have a reference document to refer to as I learn the job.
- I am going to apply it to my work in child protection.

2025 Juvenile Attorney Training

Date: May 7, 2025 | Format: In-Person

Course Summary:

Prosecution of juvenile law with experts from the FBI (animal cruelty & behavioral health) and State Fire Marshal (juvenile fire setter/arson). Additional topics: Delinquency 101 and Guns 101/201.

Evaluation Summary:

The overall value of this course was rated 8.89 (Out of a possible 10)

Participant Comments:

- In all of my cases --- to address substantive legal issues and procedures, and knowing who are the other professionals with expertise in the area who may be consulted about specific cases.
- The specific topics of arson and guns were very helpful for trial prep and charging.
- I'll be taking a better look at available resources for juvenile dispositions as there were programs and resources, I was not aware of. I also found the firearm presentation helpful given a recent firearm case.
- Diversion programs recommendations

Experiential Trial Advocacy Course for Child Abuse Prosecutors

Date: June 4, 2025 (three-day course) | Format: In-Person

Course Summary:

Experiential program with simulated voir dire, cross-examination of a defendant, proper evidence foundation for admissibility, and preparing for expert testimony (medical, scientific, digital). Focus on overlooked/complex trial segments.

Evaluation Summary:

The overall value of this course was rated 8.00 (Out of a possible 10)

Minnesota Legislative Update Live Webcast and OnDemand

Date: July 23, 2025 | Format: Live Webcast | CLE: 1 CLE approved

Course Summary:

Legislative developments impacting practice; live Q&A. This was a comprehensive update provided to prosecutors of criminal laws that were amended or newly created.

Lethal Weapon: Vehicular Homicide

Date: August 13, 2025 (2.5 days) | Location: MCAA Offices, St. Paul, MN (with off-site crash demo) | Format: In-Person

Course Summary:

Intensive course featuring an off-site live crash (SUV vs. motorcycle) to demonstrate Minnesota State Patrol fatal crash reconstruction. Objective: equip prosecutors handling vehicular homicide with reconstruction insight and trial strategies.

Evaluation Summary:

Strong positive feedback from attendees.

Participant Comments:

- “Wonderful and informative training!”
- “Learned and enjoyed this more than I thought I would.”
- “Great to add to the knowledge base; helpful for new prosecutors.”
- Crash scene: “Beyond beneficial. Great to see step-by-step approach.”
- “John Kwasnoski is a valuable, captivating instructor.”

MCAA Leadership Retreat — Building Strong Offices

Date: September 24–26, 2025 | Location: Ruttger’s Bay Lake Lodge, Deerwood, MN | Format: In-Person (Leadership Conference) | Attendance: 58 registrants

Course Summary:

Annual leadership retreat focused on building high-functioning offices, durable leadership skills, and empathy for prosecutorial work. Included SWOT analysis for each office, an AI deep-dive for legal operations, and mental-health/wellbeing specialty CLEs.

Evaluation Summary:

The overall value of this course was rated 9.22 (Out of a possible 10)

Participant Comments:

- “Focus on leadership topics is appreciated.”
- “Terrific — keep the same quality of speakers.”
- SWOT: “Good forum; engaging; helped identify improvements.”
- AI session: “Timely and informative; assistants need to hear this.”
- Mental Health session: “Down-to-earth and relevant; strong presenter.”

MFSRC Annual Training Conference Program (Live Webcast)

Date: September 30, 2025 | Format: Live Webcast | CLE: 10 CLE approved

Course Summary:

Multi-session child support-focused training program. Topics included: Bankruptcy essentials for child support, five federal performance measures for Child Support, ensuring that paternity and child support orders are fair, enforceable, and not subject to later review that may render the order void, enforcement tools and contempt, county and tribal innovations, hiring bias, recruiting and retention.

Evaluation Summary:

This session was conducted in partnership with MFSRC, they have reported positive feedback. This partnership was for 6 webinar sessions totaling 10 CLE credits.

2025 CHIPS Conference

Date: October 1–3, 2025 | Location: Deerwood, MN | Format: In-Person | CLE: 12.25 CLE + 3 Specialty

Course Summary:

Agenda included mental health credits; CHIPS appellate/caselaw updates; permanency; MAAFPA phase-in; ethics; step-by-step ICWA; child labor trafficking (MN BCA); psychology/neuroscience of addiction; and a closing roundtable.

Evaluation Summary:

The overall value of this course was rated 9.14 (Out of a possible 10)

Participant Comments:

- “I will use it in everyday practice and reach out if I have questions.”
- “I will use some caselaw at an upcoming trial... advise my agency about gearing up for AAFPA.”
- “Helpful and informative for someone newer to CHIPS.”

Session Highlight — Mental Health Credit: Dust Storm — Vicarious Trauma and the Prosecutor (Stacy St. George):

Attendees praised relevance and tone; requested more strategies for managing vicarious trauma.

Participant Comments:

- “Very engaging, fun, and informative.”
- “Perfect way to start the conference.”
- “Awesome — should come back every year; we need to hear this.”

Session Highlight — Legislative Update (Erin Johnson & Max Page):

Participants valued context, history, and process insights; speakers described as well-informed and connected to legislative developments.

Participant Comments:

- “Always relevant and helpful.”
- “Context behind updates provides great value.”
- “Excellent update.”

Session Highlight — Breakout 2: Labor Trafficking and Child Welfare (BCA & DCYF panel):

Clarified differences between labor and sex trafficking; attendees requested more depth on child-welfare distinctions and court interventions.

Participant Comments:

- “Very interesting subject matter.”
- “Wish this had been a little longer, but really helpful.”

Automatic Expungement: How, When, and Where

Date: November 6, 2025 | Format: Webinar Live, OnDemand

Course Summary:

Step-by-step guidance on automatic expungement workflows and timelines.

Evaluation Summary:

72% of survey respondents found this session to be Very Good or Excellent.

Participant Comments:

Very helpful and timely, as many county attorneys are grappling with how to implement the Clean Slate Act. It was helpful to hear how the Judicial Branch is processing these expungements. Since this CLE was focused more on the Judicial Branch logistical processing, it would be nice to have another Clean Slate Act meeting/presentation covering the questions/difficulties county attorneys are facing when trying to implement the legislation (jail records, data requests, etc.).

The speaker was incredibly knowledgeable and prepared to present this topic. Although it's still a murky issue, she provided some valuable insight and information.

MCAA's 48th Annual Meeting — Then and Now: Changes in Public Practice

Date: December 3–5, 2025 | Location: Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport, Bloomington, MN |
Format: In-Person | CLE: 9.5 CLE; 1.75 Ethics; 1.25 Elimination of Bias; 1.0 Mental Health |
Attendance: 255+

Course Summary:

MCAA's largest event of the year with comprehensive programming and specialty credits.

Evaluation Summary:

Survey results indicated strong satisfaction across sessions (source charts).

Participant Comments:

- “Will use skills daily (e.g., cannabis lab results; material-witness issues).”
- “We will draft a county policy for AI; taking a closer look at AI tools.”

Session Highlight — Case Law Update (Hydukovich, Johnson, Meyer, Petras):

Praised as best presentation of the year; excellent slides and delivery; highly valuable.

Participant Comments:

- “Favorite session of the conference.”
- “Excellent. Very valuable.”
- “All were excellent speakers.”

Session Highlight — Then and Now: Changes to Rule 20 / Minn. Stat. ch. 611 — Two Years Later (St. George, Zimmerman, Crowe):

Well-conceived and executed panel providing multiple perspectives on competency handling and jurisdictional practices.

Participant Comments:

- “Top marks.”
- “Three perspectives helped us plan our own approach.”
- “Great content on a timely subject.”

Session Highlight — AI in Practice: Lessons, Tools, and Considerations (Lutes, Maus, Waters):

Open and practical exploration of AI use in county attorney offices and lessons learned.

Participant Comments:

- “Appreciate openness in sharing difficult lessons learned.”
- “Incredibly insightful and helpful.”
- “Timely topic with good structure.”

2026 Vision & Goals — Education Program Planning

Summary:

The MCAA Education Committee identified 7–8 core sessions to have each year: Annual Meeting, Trial Advocacy I, Advanced Trial Advocacy II, New Prosecutor Training, New Civil Prosecutor Training, CHIPS, Juvenile Law Training, Civil Commitment Training. Our goal for 2026 is to have 24 live webinars plus matching OnDemand.

Regional Law Enforcement Training (one-day) will be delivered to local police & sheriff partners; topics include report writing, testimony, child protection investigations, LEO role in child welfare & CSC, use-of-force standards, and potential Brady legislation (Seven sessions planned currently; 250+ LEO/attorneys projected).