



AMERICAN
INNS of COURT®

**National Advocacy
Training Program**

NATP 2025 Participant Biographies



Farhan Ali

Galfand Berger, LLP

Farhan Ali is a Partner at Galfand Berger, LLP where he champions those harmed in automobile collisions, premises negligence, and construction site injuries. Since joining the firm in 2016, he has secured substantial recoveries through tenacious and empathetic advocacy—confidently taking on deep-pocketed insurance carriers and corporations. Farhan has successfully guided numerous cases to verdict in trials and arbitrations. Farhan fought to achieve a landmark win at the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. In *Bourgeois v. Snow Time, Inc.*, the Court ruled unanimously (7-0), ensuring justice for our catastrophically injured client and expanding the rights of injured individuals throughout Pennsylvania. Farhan also serves as the Vice President of the Board of Directors for HIAS Pennsylvania, a nonprofit that provides legal aid to refugees, immigrants, and asylum seekers of all backgrounds. He is also a board member for the Temple University Law Alumni Association, supporting alumni through career and community initiatives. He volunteers as an Arbitrator for the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. A resident of Philadelphia since 2013, Farhan loves reading, traveling, listening to historical podcasts, and spending quality time with his wife and son. Farhan is fluent in Hindi and Malayalam. He is admitted to practice in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- 9 years as a personal injury (plaintiff) attorney.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- 3 trials, 10 arbitrations, numerous motions and hearings.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Being more comfortable with the procedural aspect of admitting evidence in at trial.



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Darby Baglia

Cozen O'Connor

Darby brings strong research, drafting, and organizational skills to her role as an associate in Cozen O'Connor's litigation department. Before joining the firm as an associate, Darby participated in Cozen O'Connor's summer associate program in 2022. She also served as a judicial extern for the Camden County, New Jersey judiciary. Darby earned her J.D., magna cum laude and Order of the Coif, from Villanova's Charles Widger School of Law, where she was a staff writer and student works editor for the Villanova Law Review. She earned her B.S., summa cum laude, from Saint Joseph's University.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- 2 years practicing business litigation.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- None.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Everything!



Daniel Brobst

(Preferred name *Dan Brobst*)
Cozen O'Connor

Dan's practice involves a wide range of business litigation and complex commercial litigation matters in federal and state court, including breach of contract disputes, trade secret misappropriation, partnership disputes, health care litigation, fraud, insurance, product liability, and other complex torts and business disputes. Prior to joining Cozen, Dan served as a law clerk in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey where he worked for the Honorable Michael A. Shipp and the Honorable Brian R. Martinotti. Dan received his J.D. from Villanova University School of Law, where he was a Dean's Merit Scholar and served as a teaching assistant for civil procedure courses. While in law school he was a judicial intern for the Honorable Ashely M. Chan, United States Bankruptcy Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. He received a Bachelor's of Science in economics and a Bachelor's of Science in finance, magna cum laude, from West Chester University of Pennsylvania. Dan currently serves as chair of the Associates' Committee.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- Commercial litigation/business litigation. Graduated in May 2019. Clerked in DNJ until October 2020. Been at Cozen O'Connor since then.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- None in an actual courtroom. Multiple oral arguments over zoom.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Just looking to get more experience.



Joshua T. Calo

(Preferred name *Josh Calo*)
Buchanan

Joshua Calo is a Litigation Associate at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney. Based in the Philadelphia area, Josh has a national practice representing commercial clients and healthcare providers in civil litigation, with a particular focus on corporate liability in the healthcare industry. He frequently represents national health systems and parent entities in cases involving corporate liability theories and is experienced litigating these issues in jurisdictions throughout the country. Josh regularly handles complex motion practice and appeals involving diverse legal and procedural issues in state and federal court.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- 9 years: litigation, primarily in the healthcare industry.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

I have been second chair in approximately 6 medical malpractice trials earlier in my career (2020 and prior). Currently, I am regularly in court for oral arguments.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Transitioning skills used in depositions and pre-trial case development into more trial and jury focused advocacy.



Raphael Castro

(Preferred name *Ralph Castro*)

Castro Injury Law

Raphael Castro, the son of immigrant parents, has devoted his entire career representing victims and the seriously injured. He is an accomplished trial attorney who represents those who are harmed and their loved ones in personal injury and workers compensation cases. Raphael brings skills as a former prosecutor, investigating and litigating hundreds of trials, to bring justice for his clients. He has represented countless of injured workers, fighting against corporations and insurance companies to recover significant victories. The Legal Intelligencer has recognized Raphael as a “Lawyer on the Fast Track,” and he was selected by his peers for inclusion into the “Rising Stars” list by Pennsylvania Super Lawyers. He was also recognized by the Pennsylvania Bar Leadership Institute and New Leaders Council in fellowship positions. Beyond the courtroom, Raphael believes in giving back to the community. He serves multiple boards including the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, the 26th Police District Advisory Council, SEAMAAC, Philadelphia Bar Association Young Lawyer Division, Millennial Advisory Committee for the City of Philadelphia, and Minority Committee of the Pennsylvania Bar Association. After graduating from Temple University, Raphael earned a JD from Widener University Delaware School of Law. He is admitted to practice law in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- 10+ Years. Personal Injury and Workers Compensation.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- Started career at Philly DA’s Office in courtroom 4 days week, then switched to civil which is more depositions, arbitrations, mediations.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Consistent theme, jury selection, expert direct/cross.



Therese Gildea

(Preferred name *Tess Gildea*)

BlankRome

Therese Gildea concentrates her practice on a wide range of litigation matters at Blank Rome. She also focuses her work on pro-bono matters, specifically assisting recent immigrants with asylum applications. Prior to joining Blank Rome, Tess served as an extern for The Honorable Judge Bumb at the U.S. Federal District Court of New Jersey in Camden and as a senior outreach associate at an American political action committee and fundraising platform. In her free time, Tess enjoys exploring the food scene around Philadelphia and has competing in triathlon races.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- I have been practicing for two years and work in primarily commercial litigation matters, as well as some major medical malpractice and white collar disputes.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

I have had a few opportunities at courtroom advocacy, but I am eager to expand this part of my practice.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Oral advocacy.



Patrick C. Holvey, Esq.

U.S. Department of Justice

Patrick C. Holvey is an Assistant United States Attorney with the District of Columbia's U.S. Attorney's Office, currently assigned to criminal prosecutions in the D.C. Superior Courts. A patent attorney with extensive experience in federal courts and complex civil litigation, Mr. Holvey is currently a Trustee of the American Inns of Court Foundation and a 2018 Pegasus Scholar. A longtime member of the Giles S. Rich Intellectual Property Inn of Court in Washington, D.C., he also serves the national organization as a member of the U.S. Pegasus Scholarship Selection Committee and the British Pegasus Placement Committee.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- 10 years: Patent law litigation (8 years); Prosecution/criminal (2 years)

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

Patent law litigation -1 to 3 days per month on average; criminal law - 2-3 days per week.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Recovering from unexpected areas of inquiry, presenting confidently while a little unsure, ensuring cross examinations are closed question (most of the time) - I'm too curious about what they want to say.



Leah Kramer

(Name pronounced "Lee-ah")

Post & Schell, P.C.

I graduated from Marquette University Law School in 2023. After graduating, I was a Judicial Law Clerk to the Honorable Robert O. Baldi of the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas. I was then an Associate at Margolis Edelstein in their Casualty Department. I am now an Associate at Post & Schell in the Professional Liability Department, with a focus in medical malpractice matters. I am barred in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Wisconsin.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- Over five years in medical malpractice defense.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- I have been practicing for two years. My practice area is Professional Liability, specifically, Medical Malpractice Litigation. I have spent very little time advocating in a courtroom.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- building my confidence



John J. Larkins

(Preferred name *J.J. Larkins*)

Duane Morris LLP

J.J. Larkins practices in the area of commercial litigation with a focus on medical malpractice and products liability defense. Mr. Larkins is a 2023 magna cum laude graduate of Temple University Beasley School of Law, where he was editor-in-chief of the Temple International and Comparative Law Journal and a Law & Public Policy Scholar. He regularly serves as a volunteer mediator with the Philadelphia Eviction Diversion Program, and in his spare time, he enjoys baking and gardening.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- I have been practicing for two years (graduated law school in 2023), and I work in commercial litigation with a focus on medical malpractice and products liability defense.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- None — I have not had the chance to practice in a courtroom yet.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Getting comfortable advocating in front of a judge and thinking on my feet



Julie Peeler

Post & Schell, P.C.

I have been an Associate with Post & Schell in the Professional Liability Department for approximately four years. I defend healthcare providers in matters involving alleged medical malpractice with high financial exposure. My clients include hospitals, physicians, physician assistants, and nurses, among others.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- Over five years in medical malpractice defense.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- I periodically go to court. I previously went to court frequently, at least once a week for about 8 months, for family law cases.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Closing statements



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Lisa J. Peters

O'Brien & Ryan LLP

I graduated from Widener University School of Law in 2013. Following law school, I briefly practiced in plaintiff's personal injury before accepting a clerkship in Family Court in Delaware. Since 2016 I have worked for O'Brien & Ryan, LLP concentrating in medical malpractice defense. I was named Pennsylvania Rising Star 2019-2023. I am currently a partner at O'Brien & Ryan.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- 12 years, I have been practicing medical malpractice defense for almost 10 years.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- I have acted as a second chair in approximately 5-7 trials and argued motions regularly throughout my career.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Adapting on my feet to criticism.



Ian A. Ramsey-North

Burns White

Ian A. Ramsey North is an Associate in Burns White's Philadelphia office. He focuses his practice on the defense of healthcare providers, healthcare systems, and other medical entities in complex medical malpractice litigation. Before joining the firm, he served as an Assistant District Attorney in the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, where he prosecuted felony cases in the Family Violence and Sexual Assault Unit. He also worked as a Legal Intern for the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, where he conducted research and drafted legal memoranda on matters involving consumer protection, administrative law, civil procedure, and criminal law at both the state and federal levels. Mr. Ramsey North earned his Juris Doctor, cum laude, from Boston College Law School, where he received the St. Thomas More Award and a Merit Scholarship. He was a Fellow at both the Rappaport Center for Law and Public Policy and the Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy. He also participated in the Fellowship at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics and served as Executive Editor of the UCC Reporter-Digest. Prior to law school, he earned a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School, where he was awarded the Dean's Merit Scholarship. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Haverford College, where he received the Stephen H. Miller Memorial Award for Political Engagement and the Center for Peace and Global Citizenship Summer Research Scholarship.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- Practicing Law for three years. First three years in criminal law at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. Last two months at Burns White, practicing healthcare litigation defense.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- While in DA's office was in court daily. Conducted dozens of waiver trials and 10 jury trials. Was in the Family Violence and Sexual Assault Unit at time of departure.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- Need to improve.



Alexandria Rosa

Buchanan

Alex is an associate in Buchanan's healthcare litigation group, where she focuses her practice on defending healthcare providers in professional liability matters. Prior to joining Buchanan, Alex was an associate at a regional defense firm in Philadelphia where she second chaired two medical malpractice jury trials, resulting in defense verdicts. She gained valuable experience representing a wide variety of clients, including commercial transportation companies, motor carriers, healthcare professionals, and bars and restaurants, throughout all stages of civil litigation. During law school, Alex served as a student attorney for the Farmworker Legal Aid Clinic, a judicial extern to the Honorable Steven C. Tolliver in the Montgomery County Court of Commons Pleas, and a research assistant, exploring states' Death with Dignity laws and their intersection with prisoner rights. She also interned with West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc., a leading global manufacturer of containment and delivery systems for injectable drugs and healthcare products, in its legal department.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- 5 years practicing; healthcare professional liability.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- I've second chaired two trials and done a cross exam once. I also done a handful of oral arguments (5-10).

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- To improve my oral advocacy.



Theresa Topping

BlankRome

Theresa concentrates her practice on representing employers in a wide range of employment litigation matters. Theresa handles litigation cases in both single-plaintiff and collective actions in state and federal courts. She defends employers against a variety of claims involving employment discrimination and retaliation, hostile work environment, failure to pay overtime wages, tortious interference of contract rights, violations of restrictive covenants, and misappropriation of trade secrets. Prior to working in labor and employment, Theresa served as an assistant district attorney at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. During law school, Theresa was a member of Drexel Law's nationally recognized Trial Team where she earned the Philadelphia Trial Lawyers James J. Manderino Award for Trial Advocacy. Theresa continues to be involved with her alma mater and currently serves as a coach for Drexel Law's Trial Team. Outside of being a lawyer, Theresa enjoys spending time at the beach, cheering on the Phillies, Pilates classes, and trying new restaurants throughout Philadelphia.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- I am going into my 4th year practicing and I practice labor and employment.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- For the first year out of law school I worked as an Assistant District Attorney where I spent every day in the court room conducting misdemeanor trials and felony preliminary hearings.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- To talk slower than I think I should, be comfortable with moments of silence and staying present throughout the trial!



Jonathan Kovach Trout

(Preferred name *Jon Trout*)

Defender Association of Philadelphia

I'm a native Philadelphian and graduated from St. Joseph's Prep high school. I then moved to New Orleans where I received a degree in Political Science from Loyola University before getting my JD from Loyola University as well. I've been practicing law for four years at the Defender Association of Philadelphia and am currently assigned to the Juvenile Special Defense Unit where I represent children and teens who have been charged as adults or are otherwise facing serious felony charges. In my spare time I enjoy being a fun uncle to my two nephews and two nieces, traveling with my girlfriend Cate, and doing anything physical or outdoors.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- I have been practicing law for about four years, and I have spent all four practicing criminal law as a public defender here in Philadelphia.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- I am in the courtroom almost every day. I have done more bench trials than I can count, and I have also done a few jury trials.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- The main area of my practice that I'm looking to improve is my ability to stand and delivery good oral argument and have it seem natural. I'm not a fan of public speaking but it is an essential skill for me to have in my work, so I am always looking to improve.



Tasha L. Vazquez

Santiago

Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar
Association, Inc.

2025 Tim Coleman Scholar

Tasha is an experienced Dependency attorney with the Guardian Ad Litem Program of the Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association, Inc. Tasha handles cases related to dependency and advocating for the child's best interest. Dependency law is a civil case brought before the Court based on allegations of abuse, abandonment, or neglect of a child. The proceeding is based on allegations communicated to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) through an abuse report called into the Florida Abuse Hotline. As an attorney, she is passionate about zealously advocating for the best interests and needs of children when in the Courtroom. Tasha received her Bachelor of Arts at the University of Rochester in Upstate New York, and earned her Juris Doctorate from Barry University's Dwayne O. Andreas School of Law. She is also an active Florida Bar member of the George C. Young Central Florida Inn of Court. Tasha was born in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and spent her early childhood years in Pennsylvania before making Central Florida her permanent home. She is bilingual and speaks both English and Spanish.

How many years have you been practicing and the type of law you practice?

- I have been licensed for 6 years. I work in Dependency Law.

How much time have you spent advocating in a courtroom?

- I would say I have been more actively in the courtroom the past 4 years. And with my current position, I am in the courtroom 2-3 times a week.

What do you think will be your main area for improvement?

- I would like to work on my confidence when presenting in court, particularly in my opening and closing statements.