

JUSTICE FOR ALL

NEW MEXICO ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Champions of Access to Justice



**Representative
Katy M. Duhigg**

Senator Katy Duhigg was elected to the New Mexico State Senate in 2020 and serves as the Chair of the Senate Rules Committee and the Vice-Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Since taking office she has passed legislation focused on consumer protection, fair and secure elections, and economic development, including enacting the nation's first Native American Voting Rights Act, protecting indigent patients from medical debt collection actions, ending predatory lending in New Mexico, and legalizing recreational cannabis. Before taking office, Senator Duhigg served as the Albuquerque City Clerk, and she spent nearly a decade serving as vice president of Common Cause New Mexico, a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to fair elections. Senator Duhigg has been a practicing attorney for 15 years, and when she is not in Santa Fe representing her constituents she works at the law firm of Sutin, Thayer & Browne.

SPOTLIGHT



Pegasus Legal Services for Children ("Pegasus") provides free, bilingual civil legal services to children, youth, and their caregivers in New Mexico. Their work includes providing information and advice, direct representation, community legal action, and systemic advocacy. Based out of Albuquerque, Pegasus provides services across the state including several Native American communities.

The impact of COVID-19 on New Mexico resulted in a high rate of parental deaths which in turn increased the number of runaway, homeless, and orphaned children in New Mexico. These tragic losses left children and youth across the state coping with the loss of parents, adjusting to new caregivers, running away or in some cases homeless.

Annie E. Casey reports that between 2018-2020, about 4% of children in the US are raised by kin with no parents present. In NM, it is 6%, roughly 31,000 children. These "kinship guardians" are typically grandparents raising their young grandchildren. Pegasus's Kinship Guardianship program helps these children and their families by providing legal services to grandparents and other kinship caregivers caring for children whose parents are unable or unwilling to provide them with proper care. Pegasus also offers a Client Advocate who assists with healthcare and behavioral resources while cases are ongoing.

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News from the Judiciary

Efforts are underway in the Eleventh Judicial District to maximize the community's access to justice. The Eleventh has paired with tribal and community partners to bring Justice Stations online at several key locations. This includes Chapter Houses, Libraries, Court, and community locations.

Chief Judge Curtis Gurley notes that people are in court because they have to be but many face hardships and barriers due to the distances and financial demands required to attend court. Parties can attend through the justice stations to attend court hearings and serve to reduce the negative consequences that may result from not appearing. The Eleventh is also expanding court clerk office window hours and walk up hours for the district from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Eleventh is staggering employee breaks so that court access is available to serve the public through lunch and to process transactions until 5:00 p.m. The enhanced convenience of walk-up hours better meets the needs of the community.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 2, 2023 - Everyday Heroes Event for Civil Legal Service Providers to be held at the New Mexico United Game. For more information please contact Damon Hudson at dhudson@singletonschreiber.com

Want to highlight your civil legal service program? A pro bono event? ATJ efforts in your district? Tell us about it!

Questions or Submissions can be sent to Tesha and Twila at atj@nmcourts.gov

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The need for accessible legal assistance and representation for children, youth, and kinship caregivers in New Mexico is higher than it's ever been.

Pegasus provides free and accessible services which the community can best be support with financial support (donations accepted at PegasusLaw.org).

Reading and sharing Pegasus's informational social media posts also helps by keeping the needs of children, youth and kinship families in the public eye. Follow Pegasus at:

Facebook.com/PegasusLaw,
Instagram.com/pegasus_law_nm, and
Linkedin.com/company/pegasus-legal-services-for-children.

COMMUNITY WEBINARS

Watch all Community Webinars on the NM Courts YouTube Channel
[@NewMexicoCourts](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNewMexicoCourts)



ATJ Commission Meetings

September 22, 2023 (Hybrid)
December 8, 2023 (Hybrid)

Pre-Registration required for in-person attendance.

Please contact ATJ@nmcourts.gov for any accommodation needs.

The NM Commission on Access to Justice (ATJ) is an independent, statewide body dedicated to expanding and improving civil legal assistance in the state.