

JUSTICE FOR ALL

NEW MEXICO ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Champions of Access to Justice



**Representative
Gail Chasey**

Representative Gail Chasey has served in the New Mexico House of Representatives since her election in 1996 and is currently the longest-serving member of the House. Gail is a retired educator, having taught high school History and English in the Salinas Valley of California, and Special Education in the Albuquerque Public Schools. She earned a Master's and Doctorate degree in Special Education from the University of New Mexico. Gail was inspired to run for office in 1985 after working with New Mexican parents who were successful in their effort to secure public education services for children with developmental delays, ages 3-5.

Representative Chasey quickly advocated for civil rights, criminal justice reform, and equal access to justice in the Legislature. In her first session, she sponsored a bill to end filing fees for victims of domestic violence, which was signed into law. She later championed efforts to end discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Serving on the House Judiciary Committee inspired Representative Chasey to seek a law degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law while continuing to serve in the Legislature. After graduation, she began a second career as an attorney.

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SPOTLIGHT



DISABILITY RIGHTS
NEW MEXICO (DRNM)

Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM) is an independent, private nonprofit organization that has, for over 40 years, protected, promoted, and expanded the rights of persons with disabilities. DRNM's services are free and are provided statewide. DRNM is the designated protection and advocacy program for New Mexico and has authority under federal law to pursue legal, administrative, and other remedies on behalf of persons with disabilities.


DRNM's mission is to promote the independence, productivity, and full community inclusion of persons with disabilities, facilitating consumer control of individual services, and self-help through knowledge and self-advocacy skills. DRNM services are vital to the well-being of persons with disabilities by responding to their legal needs relating to education, employment, housing, health services, protection from abuse and neglect, and fundamental legal rights.

DRNM provides several services: information and referrals about services for persons with disabilities and about their legal rights; individual case advocacy services to resolve specific disability rights problems; advocacy efforts to improve service systems; generally promote, protect and expand the rights of persons with disabilities; outreach and training activities to increase awareness of disability rights; and to increase consumer empowerment.

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For many years, she served as a court-appointed attorney, dedicating her practice to abuse and neglect cases, representing children who were in state custody, or adults working to be reunited with their children. In addition to advocating for improvement in the child protective services system, Representative Chasey is dedicated to civil rights, criminal justice reform, and addressing the underlying causes of crime. In 2009, her 10-year effort to repeal the death penalty was successful. The late Governor Bill Richardson signed the bill into law and became an advocate worldwide.

A strong supporter of equal access to justice, Representative Chasey protected women’s reproductive freedom while chairing the House Consumer and Public Affairs Committee for 10 years. She then chaired the House Judiciary Committee for 8 years and continues to serve on that committee and the House Government, Elections, and Indian Affairs Committee. Representative Chasey is now the House Majority Floor Leader and was one of the primary sponsors of the landmark Voting Rights Act (HB 4) enacted in the 2023 legislative session. 

Access to Justice News

LawHelp New Mexico


LawHelp New Mexico is a public website available for anyone looking for legal information about civil legal issues in New Mexico. It offers information in many areas of law, including Family Law, Domestic Abuse, Tenant’s Rights and some related housing issues, Public Benefits, Medicaid and Medicare, Consumer Debts and Taxes, Employment and Workers’ Rights, Disability Rights, Veterans resources, and Wills and Estate Planning. It also provides convenient access to the New Mexico law. Information is provided in English and Spanish.

The site also lists most of the civil legal service providers in New Mexico along with their contact information.
www.lawhelpnewmexico.org



Spotlight
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DRNM, in addition to providing legal assistance on individual cases, focuses on systemic advocacy on issues impacting populations with limited access to legal assistance. By targeting their resources, DRNM has been able to achieve systemic changes, including the delivery of special education services, protection from abuse and neglect, combating employment discrimination, and securing services for youth in the New Mexico foster care system.

DRNM, as part of its continuing mission, will often work collaboratively with sister organizations to address violations of legal rights and secure remedial actions for persons with disabilities. DRNM is grateful for donations to help further support their work. <https://drnm.org/> 

COMMUNITY WEBINARS

November 15th Webinar on Student Loan Rights presented by Student Borrower Protection Center

Watch all Community Webinars on the NM Courts YouTube Channel @NewMexicoCourts

ATJ Commission Meetings

December 8, 2023 (Hybrid)

Please Pre-register for in-person attendance.

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



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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Free Bankruptcy Workshop hosted by SBNM

October 25, 2023

December 13, 2023

Visit <https://www.sbnm.org> for more information

Divorce Options Workshop hosted by SBNM

October 4, 2023

November 1, 2023

December 6, 2023

Visit <https://www.sbnm.org> for more information

Statewide Legal Teleclinics hosted by VAP of NMLA

November 16, 2023

Visit <https://accesstojustice.nmcourts.gov> for more information

First Judicial District Court

Free Legal Teleclinics

November 15, 2023

Visit <https://firstdistrictcourt.nmcourts.gov> for more information

NMLA Volunteer Attorney Program

Free Legal Clinics

Dates and Locations:

October 6, 2023, 4th JD Legal Fair in Las Vegas

October 20, 2023, 6th JD Legal Fair in Silver City

October 21, 2023, 12th JD Legal Fair in Ruidoso

November 4, 2023, 3rd JD Law-La-Palooza in Las

Cruces

November 4, 2023, 12th JD Legal Fair in Alamogordo

November 8, 2023, 9th JD Legal Fair in Portales

Contact Nedia Isebella (Bella) Zayani

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NEWS FROM THE JUDICIARY

Low Bono as an Avenue for Access to Justice

The AOC Court-Appointed Attorney Program (CAAP) has revised the attorney payment schedule effective September 1, 2023. The revised schedule is on the AOC Court-Appointed Attorney [web page](#). In recognition of the time required to fulfill the duties of an appointment, the hourly rate has been raised and the hourly cap has been adjusted. The schedule describes the civil cases typically requiring court appointments, allows for atypical appointments, and the possibility for a fee adjustment for complex litigation.

“Many children in our State need the assistance of a court-appointed attorney to represent their interest in high-conflict custody disputes or when family members are caring for children of parents who are struggling. Without attorneys willing to do this work, children who need an attorney to represent their interests will be disadvantaged in our system. Increasing the compensation for these attorneys is vital given how hard and important this work is.”
Judge Jane Levy, Second Judicial District Court.

Representation provided by a court-appointed attorney creates a bridge over the access to justice gap. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for attorneys to explore new areas of representation and gain experience while generating income whether as a firm, solo practitioners or recently licensed attorney.

Letters of interest are always welcome and invoices can be submitted electronically to caaff@nmcourts.gov. The submission process has been streamlined and invoice forms are embedded under each representation type on the fee schedule. CAAP will actively collect data on the number and type of court appointments across the state and develop additional improvements and adjustments as feasible.

<https://courtappointedattorneys.nmcourts.gov/non-contract-attorneys/payment-guidelines/>

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

