



Leading for Justice: Criminal Law Reform Conference

Saint John XXIII Retreat and Conference Center
100 Hodges Road
Charleston, WV

Monday, January 13th

4:00 pm	Summit registration & Room check-in	Main Lobby
5:00 pm	Welcome from Kenny Matthews Keynote by Lesley Nash	Dining Room
6:00 pm	Dinner	Dining Room
7:00-8:30 pm	The Story of Our Why	Dining Room & Room A, B, C
8:30 pm	GROUP PHOTO	Main Lobby

Tuesday, January 14th

**Please note that each skill-building breakout is offered twice throughout the day.*

7:30– 8:30 am	Trauma-Informed Yoga with Jennie Hill	Room A
8:00 – 9:00 am	Breakfast	Dining Room
9:00–10:00 am	Keynote by Doug Ammar	Dining Room
10:15–11:15 am	Skill-building Breakouts	Conference Rooms

Advocacy 101

Room A

How can we be as effective as possible getting good policy passed and also stopping bad policy? It doesn't have to be guess-work! This session will give an overview of the state legislature and ways to follow (and influence!) the legislative process.

Presenter: Seth Distefano, WV Center on Budget and Policy, Policy Outreach Director

Advocacy for Justice Involved Individuals with Disabilities

Room B

This presentation and discussion will offer information regarding Disability Rights of WV's role and advocacy related to individuals in carceral settings, with a focus on prevention and reentry.

Presenters with Disability Rights of WV

Kevin White, Senior Advocate

Debra Grant, Advocate

Heather Carpenter, MSW Intern, contributor

Helping our People Get Free:

How to Get Organized for Parole Eligibility Hearings

Room C

Each year, more than 2,500 people will have a parole release hearing. These virtual, closed hearings take place with minimal due process and no attorney to assist the person seeking release. This workshop is for anyone who would like to learn more about how to help those people gain their freedom.

Presenter: Sara Whitaker, WV Center on Budget and Policy, Criminal Legal Analyst

Introduction to Restorative Justice Talking Circle

Room D

Restorative Justice Circles can be used in all kinds of settings: schools, justice system, conflict situations, community building, celebrations, and many others. Circles don't just happen. Preparation is needed before, during and after the circle. This workshop will discuss steps in preparing for the circle, walking through a circle, as well as giving participants the experience of participating in the circle.

Presenters: Sister Rose Ann Hefner, Corey Zinn, and Stacy Kay

11:15– 11:30 am Break and Morning Snacks

Main Lobby

11:30- 12:30 pm Skill-building Breakouts

Conference Rooms

Fighting Your Local Police Department:

An Investigative Perspective

Room A

Policing as a function of state and local governments is something we fund—and as a culture, celebrate. However, it's not something we have to accept. Join this session to learn about the rights and powers that average citizens have to influence policing at the local level. We will highlight Charleston as a case study and provide instruction for accessing public court information as a way of both supporting people in the criminal legal system and investigating the punishment bureaucracy.

Presenter: Rachel Rubin, Private Investigator

How Challenging Stigma Can Impact Policy

Room B

This session equips participants with tools to reduce stigma surrounding substance use, poverty, mental health conditions, and other marginalized identities. Participants will explore how stigma impacts access to care, public perceptions, and policy in all sectors of society. Through interactive conversations, attendees will gain practical strategies, such as person-first language and empathy-driven care, to foster compassionate, non-judgmental interactions, and contribute to shifting societal attitudes and policy frameworks.

Presenter: Joanna Vance, American Friends Service Committee, Program Coordinator

The Power of Persuasion

Room C

Learn how to captivate your audience and drive change with persuasive speaking techniques. This session will cover strategies for building credibility, crafting compelling arguments, and connecting with a diversity of audiences. Discover how to use storytelling and emotional appeal to deliver powerful presentations that inspire action.

Presenter: Lizzie Howard, Mountain State Justice

Reimagining Safety:

Police Brutality and Police Budgets in WV

Room D

This workshop imagines a different way of government spending—one that prioritizes harm reduction and community health and safety in restorative justice practices. The first portion is a presentation on police brutality and police spending in West Virginia, as West Virginians overall face some of the highest rates of extrajudicial murders committed by police officers in the country. I will also present data on police spending within West Virginia compared to other services. The second portion of the workshop will be a group brainstorming session that will address questions like: do we need to spend this much money on policing while other social institutions are severely underfunded? Is there room within restorative justice models for redistributing government spending toward the social institutions that cultivate safety and harm reduction?

Presenter: Angie Luvara, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Frostburg University

12:30–1:30 pm

Lunch

Dining Room

1:30 – 2:30 pm

Skill-building breakouts

Conference Rooms

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Presenter: Keigan Abel-Brown, Marshall University Center of Excellence for Recovery

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2:30–2:45 pm

BREAK

2:45 –3:45 pm

Skill-building breakouts

Conference Rooms

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Presenter: Angie Luvara, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Frostburg University

3:45 – 4:00 pm	Break and Afternoon Snacks	Main Lobby
4:15 – 5:15 pm	Legislative Policy Round-Up	Dining Room
5:15 – 6:15 pm	Dinner	Dining Room
6:30 – 7:30 pm	Closing Session + Next Steps	Dining Room

Wednesday, January 15th

8:00 – 9:00 am	Breakfast for those who stayed the night before	Dining Room C
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THANK YOU TO SPONSORS WHO MAKE THIS CONFERENCE POSSIBLE

