

DA DISPATCH

JULY - AUGUST 2025



FULTON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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Editor-in-Chief
NADIA KENDALL

Managing Editors
JEREMY MURRAY
PALLAVI BAILEY

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SEPTEMBER

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NATIONAL BLACK PROSECUTORS ASSOCIATION



Congratulations Greater Atlanta on being recognized as Chapter of the Year for 2025 at the 42nd Annual NBPA Conference in College Park, Maryland!

This prestigious award reflects our commitment to mentorship, community service and professional development.

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

On Thursday, August 14th, FCDAO employees wore casual clothing and rain boots to prepare for the heavy rain. There were even refreshments to combat the gloomy mood the rain caused.





On Friday, August 1, 2025, family, friends, and staff gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of our 2025 Summer Interns. The interns reflected on their time at the courthouse through a slideshow presentation of images that captured their summer experiences. Students in the program shared a few remarks, and the staff from the DA's office presented a multitude of awards. Notably, students were even offered positions upon their graduation from law school!

The keynote address was delivered by Nancy Grace, who inspired the room with her powerfustory—beginning at the Fulton County District Attorney's Office and extending to her successful career as a renowned legal expert. Her words of encouragement left a lasting impression on the interns.

One of the most anticipated highlights of the program was the Mock Trial Competition. Congratulations to all the participants who showcased their talent and dedication, and a special shout-out to Team 3 (Ella Colker, Oucte Wright, Pradeepthi Palvai, Sarah Bellagat, Gavin Warren, Jacob Snyder, Jada Mathis, and Khrystyn Linder) for taking home first place! A big thank you as well to their incredible coaches, Deputy District Attorney Chinekwu Okam, Senior Assistant District Attorney Alicia Barney-Duck, Assistant District Attorney Jeffrey Hawkins, and Assistant District Attorney Rashida Davis, for leading the team to an undefeated season.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and congratulations to the 2025 Internship Directors and Coordinators, Kyra Banks, Amanda Green, and Jazmin Dilligard, for an exceptional summer program that will be remembered for years to come.

2025 AWARDS CEREMONY

FULTON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



1ST PLACE MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION



2ND PLACE MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION



3RD PLACE MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION

MENTAL HEALTH CORNER



The Scroll Before Bed in the Legal World ***Ilona Rolack, M. Sc.***

Ah, the nightly ritual of scrolling through social media before bed. It starts innocently enough, doesn't it? One minute you're checking the latest updates from friends and family, and the next, you're knee-deep in the whirlwind of high-profile attorneys giving their perspectives on a case ignoring all the facts and evidence you know exist. Let's face it: we've all been there! Picture this: you lie in bed, ready to drift off into dreamland, and you think, "Just five more minutes."

Those five minutes quickly turn into a deep dive into the latest antics of defense attorneys turned tiktokers involved in cases that have captured the public's attention. "Did you see that attorney's latest tweet about their client's wardrobe choices?" you think. Suddenly, you're scrolling through a timeline filled with personal details about their lives, their kid's daycare teacher, emotional rants about their other half, their weight-loss journey or their burnt culinary experiment gone wrong. It's information overload—and, honestly, more than you ever wanted to know about their private lives! The psychological effects of this late-night scrolling spree can be a bit of a double-edged sword. While you initially turn to social media to relax and unwind, the overstimulation from screens can increase anxiety and stress. The blue light emitted from our devices messes with our melatonin levels, making it harder to fall asleep. So, essentially, that riveting coverage of the office' latest trial is now your nemesis, robbing you of precious Z's. And let's not forget about the comparison game.

As you scroll through these updates, you might find yourself questioning your own professional choices. "Why isn't my style as sharp as theirs?" or "Why didn't I think of that argument?" It's a spiral of self-doubt that can keep the mind racing long after you've put the phone down. Now, you start thinking, "Man, I need to make more money!" You're now headed down a rabbit hole. One more scroll turns into "just one more" until you've lost track of time. The next morning, you wake up feeling like a zombie. Your productivity? Non-existent. You stumble through your day, fueled by a mix of coffee, monster and regret, wondering why your brain can't seem to function. So, what's the solution? Try setting a social media curfew. Make a pact with yourself to put the phone down at least 30 minutes before bed. Maybe pick up a psychological thriller, meditate, or even stare blankly at the wall—anything but scrolling! Your future self will thank you, and you might just wake up feeling refreshed instead of sleep deprived.

LAW CORNER



Admissibility of Victim Toxicology Results ***Christopher Sperry***

Defendants will often try to attack the character of the victim by attempting to introduce evidence of drug or alcohol use. When a victim's toxicology is positive for narcotics or alcohol or narcotics are found on the person of a victim, prosecutors need to be proactive and file motion in limine to exclude this evidence when it is not relevant to the case. The lack of relevance of a victim's toxicology report in non-affirmative defense cases is self-evident, but what about in cases where the Defendant alleges that he or she acted in self-defense? The Georgia Supreme Court has repeatedly held that in justification cases, the fact that the victim had drugs or alcohol in their system is not relevant unless testimony is established to show how the presence of such drugs affect that specific individual. See *Ivey v. State* 305 Ga. 156 (2019); *Mondragon v. State* 304 Ga. 843 (2019); *Gill v. State* 296 Ga. 351 (2014); *Robinson v. State* 272 Ga. 131 (2000).

In *Ivey*, the Defendant contended that his counsel was deficient for failing to call a forensic toxicologist to testify that the victim's blood alcohol content was .217 at the time of the shooting. *Ivey* contended that such evidence would corroborate his claim that the victim was acting aggressive at the time of the shooting. The Georgia Supreme Court held that *Ivey* could show no harm in the failure to call the toxicologist as *Ivey* had offered no evidence that the victim would act aggressive when under the influence of alcohol. In *Mondragon*, *Mondragon* wished to introduce evidence of the victim's toxicology report to impeach witness testimony that the victim did not appear to be under the influence of alcohol and to corroborate his claim that the victim was aggressive. However, *Mondragon* was unable to proffer how alcohol would affect the behavior or appearance of this specific victim and therefore such evidence was not relevant. In *Gill*, the court excluded evidence of drugs in the victim's system, which *Gill* sought to admit to speculate about how such drugs could have affected the victim.

In *Robinson*, the Georgia Supreme Court found no error in the trial court excluding evidence that the victim possessed cocaine and had cocaine metabolites in his system as the toxicologist would not be able to testify how the drugs would affect the specific victim and therefore the presence of drugs on the victim's person was irrelevant. Prosecutors also need to remember to file such motions more than thirty days in advance in order to maintain their appellate rights on this issue.

CATCH THE WAVE

FANI T. WILLIS

BACK TO SCHOOL BACKPACK GIVEAWAY

On Saturday, July 26, 2025, the Fulton County District Attorney's Office hosted its vibrant Catch the Wave Book Bag Drive at the C.T. Martin Recreation Center, welcoming students from elementary through high school. Thanks to generous community donations, our office collected over 1,700 backpacks—and more than 700 were distributed to over 500 children, along with their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles who picked up supplies for other children unable to attend.

In addition to book bags filled with essential school supplies, families enjoyed free food, clothing, and haircuts. Students and parents also joined in on exciting games for a chance to win cash prizes!

A heartfelt thank you to our incredible sponsors, vendors, and volunteers who helped make this event a huge success and ensured our students start the school year confident and prepared!



For More Information, Please Contact:
 Kendall Watkins - kendall.watkins@fultoncountyga.gov
 Angela Johnson - angela.johnson@fultoncountyga.gov





Pictured, first row (left to right): Audrey Shoemaker, Shelter Director for Fulton County Animal Services; Che Alexander, Clerk of Superior and Magistrate Courts; Deputy District Attorney Jill Hollander; Chief Judge of Probate Court Kenya Johnson; Chief Executive District Attorney Daysha Young; Raysa Figaro, Director of Programs at LiveSafe Resources; and Executive District Attorney Simone Hylton

Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Enhanced Multidisciplinary Teams

On July 8th, representatives from law enforcement and community partners across Fulton County came together to sign a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the county's first Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Enhanced Multidisciplinary Team (EMDT).

This collaboration brings together a wide range of professionals dedicated to improving the assessment, investigation, prosecution, and review of cases involving elder abuse. The creation of the EMDT is the culmination of years of planning and is funded through a federal grant. Its establishment represents a new era of partnership and inter-agency cooperation in Fulton County's ongoing fight against elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.



The Hearts of Gold event, hosted by Backstage Restaurant & Venue and 1244 Ministries on July 12, 2025, celebrated seniors in memory of the late Ivory Joe Douglas, former owner of Backstage and a devoted supporter of the community throughout his life. Seniors were treated to lunch, giveaways, and fellowship while also receiving valuable information from Jill Hollander, Deputy District Attorney with the Fulton County District Attorney's Office. Hollander spoke about the resources her office provides to the community, including programs and services designed to protect older adults. She also introduced the S.A.F.E. method (Stop, Analyze, Friend/Family, Exit) as a practical tool for recognizing and responding to potential threats. In addition, she outlined steps individuals and families can take to help prevent elder abuse, empowering attendees with knowledge to stay safe and supported. The event not only honored Mr. Douglas's legacy of service but also equipped seniors with resources to remain informed, connected, and protected.



Reach

Transformational Youth Mentoring

The REACH team hosted its annual College and Career Readiness Boot Camp June 16-20, 2025 at the At-Promise Center South Location with over 20 participants. The week was full of inspiring and fun activities. A college admissions coach led the core curriculum on the admissions process including securing recommendation letters, mapping college options, essay writing, and a host of other post-secondary planning pieces.

Participants heard from special guests on the trade and entrepreneurial panel, STEAM panel and licensed professionals panel over the course of the week. The participants also heard from community leaders who work through personal losses and traumatic experiences to change their pain to purpose to serve the community.

The participants participated in a Juneteenth Service Day in partnership with the City of Atlanta's Public Works Division's Project Clean Sweep. Youth cleaned up a neighborhood alongside Atlanta residents and supporters. Participants then heard from a local reentry organization who specializes in creating job opportunities for returning citizens. Youth wrote letters of inspiration to returning citizens the organization can share when they begin their job readiness programs.

As a culminating event, several business, school and agency representatives participated in a mini-college an career fair following a financial aid presentation by Atlanta Technical College, a partner of the FCDAO. Youth received participation recognition and shared highlights of the week. Youth also spoke with the District Attorney, created self-care items, and enjoyed a professional actress led improv session.

If you are interested in learning more about the Fulton County District Attorney's Reach Transformational Youth Mentoring, please contact:
 Aakeem Woodard, Director of Juvenile Youth Services
aakeem.woodard@fultoncountyga.gov | 404-353-2457



SCAN HERE
For More Information

Reach
Transformational Youth Mentoring

COLLEGE READINESS BOOTCAMP

Throughout the week, REACH Boot Camp participants heard from an inspiring lineup of professionals across diverse fields. Monday's Trade and Entrepreneur Panel featured speakers from organizations like Savor Training Co., Southeastern Carpenter's Union, and Trenches Global. The Pain to Purpose Roundtable included voices from FCDAO, MACV, and SAT World MisSHON. On Tuesday, STEAM day welcomed experts from Google, Per Scholas, and Vitality Transport EMS. Wednesday highlighted licensed and certified professionals including APD officers, FCS staff, and ADA representatives from the DA's Office. Thursday featured a community cleanup with Hands On ATL and a "Chat and Chew" in the park. The week concluded Friday with a Financial Aid Workshop and Mini College and Career Fair, featuring schools like Atlanta Tech and Atlanta Metropolitan College, along with organizations such as FCSO, Per Scholas, and the Atlanta Barber Institute.



LEVEL UP



2025 Summer REPORT

BUILDING A SAFER, STRONGER TOMORROW

On August 1st, our team came together to celebrate the release of the Summer Report and recognize the remarkable contributions of our summer interns. This year, our office continues to deliver strong results; maintaining a 96% conviction rate and resolving 72% of 2024 cases to date, a reflection of the preparation, diligence, and integrity of our trial teams. But our impact reaches far beyond the courtroom. We've launched a new Juvenile Division, expanded our REACH Program, and are developing a juvenile diversion program focused on growth, accountability, and positive futures for young people. Our 2025 Summer Interns played a vital role in these accomplishments. They contributed to over 650 resolved cases, volunteered at community events, and supported divisions across the office with meaningful, high-quality work. Together, we are building on progress and preparing for an even stronger future.



CONVICTION ALERTS



State vs. Roddrick Teasley

Congratulations to the Major Case Division! In the case of State vs. Roddrick Teasley, the Defendant was found guilty on all counts including Murder, Felony Murder, and Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon. Judge Scott McAfee sentenced the Defendant to Life +5 Years of Confinement.

*Chief Senior District Attorney Kassie Hall
Senior Assistant District Attorney Christian Adkins
Senior Investigator Chara Dennis
Senior Investigator Brodriche Jackson
Victim Witness Advocate Cherrilie Looby-Tonge
Legal Assistant Quentin Wright*



State vs. John Michael Gibson, Linda Smith, and Tyrone Taylor

Congratulations to the HTICE Unit! In the case of State vs. John Michael Gibson, Linda Smith, and Tyrone Taylor, Taylor and Gibson were found guilty on all counts including Rape, Violation of the Georgia RICO Act, and Aggravated Sodomy. Smith was found guilty on all counts including Violation of the Georgia RICO Act and Trafficking a Person for Sexual Servitude. Judge Melynee Leftridge sentenced Gibson and Taylor to Life Imprisonment +70 years and Linda Smith was sentenced to 30 years.

*Chief Deputy District Attorney Adriane Love
Deputy District Attorney Earnelle P. Winfrey
Deputy District Attorney Grant Rood
Deputy Chief Investigator Paula Duprey
Assistant Chief Investigator James Spear
Assistant Chief Raeisha Oliphant
Lieutenant Investigator Michelle Lam
Victim Witness Advocate Christen Clarke
Victim Witness Advocate Jasmyn Drummond
Legal Assistant Leader Edwina Sellan
Deputy Legal Assistant Lora Andrews
Legal Assistant Michael Tanks
Legal Assistant Angel Muhammad*



State vs. Christopher Anderson

Congratulations to the Domestic Violence Trial Team! In the case of State vs. Christopher Anderson, the Defendant was found guilty on all counts including Attempt to Commit Murder, Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon, and Criminal Attempt to Commit Arson. Judge David Emerson sentenced the Defendant to 60 years in Custody followed by 25 Years of Probation.

*Senior Assistant District Attorney Travis Thomas
Assistant District Attorney Celeste Patten
Senior Investigator Kenneth Rucker
Victim Witness Advocate Sandra Jean Louis
Chief Legal Assistant Tywana Settles-Isby
Deputy Legal Assistant Patrice Stewart*



State vs. Kentario Shields

Congratulations to the Trial Division! In the case of State vs. Kentario Shields, the Defendant was found guilty on all counts including Theft by Receiving, Aggravated Assault, Carjacking in the 1st Degree. Judge David Emerson sentenced the Defendant to 45 Years to Serve 30 in Confinement.

*Assistant District Attorney Frank Marquez
Assistant District Attorney Rashida Davis
Assistant Chief Investigator Trina Swanson-Lucas
Investigator Donald Scully
Deputy Victim Witness Advocate Misty Botu
Deputy Legal Assistant Whitney Meyer
Legal Assistant Gabrielle Waterman*

REACH MIXER

On August 21st, FCDAO employees gathered in the multipurpose room to learn about the exciting volunteer opportunities available through our REACH Program for the 2025–2026 school year. REACH Coordinators shared the powerful impact our volunteers have on the students we serve and walked through this year's lesson plan. District Attorney Fani Willis also spoke on the importance of the program, emphasizing how vital consistency is when visiting schools.

This year, the FCDAO is proud to serve over 200 students across 20 Fulton County and Atlanta Public Schools—and we look forward to making a lasting difference in their lives!



FULTON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A W A R E N E S S M O N T H

OCTOBER 1, 2025 – **DV MOVIE AND DISCUSSION**

OCTOBER 11, 2025 – **DV 5K**



OCTOBER 16, 2025 – **NATIONAL WEAR PURPLE DAY**

OCTOBER 23, 2025 – **DV TRAINING**

OCTOBER 30, 2025 – **DV DAY**



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SAVE OUR YOUTH

On Saturday, August 23, 2025, the Fulton County District Attorney's Office hosted the first Save Our Youth Community Summit at The Kingdom of God International Ministry on Welcome All Road, the home of worship for Chief Randolph. South Fulton—including Welcome All Road—has been identified as a priority area under the FCDAO Byrne Grant, along with two additional hot spots: the City of Atlanta and the Fairburn-Mays community.

Residents of South Fulton and Fairburn-Mays expressed the need for more support for their children, where truancy rates remain high. In an effort to break the "truancy-to-prison pipeline," District Attorney Willis convened the summit, which was organized by a team led by Chief Randolph, Angela Johnson, and Kendall Watkins.

The first panel, "Juvenile Crime Trending in Our Community," featured law enforcement representatives from South Fulton, College Park, Union City, Fairburn, Hapeville, Chattahoochee Hills, East Point, the Fulton County Sheriff's Office, and WAVE—an organization of active officers mentoring youth. The discussion focused on the ages of youth being arrested, the wraparound services needed, and DA Willis provided an explanation of the Juvenile Point System.

The second panel, "Keeping Youth in Classrooms and Out of Courtrooms," included representatives from Fulton County Schools who addressed youth mental health, parent partnerships, and educational programs.

Breakout sessions for parents and youth included presentations by community partners such as Clippers and Cops and Mothers Against Gang Violence, along with members of the DA's Office: Chinekwu Okam, Deputy District Attorney of the Major Crimes Division, Gang Units; Earnelle Winfrey, Deputy District Attorney of the Special Victims Division, Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Unit; and Lashawnda Woods-Roberts, Senior Assistant District Attorney, Truancy Court Lead and REACH Coordinator, Juvenile Division.

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News Corner



<https://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/fulton-county/prosecutors-detail-strategy-behind-life-sentence-cah-out-rico-sex-trafficking-case/BLJJG-7GK5VCKHHVIZEKN5ZMADM/>



<https://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/atlanta/man-behind-12-day-reign-terror-atlanta-neighborhood-sentenced-life-prison/7OLLZ-VYEZ5GRFG2VTH7KEP4IJY/>



<https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/atlanta-man-sentenced-11-years-high-speed-police-chase-conviction>



<https://www.11alive.com/article/news/education/fani-willis-backpack-giveaway-atlanta-back-to-school-supplies/85-1d6c48e8-5996-450d-8d5c-cffaeca514bb>



<https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/family-friend-sentenced-life-repeated-sexual-abuse-11-year-old-boy>



<https://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/north-fulton-county/geo-fencing-technology-leads-arrest-71-year-old-grandmothers-cold-case-murder/QA7ZBFHESVB2XFEFKJJOG4RHHMY/>



<https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/rodney-mcweay-trial-life-sentence-starving-daughter-death>



<https://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/atlanta/pattern-domestic-violence-led-up-woman-shooting-wife-head-inside-their-home/B2KIKISQ-JZACVBMNSQ5ZIBM6UQ/>



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<https://www.11alive.com/article/news/crime/man-sentenced-convicted-17-year-old-killed-shooting-atlanta/85-829f51b5-6a0a-4512-8be1-0ea810db7708>



<https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/crime/nicole-alston-atlanta-cold-case-murder-charges-b2807007.html>