NIWAP

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WASHINGTON COLLEGE of LAW

Law Enforcement and Prosecution Virtual Roundtable

Navigating Complexities of Self-Defense and Predominant Aggressor Determinations: Evidence & Trauma Informed Investigations in Domestic Violence Cases

August 12th, 2026

Faculty

- **Investigator, Michael LaRiviere,** Salem Police Department
- **Donald Goodman,** Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney at Prince William County

NIWAP is looking for a Jurisdiction to Host a FREE Training

Law Enforcement & Prosecution Best Practices: Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking, U & T Visas, and the use of Interpreters and Translation

- **Benefits for Your Jurisdiction:**
  - Improve victim and officer safety
  - Increase crime reporting and community trust
  - Strengthen investigations and prosecutions
  - Strengthen interpretation and translation practices
  - Learn U Visa and T Visa certification best practices

- **Interested in Hosting?** Contact Rafaela Rodrigues rrodrigues@american.edu to discuss training details.

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The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

Who has joined us for today's Roundtable, and from what city?

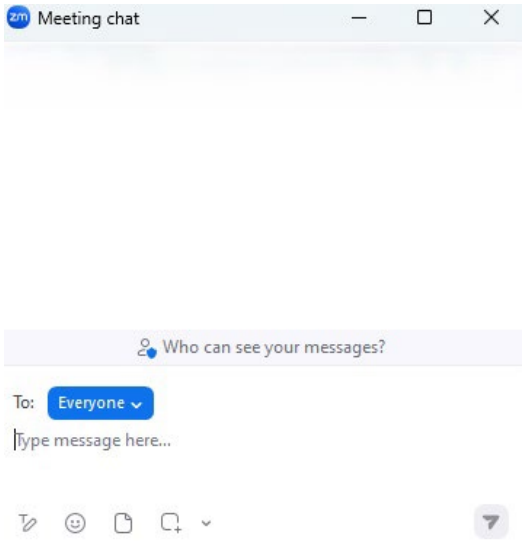
A. Prosecutor

B. Law Enforcement

C. Victim Witness Staff - Law enforcement

D. Victim Witness Staff - Prosecutor

E. Other – type in the chat



The following slides are intended to be a guide to lead our discussion on this topic and to provide substantive material for your future reference.



"Predominant Aggressor": What Does That Mean?

- Who is dominant?
- Who is creating fear?
- Who needs protection?

Taking Time to Get It Right:

Legal Importance of Accurate Predominant Aggressor Determinations

The Prosecutors Role in Predominant Aggressor Determinations

Evaluating the Evidence: Determining the Predominant Aggressor

- What are sources of evidence and information?

Self Defense VS. Mutual Combat: What is the difference?

Scenarios:

What do you do when both parties claim self-defense? What happens when the aggressor also identifies as a victim?

Technical Assistance

NIWAP

- Call: 202.274.4457
- Email: info@niwap.org
- Law Enforcement and Prosecutor Roundtables Materials Repository: https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/law-enforcement-and-prosecutor-roundtables-materials-repository/

Contact NIWAP for training for your department or agency

Thank you!