2026 AILA Texas, Oklahoma & New Mexico - Fall Conference Agenda

November 18-20, 2026

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Resilience / Wellness & Law Practice Management

Plenary sessions:

Title	Description
Leading Through Uncertainty: Immigration Law in a Volatile Political Climate	Running a sustainable firm while managing the emotional toll of today's immigration environment — leadership, resilience, and adaptive planning.
Boundaries as Business Strategy: Saying No to Protect Your Practice and Your Peace	In a high-demand field like immigration law, knowing when and how to say no is one of the most powerful tools an attorney can have. This panel explores practical strategies for setting and enforcing professional boundaries — with clients, staff, and your own schedule — and how those boundaries directly contribute to a healthier practice, stronger client relationships, and long-term sustainability.
Navigating Difficult Conversations: Clients, Staff, and the Personal Toll of Legal Work	Whether it's delivering bad news to a client, addressing performance issues with staff, or setting boundaries in your personal life, difficult conversations are an unavoidable part of running a legal practice. This panel explores practical communication frameworks and emotional strategies for handling high-stakes conversations with confidence, compassion, and professionalism — without sacrificing your own well-being in the process.
Building a Healthy Law Firm or Nonprofit Legal Organization: Leadership, Mission, and Culture	A thriving legal organization starts from the inside out. This panel explores how to build a cohesive leadership team, define and articulate your organization's mission and core values, and create a culture of clarity and accountability that promotes organizational health, retains talent, and drives long-term success.

Law Practice Management track

Title	Description
AI in the Immigration Law Firm: Tools, Risks, and Staying Ahead of the Curve	A practical look at which AI tools are moving the needle in 2026 — from document drafting to intake automation — how to evaluate them ethically, and how immigration attorneys can leverage AI as a competitive advantage rather than be replaced by it.
Protecting Your Practice: Compliance, Risk Management, and Cybersecurity in an Era of Increased Government Scrutiny	How firms can safeguard themselves on two fronts — navigating heightened enforcement through robust compliance protocols and client vetting procedures, while also defending against cybersecurity threats through secure client portals, data protection practices, and breach response planning.
Client Pipeline in a Down Market: Lead Generation, Referrals, and Converting Consultations into Retained Clients	Keeping revenue flowing when policy uncertainty causes clients to delay filings — marketing, community partnerships, and referral strategy.
From Associate to Owner: Buying, Selling, or Transitioning an Immigration Law Practice	A practical guide to law firm succession, including valuation, deal structure, and common pitfalls.

Title	Description
Scaling Smart: Growing Your Firm Through New Offices, Virtual Teams, Virtual and Hybrid Models, and Expanded Practice Areas	Whether you're opening a second location, building a remote or hybrid team with international staff, or adding a new practice area, this panel covers the decision-making framework, financial modeling, and operational infrastructure needed to grow strategically without overextending.
Creating Templates, Procedures, and Systems for Efficient Filings and Client Communication	Best practices for creating standardized templates, documented procedures, and efficient systems that streamline filings, reduce errors, and improve consistency in client communication across your practice

Resilience / Wellness track

Title	Description
Relationships and Community: No Immigration Lawyer Left Behind: Peer Support and Asking for Help When It's All Too Much	• Why immigration practice is structurally isolating and why "I'll network when things calm down" never happens • How to design a deliberate support system: mastermind groups, peer circles, and mentorship in both directions • The ethics of leaning on colleagues: confidentiality boundaries when consulting peers on cases and case mistakes • Concrete takeaway: a framework for auditing your current support network and filling the gaps before a crisis, not during one
Balancing Business and Caregiving: Everyone Needs You and the Country Is on Fire: Being a Leader and Caregiving in Immigration Law	• The full caregiving spectrum: young children, special-needs kids, aging parents, ill siblings and partners, and the sandwich of doing several at once • Contingency planning as an ethical duty: coverage plans, client communication, and what happens to your caseload/firm duties when your family must come first • Guilt, asking for help, and the myth that everyone else is managing fine • Concrete takeaway: firm policies and personal systems panelists actually use — not aspirational advice
Mental and Physical Health: Keeping Your Body Alive: Tips from a Clinician to Minimize the Health Effects of Practicing Immigration Law	• What chronic stress actually does to your body: how to tell the difference between a symptom of anxiety and a symptom that needs a workup, and what to monitor when your baseline is "under attack." • The essential screenings, labs, and appointments by age: a rapid-fire cheat sheet (with handout) so you don't accidentally die of something preventable while saving everyone else. • Anonymous Q&A: submit your questions in advance about medications, therapy, sleep, drinking, panic, the colonoscopy you keep rescheduling, and get answers as practical guidance the whole room can use. Nothing is off limits.
Mindfulness and Energy: Grounded While the Ground Keeps Moving: Mind Your Energy in Volatile Times	• Energy management vs. time management — why the calendar isn't the problem • Micro-practices that fit between hearings: techniques measured in minutes, not retreats • What the research shows in mindfulness practice in the law • Concrete takeaway: a live guided practice and a plan for keeping it up after the conference high wears off

Title	Description
Redefining Success: **Pivot, Don't Perish: Reinventing Your Career in a Hostile Climate**	• Real trajectories from people who've made the move recently: folding and contracting a firm deliberately, private-to-nonprofit (and the reverse), joining law school faculty, policy work • The mechanics of a pivot: finances, timing, telling your clients and your ego • Redefining metrics: what success looks like when it isn't headcount and revenue
Life Outside the Law: **Joy, Despite It All: Reclaiming a Self Outside Immigration Law**	• The immigration-specific version of over-identification: when the work is a cause, taking a weekend feels like abandoning clients facing removal — which is exactly how the identity fuses • Life outside the law framed as resistance, not indulgence; service that refills rather than depletes; starting small this month • What feeds people: the things that have nothing to do with a caseload, activities outside the law
Financial Wellness: **Overcoming Scarcity Brain: Financial Wellness for Everyone**	• Money psychology across every seat in the room: scarcity thinking, financial avoidance, and comparison - whether you set the fees, earn the salary, or took the mission-driven pay cut • The nonprofit and public-interest reality: loan repayment strategies (PSLF and its current precarity), living on purpose-driven pay, and the resentment that builds when the work is noble and the bank account isn't • For those who *do* control the books: how financial desperation becomes ethical risk, i.e., undercharging out of guilt, taking cases you shouldn't, trust-account trouble (ethics credit hook)