

Meeting Minutes
ATJ Commission Meeting, April 17, 2026
ATJ Hybrid, In-Person (with video appearance option)

Location: New Mexico State Bar, 5121 Masthead St., NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109

12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Item 1: Welcome, Introductions, Announcements, In Attendance:

*Justice Shannon Bacon (NMSC Liaison)	*Mark Fidel (ATJ Commission)
Aaron Holloman (AOC)	*Hon. Mercedes Murphy (ATJ Commission)
Alex Flores (ATJ Commission)	Matt Mirarchi (Enlace)
Aja Brooks (AOC)	Merryl Sutton (NM Legal Aid)
*Allison Freedman (ATJ Commission)	Natalie Meyers (LREP)
Alma Lerma (AOC)	Nathan H. (NM Legal Aid)
Amy DiBello (NM State Library)	Rep. Pamela Herndon (NM Legislation)
Bette Fleishman (Pegasus Law)	Peggy Cadwell (AOC)
Caitlin Carcerano (SBNM)	*Rebecca O’Gawa (ATJ Comm)
Cheryl Thompson (Bernalillo County Metro. Court)	Richard Spinello (SBNM)
David Link	Rodolfo Sanchez (DNA)
DeAnne Romero (2 nd Judicial District Court)	Sara Yvonne “Bonnie” Escobar (Enlace)
*Doug Echols (ATJ Commission)	*Scott Cameron (ATJ Commission)
Gary Housepian (DRNM)	Sean Kinniry (Senior Citizens Law Office)
Heather Norfleet (Equal Access to Justice)	Sonya Bellafant (NM Legal Aid)
*Jennifer Salazar (ATJ Commission)	Sireesha Manne (NMCLP)
John Greacen (NM Portal)	Tabinda Ruiz (DNA Farmington)
*Juan Abeyta (ATJ Commission)	Therese Yanan (Native Disability Law)
Josh Pando (AOC)	Tori Jacobus (AOC)
Kasey Daniel (MMH)	Winter Torres (NM Eviction Prevention & Diversion)
Katalina Hadfield (NM Legal Aid)	Zac Addison (NM Legal Aid)
Laura Bassein (SBNM)	*Hon. Zachary Ives (ATJ Commission)
Leisha Peyketewa (NM HelpLine)	* indicates ATJ Commissioner
*Lori Smith Thornton (ATJ Commission)	
*Lucy Sinkular (ATJ Commission)	
Kathryn Farquhar (ALTSD)	

Announcement

Justice Shannon Bacon welcomed Commissioner Alex Flores as Co-Chair. Quorum was verified.

Item 2: Minutes Approved from January 09, 2026:

Commissioner Doug Echols moved to approve minutes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Juan Abeyta, with no objections. The minutes are approved.

Item 3: Scribing & ADA Updates (Peggy Cadwell, State LAS ADA Coordinator, AOC):

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Presentation: Scribing Statistics for 2023-2025 - Scribing numbers have increased in some districts and in some have decreased due to the type and length of scribing sessions. Sessions involving case matters such as family law or those requiring more than just a Juror Questionnaire, may take longer and may decrease number of scribing sessions. Examples of this include the Second Judicial District Court and the Ninth Judicial District Court. These two districts are the original pilot districts and have reported similar case scenarios. Districts with more than one reporting courthouse and/or that scribe only Juror Questionnaires, have had a higher increase of scribing sessions. Current stats do reflect Magistrate Courts for each county. The ADA team visits courts throughout the state to understand reported stats and differences within each district. Total current sessions for 2026 account for 706 sessions throughout all districts. The number of certified scribes is unclear at this time and it is recommended that each district provide at least one scribe per court as certification is open to all judicial employees. The upcoming efforts include updating the scribing course to reflect a new Supreme Court Order, governing scribing.

Item 4: CLSP Update – NM Center for Law & Poverty (Sireesha Manne, Executive Director, NMCLP):

NMCLP was created in 1990 and just celebrated their 30TH anniversary. Their main work involves impact litigation and policy work in areas such as education, food/cash security, healthcare, housing, immigrants' rights, workers' rights and in the civil justice system. Their goal is focused on building respect, dignity and abilities for every person and of the community. Focus areas are in education and are representing and following up on the Yazzie/Martinez lawsuit which is about equity and underserved students. The remedies in this case are to help build strong supports and appropriate education to NM students.

Healthcare is another area where NMCLP is currently advocating and educating on legislative advocacy and guidance to individuals who are affected, especially in areas of debt. NMCLP provides expertise and can assist the State of New Mexico with impacts from federal changes. They are also providing awareness campaigns which teach individuals how they can access programs like "Know Your Rights Campaign." They also work in collaboration with groups/state to evaluate assistance programs. Worker rights is another area that they are currently working on, though advocacy efforts to raise wages for chile workers whose rights were being violated and/or for non-payment of wages. These types of violations address humanitarian and safe conditions for agriculture.

Other advocacy plans involve working with the state to represent independent contractors and also to bring back unemployment benefits through a publicity campaign to those who money is

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owed to. Other areas with growing problems are on affordable housing such as manufactured homes which are affected through processes that are abusive and inflict circumstances like raise in rent and/or unfair practices/exploitation through eviction. Currently they are representing various cases that involve tenant rights settlement and section 8 housing throughout the state. Future efforts involve seeking funding to work on projects for policy/tracking solutions, which can help other civil legal services.

Item 5: CLSP Update – Enlace Comunitario (Bonnie Escobar, Executive Director & Matt Mirarchi, Director of Advancement & Operations, Enlace Comunitario):

Presentation: Enlace Comunitario, Celebrating 25 Years of Impactful Transformations - 2025 Annual Report. Enlace serves survivors of DV with a focus on the Latino community. These services include case management, housing, clinical services and legal support. Currently, the needs for support and services also come from circumstances that arise from ICE raids. During COVID Enlace implemented a hybrid model which has allowed them to assist in a variety of ways and especially for those who are in fear of going out to public areas. The DOJ has certified case managers/paralegals on immigration support which has allowed one of their paralegals to become trained and certified to provide support in this area. This has expanded their support services to pro se litigants within this area of practice through guidance in court and in justice programs. This type of case load is over 50 and is being timely processed.

Current concerns are on future federal funding streams, either completely cut or reduced, which will cut 1.2 billion dollars to the Office of Violence towards Women. These cuts and other grants facing cuts may have an impact towards women and families experiencing DV, especially in rural areas. The total number of clients served in the past year is close to 500 people which includes all or some services provided. Bernalillo County is the highest serving county following with Sandoval and Valencia. Their services related to immigration assistance are still current given DOJ's 3-year certification.

Item 6: Portal Project Update (John Greacen, ATJ Commission/Portal Project & Juan Abeyta, Portal Project):

Presentation: Project Update/Time-Line

Portal Project is an initiative to provide an online initiative to litigants for civil legal issues. The timeline to date follows: January 2024: NM Supreme Court requests study; October 2024: Portal Stakeholder Workgroup established; October 2024 – March 2025: Study conducted; April 2025: Report completed; April 2025: Presented to ATJ Commission and approved for submission to

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NMSC in July; July 2025: Presented to Bar Foundation Board of Directors; August 2025: Presented to NMSC and approved for implementation; January 2026: Planning meeting with NM State Library; February 2026: Planning meeting with State Tribal Judicial Consortium; February 2026: NMSC Order establishing the portal initiative and an Advisory Committee; March 2026 – ongoing: Selection of Advisory Committee Members.

The Portal Stakeholder Workgroup has a total of 21 members that included representatives from the legal and nine (9) members from the non-legal community, the creation of five (5) teams with a dynamic governance process providing for a unanimous consent approval. The final report “provided various options for implementation and a 3-year budget.” Additional collaborations involved NM State Library who will be the first cohort of trusted intermediaries and who will assist with a presentation on the portal initiative at the statewide NMLA Annual Conference in October of 2026. In February of 2026, the portal initiative was shared at the Tribal State Judicial Consortium’s Quarterly Meeting, and a strategy was agreed on to work with those tribal courts willing to connect with the portal. Currently, they are working on the selection of the Advisory Committee Members which will consist of nine (9) members.

Next steps include working with Kasey Daniel who has been selected as the Executive Director of the Portal Initiative, is within SBNM Leadership and who will help with the launch of this project, which has been granted 1.3 million dollars for the next three (3) years.

Item 7: NMILC – Habeas Project Announcement (Teague Gonzalez, Co-Executive Director, NMILC):

Presentation: NM Habeas Project - “The New Mexico Habeas Project, a collaboration between the New Mexico Law Center, ACLU of New Mexico, and Innovation Law Lab, seeks attorneys to provide pro bono representation to unlawfully detained noncitizens. Pro bono attorneys will file Petitions for Habeas Corpus for these noncitizens in federal court based on guidance provided by the Habeas Project. An attorney does not need experience in immigration law to work with the Habeas Project. We recommend that the attorney have experience with litigation in federal court, but this is not required. Provided instructions on admission to Federal District can be found at nmilc.org/toolkit/nm-habeas-project.”

The current administration removed the possibility of bond if detained. NM has the highest bed capacity. Currently, there are over 800 pending petitions in NM for release with reasons of unjust detention. The argument for unjust detention is that a detainee is not a danger to the community. Any attorney can apply to volunteer and will receive training and support to assist with the NM Habeas Project. Success rate has been high and is a great way to support this community.

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Item 8: Private Attorney Involvement Plan, 2026 Plan (Zac Addison, Volunteer Attorney Program Director, NM Legal Aid):

Presentation: Private Attorney Involvement 2026 Plan also known as the Pro bono Attorney Involvement Plans; NMLA overview and priorities, Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP) overview, 2026 PAI Plan – involving pro bono attorneys.

VAP is federally and directly funded from the Civil Legal Services Commission which screens for financial eligibility, citizenship/non-citizenship eligibility and for cases within organization priority areas and not a prohibited activity by Congress. VAP also serves on special projects and is involved in pro bono activities. Their delivery model includes pro bono attorney engagement and direct case placement through intake, procedure, and oversight of support. This also includes support to attorney recruitment, legal information to the community, clinics and engagements with other professionals and to the judiciary through the various services. VAP additionally provides assistance through the rural seniors grant for services to seniors 60 and over.

Currently, the NM State Bar annual surveys, captured important data for types of services involving pro bono work. There was a justice gap from 2023 and 2024 providing that more than half of NM Attorneys do not provide pro bono services. The barriers to pro bono engagement are, “lack of time/billable hour pressures, unfamiliarity with legal aid needs and systems, perceived lack of expertise in relevant areas, firm policies or culture that don’t prioritize pro bono.” Overcoming these barriers include strategies to obtain, “firm-wide commitment/leadership engagement, structured pro bono models – mentorship, training, support, recognition and incentives – CLE credits, visibility, flexible options – short-term, limited-scope, remote opportunities.” (*thredpartners (thredpartners.com) national legal aid pro bono assessments & attorney surveys*)

Given these recommendations, VAP continues to recruit and partner with participating firms and provide flexible options for pro bono. This is what they strive to provide through direct representation, legal fairs, clinics, CLE programs and volunteer trainings. They are seeking to expand services by providing resources and video-recorded training on their website. Their year to date stats include 91 new referrals. Their further efforts are to increase/expand new case placements and services in areas such as expungements, estate planning, adult guardianship, appellate cases, estate planning and tenant project. The use of technology is also in plan especially for rural legal fairs. Collaborations are very important for VAP: with the judiciary, pro bono committees, security and recruitment of additional attorneys for any legal fair function. Their current goal is to have 23 legal fairs a year of which year to date are 17. Their current

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challenges arise at most walk-in legal fairs and in recruiting attorneys for rural areas, but they are working on more suitable scheduling times/locations.

Item 9: MMH & LREP Updates (Kasey Daniel, Legal Services Director & Natalie Meyers, LREP Director, SBNM):

Presentation: Legal Services Department; MMH and LREP.

MMH and LREP are housed in the Legal Services Department of the State Bar Foundation. MMH started in October 2022. They are able to assist individuals whose incomes are below 500% of the federal poverty level, which accounts for 75-80% of our population in NM. Bilingual intake services are available. They provide legal advice over the phone, pro bono services and representation if appropriate. The areas of law/cases served range from the; highest being domestic relations at 43%, landlord tenant 20%, consumer finance 11%, DV 8%, employment 7% and other various civil matters ranging from 3% - appeals at 1%, amongst others. Their Heat Map for 2025 provides data on Cases Opened by County with a statewide range from highest number of opened cases in Bernalillo County at 42%, Santa Fe and Sandoval at 7% and lowest in Valencia at 4% - Torrance at 1%. The highest number of cases in rural areas are in San Juan County and in the Southern Counties of our state. Additionally, they provide three (3) small business webinars a year to the public and publish monthly “Success Stories” which summarizes the type of assistance they provide, the outcome that was accomplished from their services and what was taught to help client understand how to represent themselves. Most of their referral sources range and come from NMLA at 22%, courts 21%, website 13%, friend/relative 11% and others ranging from 7% - 1%. The total number of cases served by MMH in 2025 was 3,727.

LREP is also a free civil legal helpline, serving NM residents 55 and older, regardless of income and have served for 37 years. Services are provided by staff attorneys who can provide legal advice and brief services over the phone on a variety of areas: powers of attorney, estate planning, landlord/tenant issues, and debt problems. Most of these involve elder law-related topics, but they can assist with other civil legal matters. The total number of cases served in 2025 were 3346; ranging from probate/wills/estates at 31%, consumer/finance 22%, LL/T/MH/RP 18%, employment 4%, public benefits 3%, neighbor problems 2%, other various civil matters all ranging at 1%. Their Heat Map shows a similarity to MMH with numbers ranging highest from Bernalillo County at 35%, Sandoval 8%, Santa Fe 13%, Valencia 5 and Torrance 1%. LREP also provides “Success Stories” and outcomes which show that through phone assistance a few times, callers can accomplish meaningful results. Referral source data ranges highest from; prior use at 25%, website 16%, friend/relative 13%, courts 8%, other 14% -

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1%. Additional important data collected is on “clients who self-reported as having a disability”; 58% who did not self-report and 42% reported as a disabled client. LREP is also able to assist in Spanish and other languages through the assistance of their in-house attorney. and through the translation help-line.

Item 10: Updates – Kiosk Study, Statewide HelpLine, Portal Project, RJI (Alex Flores, Co-Chair):

Upcoming meeting is on August 07, 2026. Further updates at upcoming quarterly meetings will be on NM HelpLine and RJI Summer Interns. Reminder: June deadline for letter in support to the NM Supreme Court on Alternative Pathways Initiative.

Item 11: Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.