



Minimizing the Unknown: How to Try a Prisoner Civil Rights Case (or Any Civil Case!) in Federal Court

Date and Time: October 23, 2025 | 8:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (Registration at 8:30)

Location: Joseph F. Weis Jr. Federal Courthouse, 700 Grant St., Room No. TBD

Presenters:

Magistrate Judge Patricia L. Dodge, U.S. District Court, Western District of Pennsylvania
Magistrate Judge Kezia O. L. Taylor, U.S. District Court, Western District of Pennsylvania
Chase Defelice, Esq., Deputy Chief Counsel for Inmate Litigation, Pa. Dept. of Corrections
Andrew J. Horowitz, Esq., Partner, Obermayer Rebmann Maxwell & Hippel LLP

Who Should Attend: Legal professionals of all experience levels who litigate civil cases in federal court will benefit from attending this program. While certain content will be directed toward attorneys interested in serving as *pro bono* trial counsel in *pro se* prisoner civil rights cases pending in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, this program offers information and trial skills training that will be valuable to any attorney litigating civil cases before this Court, regardless of practice area.

Program Description: Every year, thousands of incarcerated individuals, most without the assistance of an attorney, file civil rights claims in federal district courts asserting that their Constitutional rights have been violated. These cases are referred to as Prisoner Civil Rights ("PCR") cases. When these cases are ready for trial, a volunteer attorney may be sought to represent the plaintiff prisoner. Once appointed, *pro bono* counsel will try the case in federal court. This program will provide attorneys with both substantive knowledge about PCR cases and practical advice about what to expect when trying a PCR case in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania from the perspectives of the presiding judge, the *pro bono* attorney, and the Department of Corrections. Program topics include Managing *pro se* Prisoners as Clients, Pretrial Orders and Conferences, Jury Selection, Courtroom Rules, Protocols, and Logistics, and Trial Skills, such as examining witnesses, introducing exhibits, and making objections. Many of these topics are not unique to PCR cases and this program will enhance any attorney's trial proficiencies.

WBA CLE Registration & Cost: Register and pay by **October 15, 2025**. The program qualifies for a total of 3 Credits of Pennsylvania CLE (which includes 1 ethics credit for those who attend the entire program), provided by the Women's Bar Association of Western Pennsylvania (a registered provider that reports all CLE credits). CLE cost is \$50.00. Credits are provided at the reduced cost of \$25.00 for Law Clerks, 2025 WBA Members, and Attorneys who commit to provide their services *pro bono* for a *pro se* prisoner civil rights case in the Western District of Pennsylvania within one year of the CLE date. Attendance without CLE is at no cost, but you must register. To register and pay go to: <https://wbawpa.com/event-registration/> or send your check for the appropriate fee written to the WBA to WBA, P.O. Box 23620, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 (note your name and PA Bar Id. No. on the memo). Send an email to info@wbawpa.com if you have any questions. The Court cannot accept payment for CLE credits and plays no role in offering, providing, or reporting CLE credits to the Pennsylvania Bar.