

WITNESS IDENTIFICATION BEST PRACTICES SEMINAR
AGENDA TOPIC DETAILS

Police Chief Lou Dekmar – President and Chairperson of CALEA

Chief Dekmar will provide opening remarks to seminar participants. He will discuss the value of embracing scientifically-supported best practices in police work, specifically in the eyewitness identification realm, which have been shown to enhance both justice and public safety outcomes. He will touch on data relating to misidentification, including both the number of wrongful convictions in which misidentification played a role, and will detail groundbreaking data that speaks to the scope of criminal activity committed by the real perpetrators of crime while the innocent languished behind bars. Finally, he will speak to the need for uniformity of protocols across Georgia in professionalizing police practice and efforts underway across the nation in regard to eyewitness identification practice.

Dr. Jennifer Dysart – Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Dr. Dysart will discuss the scientific research that explains both human memory and the fallibility of eyewitness identification. She will discuss factors that impact the accuracy and reliability of eyewitness identification, many of which can be controlled by the criminal justice system. Additionally, Dr. Dysart will discuss how scientific research has isolated those police identification procedures can influence the mistaken identification of innocent people and how the implementation of safeguards may reduce these errors.

Police Chief Bill Brooks – Chief of Norwood, Massachusetts Police Department and Certified Trainer (Eyewitness Identification), State of Massachusetts

Chief Brooks will discuss his personal experience, as a member of law enforcement, with the best practices presently being sought in Georgia. He will describe the specific reforms (e.g. blind administration; sequential presentation; proper filler selection; proper instructions to the eyewitness; and obtaining a statement of confidence from the eyewitness) and also describe their implementation in two small-sized police agencies in Massachusetts. Chief Brooks will discuss the practical aspects of a best practices policy, the costs and the positive impact the policy has had on how his law enforcement officers investigate a case and their experiences in the courtroom since implementing best practices. He will also discuss some of the concerns raised by law enforcement when changes

were being sought to their traditional practices and how law enforcement ultimately responded to those changes.

Panel Participants

Judge Robbie Mumford – as a former defense lawyer, prosecutor and legislator in the Georgia House of Representatives, Judge Mumford will discuss how a best practices eyewitness identification procedure will be used in court proceedings and jury trials. He will also discuss the history of previous proposed witness identification legislation in Georgia and what aspects of the legislation were supported by legislators and why.

Police Chief Warren Summers - is a former lead investigator for a district attorney, former magistrate judge and former practicing lawyer. Chief Summers will discuss how a best practices eyewitness identification procedure will impact how a case is investigated, presented to the prosecutor's office and any residual impact on a law enforcement office. Chief Summers will discuss conversations about witness identification he has had with other law enforcement from around the state of Georgia.

District Attorney Parks White – DA White will discuss what effect a best practices eyewitness identification policy would have on witness identification in both the prosecution of crimes and the presentation of such evidence in the courtroom, including potential evidentiary issues at trial.

Aimee Maxwell – is the Executive Director of the Georgia Innocence Project whose mission is to prevent wrongful convictions.