



2026 Appellate Writing Workshop Agenda

September 30 - October 2, 2026 | [Register here](#)

MAACS Roster Attorneys and SADO Assistant Defenders are invited to attend this in-person, 3-day writing workshop designed for criminal appellate attorneys. This is a bring-your-own-case workshop, where attendees will work on a case from their own caseload and will learn practical tools and develop critical skills to improve their writing. (A mock case is available to those who do not have an active case to work on.) Attendees will learn how to develop a compelling statement of facts, identify persuasive legal issues, and improve their overall writing skills. This workshop offers a mix of plenary, panel, and small group brainstorming and writing sessions. **Space is limited; register early!**

Additional important information:

- ▶ **Who can attend?** The workshop is designed for MAACS and SADO appellate attorneys who have first priority; other interested appointed attorneys may register, space permitting.
- ▶ **Where is the workshop?** The workshop will be held in-person, at the SADO Offices in Detroit (3031 W. Grand Blvd., Suite 450).
- ▶ **Can I come to the sessions I think will be best for me?** Registrants must attend all sessions for all three days of the workshop. Please be sure to clear your schedule for the program.
- ▶ **How much does it cost?** The workshop is free, and lunch will be provided.
- ▶ **Will there be homework?** There may be short homework assignments at the end of Days 1 and 2. Each should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.
- ▶ **Can I receive CLE credit?** CLE credit is available, up to 21 hours.
- ▶ **Have more questions?** Call or email CDRC Manager Kathy Swedlow (517.927.8583 or kswedlow@sado.org).

Presented in partnership by the **Criminal Defense Resource Center** of the **State Appellate Defender Office** and the **Michigan Appellate Assigned Counsel System**

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2025 Appellate Writing Workshop Agenda

Day 1: September 30, 2026

9:00 – 9:30 AM	Check-in
9:30 – 10:00 AM	Welcome; Introductions; Overview of small groups and workshop agenda
10:00 – 11:00 AM	<i>Panel: Voices and Perspectives of Appellate Clients</i>
11:00 – 11:15 AM	Break
11:15 AM – 12:15 PM	<i>Plenary: Using Facts to Tell Your Client's Story and to Develop a Case Theory</i> (Kathy Swedlow)
12:15 – 1:15 PM	Lunch (Lunch provided)
1:15 – 3:00 PM	Small groups: Brainstorming the facts
3:00 – 3:15 PM	Break
3:15 – 4:15 PM	<i>Plenary: Issue Spotting Strategies and Techniques</i> (Travis Stearns)
4:15 – 4:30 PM	Large group: Wrap-up and reflection
4:30 PM	Optional social hour (location TBA)
Homework	Theory Statement and Statement of Facts (first two paragraphs)

Day 2: October 1, 2026

9:30 – 10:30 AM	<i>Plenary: From Good to Better to Best</i> (Marilena David)
10:30 – 10:45 AM	Break
10:45 – 11:45 AM	Small groups: Paring down I
11:45 AM – 12:45 PM	Lunch (Lunch provided)
12:45 – 2:45 PM	Small groups: Feedback on theories and facts
2:45 – 3:00 PM	Break
3:00 – 4:00 PM	<i>Plenary: Legal Analysis</i> (Kathy Swedlow)
4:00 – 4:30 PM	Large group: Wrap-up and reflection
Homework	Issue headings, argument summary, or introduction to argument

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Day 3: October 2, 2026

9:30 – 10:30 AM	<i>Plenary: Looks Matter</i> (Kathy Swedlow)
10:30 – 10:45 AM	Break
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Small groups: Feedback on issues/arguments
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch (Lunch provided)
1:30 – 3:00 PM	Small groups: Paring down II; small group wrap-up
3:00 – 3:15 PM	Break
3:15 PM – 4:30 PM	Large group: Paring down winner; close-out; reflections; Q&A