

# The Defender: Coronavirus Edition

A mini  newsletter

Corona week 6  
April 24, 2020

## Steady steering during the storm



Chief Ben Baur

Here we are in week six of life and work under coronavirus. As we're all starting to get used to the new procedures and new ways of doing business, I think it's important to highlight our administrative teams. They are the people holding up the framework of the department, and their leadership will ensure we can endure whatever comes our way, so that we can keep serving our clients. As the crisis has turned into a new fiscal reality, we are all watching the state's financial situation and strategizing the best way to keep our department and the movement to improve indigent defense strong. One of the primary leaders of this effort is Deputy Chief Cydni Sanchez.

### A Hands on the Wheel profile

## Deputy Chief Cydni Sanchez



Deputy Chief  
Cydni Sanchez

Deputy Chief Cydni Sanchez leads the department's Administrative Services Division, which manages the department's HR, fiscal, IT, legal and training/recruitment functions.

It's a role she never envisioned for herself — but that's something she can say about every single job she has had in the department in her 15 years here.

"As an undergrad, I didn't even want to practice law much less be in a courtroom," she said.

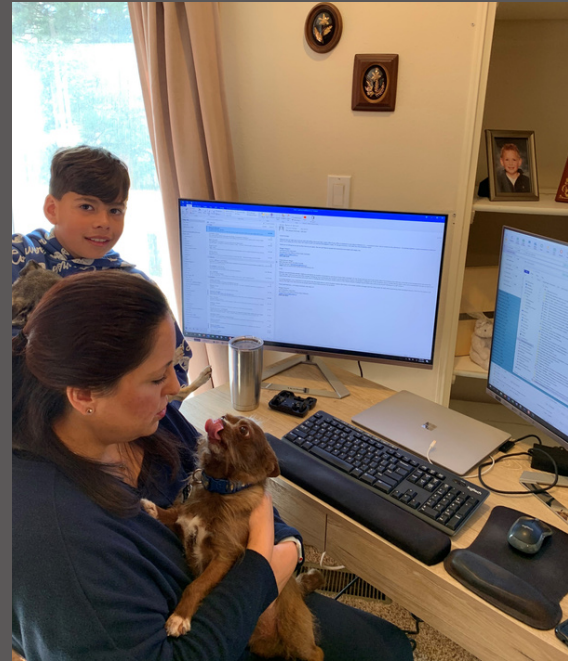
Fast forward several years, Sanchez was thriving as a trial attorney in Albuquerque's Metro and then District Court.

She knew she'd found a good fit, realizing she wasn't "one to sit in a corner reading memos and case law and writing memos. I'm more for interaction with people."

But seven years into her time as a trial attorney, she took over as managing attorney for Abq Metro and District Court and then took the leap to Administrative Services Director — where she wrote a lot of memos.

She realized that was a good fit, too. And others agreed.

"Cydni came into this work to help people, to help New Mexicans, and that's clearly what drives her.



Cydni and her husband, Greg Reynolds, who are about to celebrate their 15th wedding anniversary, live in Albuquerque with their two boys, Jace, 13, and Brett, aka Louie, aka “Blue”, 9, and their dogs, Chewie and Daisy.

But in addition to that, she has impressive organizational ability,” said Chief Public Defender Bennett Baur. “She sees and understands structures and work flows and processes. That combination is unusual for lawyers.”

In a move that surprised her, she was asked to take over as Deputy Chief of Administrative Services in 2016, becoming one of only a few women to hold the position.

“Cydni was a trial attorney, then a leader of Metro Court, and now she directs and oversees the administrative life blood of the department. Without her and the people she leads, we literally wouldn’t be able to function,” Baur said.

Sanchez has now been with LOPD for 15 years, her entire legal career.

“I’ve worked with hundreds of lawyers, a lot of people leave and come back, they leave again, but there are very few of us who consistently stay with the department through thick and thin. There’s a minority of us,” she said.

“I’m very proud to have dedicated my entire legal career to indigent defense.”

Sanchez said the department has undergone dramatic changes for the better in her time at LOPD in all of her different roles.

“We endured constant change with a constantly uneven playing field, budget struggles, and endless battles with DAs and judges,” Sanchez said. “Now that LOPD is independent and has a strong commission, we are truly client-centered and politics don’t drive how we represent clients, or how the department is run ... so LOPD is always the strongest, most passionate and best prepared team in the criminal justice system.”



"I struggle daily with how to balance getting my job done for LOPD while caring for my family at home. But, last year, I supported my sister battling breast cancer – nearly 20 years after watching my mother surpass the same battle. This is a constant reminder for me that that we are stronger than we think ... And I continue to be inspired by the strength and perseverance of all of you – showing up in the office or appearing in court while chasing children around the house—you are the front line warriors for our clients. No PD will allow a pandemic to get in the way of our clients rights! You are all sacrificing daily, so please take time to care of yourself and each other."

- Cydni



Sanchez says hers is a baseball and a softball family. But they, like everyone in this strange time, are having to take a break from their normal activity.

## What does the Administrative Services Division do?

The Administrative Services Division of LOPD, aka the ASD team, includes legal (general counsel, “GC”), human resources, fiscal, IT, and training/recruitment. In our team meetings, I refer to our group as the “heart” of the department because each of the units in ASD is needed to keep the LOPD “body” running so that the offices may provide services to our clients. We keep it pumping while the district offices provide the passion in the representation!

One example is rolling out new equipment statewide. Human resources provides counts on the number of employees in the office and those projected to be hired. Our GC reviews contracts/agreements. Fiscal confirms we are following DFA rules and processes payment for the items. Then IT rolls out the items. Meanwhile, recruitment highlights our stellar equipment during hiring to seal the deal with candidates.

Over the last six weeks, the ASD team has been navigating the pandemic by rolling out memos, plans, and policies to ensure employees are safe while are still being paid. HR is analyzing the tide of federal laws to craft leave policies. GC is leading the fight in releasing and keeping clients out of custody and advising on department policies. IT is providing equipment/remote access. Training has been working to find creative ways to provide CLEs. And fiscal finds \$ to pay for it all, including cleaning supplies and services!

Over the last several years, the ASD team has been thinking out of the box to eliminate steps and red tape to make your jobs easier and more fair. We have eliminated unnecessary steps for purchasing (P-card – Yay fiscal!), provided faster broadband in offices and remote access to H drives to all employees (IT stepping up), redesigned our recruitment of new attorneys and sped up our hiring timelines to secure the best candidates (HR and recruitment rocks!) – just to name a few of the changes. Our GC also helps represent us when people sue the department. ASD is here to make your jobs easier and improve services for clients!



Chief Financial Officer  
Christina Keyes



HR Director  
Ronald Herrera



Training/Recruitment  
Director Liz Holmes



General Counsel  
Adrianne Turner




IT Director Matt  
Bevington

## Kids in the time of coronavirus



Brenda Franco, from the Clovis office, does her best to work and play hair salon.



For any of us trying to work from home with children running around, asking for a snack, snuggle or hug, well here is a hug for you.  It's not easy. And it's not easy to explain what exactly you are home, and why it isn't all play time.

### Trinka and Sam Fighting the Big Virus: Trinka, Sam, and Littletown Work Together



Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson, and Nia Roberts  
illustrated by Axel Scheffler



### Coronavirus

A Book for Children



Consultant: Professor Graham Medley  
Professor of Infectious Disease Modeling,  
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

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Here are some books that might help:

<https://wpg-assets.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/pdf/coronavirus.pdf>

<http://piploproductions.com/trinka-and-sam-virus/>



Nicole Jones, of Las Cruces, and her family decorated their front yard tree.

## Virtual recovery

NM DEFENDERS IN RECOVERY, a virtual recovery meeting, will be held every Friday night (for the next several weeks) at 6 p.m. via Zoom. For the Zoom link, more information or for other links to other virtual recovery resources, you can contact Craig Acorn at [craig.acorn@gmail.com](mailto:craig.acorn@gmail.com) or 650-283-0694; Jennifer Birmingham at [Jbirmingham2112@gmail.com](mailto:Jbirmingham2112@gmail.com) or 575-288-7958; or JJ Hall at [jjhall@me.com](mailto:jjhall@me.com) or 307-321-4752. Notice those are their private numbers and emails as this is not a department-sponsored effort. Anonymity is strictly honored.