



Awards & Criteria

Lifetime Achievement Award

To honor an attorney whose career reflects a lifelong dedication to the defense of the accused, outstanding service to the criminal defense bar, and significant contributions to justice in Maryland.

Criteria:

1. Minimum of 30 years of active legal practice in criminal defense.
2. Demonstrated exceptional advocacy in significant cases that have advanced the law or protected constitutional rights of the accused.
3. Service to MCDAA and the broader legal community through mentorship, scholarship, or leadership roles.
4. Recognized as a role model of professionalism, ethics, and commitment to justice.

Outstanding Member of the Year Award

To recognize an MCDAA member whose outstanding contributions strengthen the association and its mission.

Criteria:

1. Active MCDAA member in good standing.
2. Significant contributions to MCDAA programs, initiatives, or membership engagement.
3. Consistent demonstration of dedication, reliability, and leadership in advancing the association's mission.
4. May include organizing CLE programs, mentoring younger members, or spearheading important initiatives.

Legislative Impact Award

To recognize an individual whose advocacy in the Maryland legislature has significantly advanced the rights of defendants, fairness in sentencing, or access to justice.

Criteria:

1. Demonstrated leadership in promoting legislation that protects due process and rights of the accused.
2. Measurable impact on legislative reform, including criminal law, sentencing, or justice policy.
3. Collaboration with MCDAA or allied organizations in advancing legislative priorities.
4. Open to attorneys, legislators, or advocates who have made a direct impact.

Indigent Defense Award

To honor a public defender or private attorney regularly representing indigent clients who has demonstrated selfless commitment to indigent defense, excellence in advocacy, and dedication to justice.

Criteria:

1. Current or recent public defender or private attorney who is regularly involved in representing indigent clients.
2. Record of exceptional casework, client advocacy, or litigation success.
3. Commitment to the mission of indigent defense and the broader defense community.
4. Embodiment of the values of equity, courage, and tireless defense of the indigent accused.

Young Lawyer of the Year Award

To recognize a rising star in criminal defense whose early career reflects excellence, promise, and dedication to the criminal defense bar.

Criteria:

1. Practicing criminal defense attorney with 5 years or fewer of criminal defense experience.
2. Demonstrated skill, creativity, and dedication in criminal defense practice.
3. Participation in MCDAA programs, committees, or initiatives.
4. Viewed by peers and mentors as a leader of the next generation of defense attorneys.

Nominations Info

Nominations should be provided in writing with a statement of support and may include additional letters, case summaries, or supporting materials. Nominations are due Friday, January 30, 2026.

Eligibility: Awards are open to attorneys and advocates in Maryland who meet the stated criteria.

Nominations may be submitted by MCDAA members, colleagues, or community partners. Awardees will be chosen by the MCDAA Executive Committee and presented at the inaugural Excellence in Criminal Defense Awards ceremony on June 18, 2026.

