

The Defender: Coronavirus Edition

A mini
newsletter



Corona week 21
August 7, 2020



Essential work

As the traditional school calendar resumes, our working parents and caregivers are facing new challenges. How can we provide our best service to clients and educate our children from home? How can our work schedules adjust? How can't they? What will this look like?



Essential work



Chief's message



As if being essential workers in a pandemic wasn't enough, this month many of us are preparing to take on the extra work of educating our children or grandchildren at home. I'd like to wish you a "happy back to school!" but I'm hearing a lot of stress and anxiety - some excitement - from many of you trying to figure out just what back to school looks like. Whatever "back to school" looks like for you, at LOPD it looks like us supporting each other and our families as we continue to represent our clients. Parents and caretakers, you don't have to go this alone. Your office leaders are ready and willing to have conversations about what you need to make work and home life work together. Being able to care for our families properly is critical to our well-being, to us as people – and having that balance, or as close to it as we can, is necessary for us to be able to serve our clients.

For most of us, even those without children at home, it already feels like we are bouncing back and forth, juggling more balls than ever before, and being torn between competing needs. Budgets – our own and those of governments – are strained. We're anxious, busy, stressed. Parents with kids at home, who likely won't be going back to traditional school soon, are having to adjust to a whole new rhythm of life and new expectations.

Over the last few months I have been trying to be optimistic, but I do not want to sound cavalier about what our jobs require of us and the work it will take to educate our families and support our working parents. But I am optimistic that we will pull through this together SAFELY, that we as people and as a Department will find our ways through. These are not easy times. But we can do this. We've included resources in this newsletter to assist you with work and life decisions, and your office leaders are available to brainstorm with you. Reach out, and be creative. And let's all pitch in to make "happy back to school!" more of a reality.

- Ben

Homeschooling
with a
growing family

Jacob Ort
Managing Attorney
Clovis



Homeschooling has proven to be a blessing to us! Learning isn't confined to a desk or four walls. Learning isn't divided into chapters or limited to certain months of the year. It doesn't have a beginning or an end for us. We are embracing this flexibility and have taken a lot of our learning outdoors. We take hikes and discover new plants and animals. We learn about pollution and conservation and how we can be better people to others and the Earth. We solve problems like how to stay safe in the heat of the desert. When we're outside we don't worry about separating history from science or art from fun. We embrace the sunshine and let our adventurous spirits guide us to learning.



Jacob and Isra, 4



General Counsel
Adrienne Turner

Kitchen table
virtual schooling
with multiple
ages

The makeshift space they had been using turned into clutter, and we're still working on setting up something more usable. We got an email that said the kids should be dressed and ready at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday for the first day of virtual school, and it sent a chill down all four of our spines. My kids miss their school like crazy but have become accustomed to slower summer days. We'll get their space set up and our new routine down, but it's a work in progress.

Where shall I begin? Santa Fe Public Schools will begin the school year in a remote learning model starting August 20th. At this time, parents and students have been told the remote learning model will continue for the first nine weeks of school, and the district will reassess after that whether it's safe to open the school in a phased approach to the hybrid model.

For our family, there are still many unknowns, such as, who is my child's teacher? What is expected from the students during remote learning? And what will be expected from the parents? While SFPS has worked diligently to provide as much information as they can to families, there are still many things that will need to be figured out as time passes.

This year we have both our children attending SFPS. Our oldest son Alejandro, 11, flourished during the last school year's remote learning model, and we hope the same for him this school year. For Alejandro, he is anxious to go back to school, as he misses the social component school brought to his everyday life. Our younger son Nathaniel, almost 3, will begin a new chapter in his life as he will be attending Pre-K this school year.

Nathaniel has encountered many challenges since birth and has overcome more than most adults will face in a lifetime. We are fortunate he has been accepted to the virtual Pre-K program, as he will now be allowed to receive the assistance needed to help him lead a healthy and fulfilling life. With these new opportunities, come even more questions related to Nathaniel's well-being, such as, how will he adapt to school and how can we keep our young son focused on a screen for an extended amount of time?

We are grateful SFPS is doing everything they can to keep our children and our families safe, we are anxious to get back to our lives. With that said, from our family to yours, we wish you the best, stay safe and well.

Ronald, Trisha, Alejandro, and Nathaniel



Ronald Herrera
HR Director



Nathaniel, almost 3, left, sits at their kitchen table homeschool station for virtual pre-K along with his brother, Alejandro, 11.

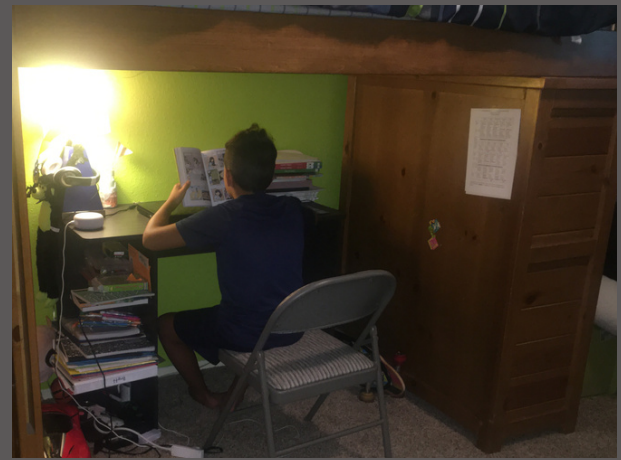
Homeschooling
pre-K,
multiple ages



Deputy Chief
Cydni Sanchez

This isn't
happening

I get too overwhelmed about how to homeschool while working, so I have refused to think about it. Partially because it seems like school plans change from day to day. I prefer to plan out as much as I can in my life, but with the pandemic and kids not returning to school in the near future, I am learning to roll with it! So, in short, I don't have a plan on how I can assist (or check) my kids schoolwork while ensuring my work is done. My goal is to take it one day at a time and to a "D3" review- a suggestion I found in an article. I will use a "D3 review" to look at my to-do list for the day – both for work and home—and decide which item on the list can be: 1) delayed, 2) delegated to another member of my team (kiddos or hubby), or 3) doesn't need to get done today!



Jace, 13, top, set up his own desk. Sanchez says it is currently only being used for Fortnite battles, but is soon to be his classroom! Brett Louie (Blue), 10, set up a classroom under his bunk bed.

Performance eval from your kids

Courtesy of Harvard Business Review

Performance evaluations are a routine part of our work lives. But if you're a working parent, it's unlikely that you ask for the same kind of feedback at home. It may sound a little silly, but following the best practices you'd use in the workplace to solicit upward feedback from your children can be a great way to help you identify ways you can improve as a parent — as well as what you should continue doing. First, set a specific time and place for the conversation, and provide your kids with specific questions to answer in advance, such as: What do I do that you like or that you'd like to see more of? What do I do that you don't like or that has a negative impact on you? What would make me a better parent? During the conversation, reassure your kids that you're listening with an open mind, and manage your emotions so you're not tempted to react defensively. When they're done answering your questions, thank them, and summarize what you've heard before reacting. And finally, be specific about what you plan to change. Follow up with them once a month to check in on progress. There's always room to improve, both at work and at home, but you need feedback to make that happen.



Communication Specialist
Maggie Shepard

Single mom,
homeschooling
for 6 years



Nova, 11, at the makeshift
art station, which is always
a mess.

More
Pro tips

My friends facing the idea of homeschooling now are worried they won't have the time, energy or expertise to succeed. How can they possibly handle more work? What I tell them first is that homeschooling is work, but it's not necessarily more work – just different. What I tell them next is how I started homeschooling six years ago, how it changed my life for the better, and then I give them unsolicited advice, like I'm going to do here.

When I started homeschooling, I was a single mother working full time living with the help of food stamps to care for my kids, then ages 8 and 6. At first, homeschooling was an emergency decision after my oldest child's classroom became unsafe. But what was a very stressful initial decision to homeschool turned out to be the best decision I have made for my children, myself and our family health. It required a total revamp of what I thought school was, what learning looks like and who I am as a parent. Now my kids are 13 and 11 and say they appreciate the freedom they have, the pace of life and the peace in our family. Here are some of the top things I've learned:

- You don't have to replicate traditional school anything. Traditional 8-hour school days do NOT happen at home. They don't have to. Nearly all homeschoolers spend much, much less time on focused learning. Homeschool can happen anytime of day and day of the week. When I was working full time during the week, I hired high school, college students to watch and play with my kids. Then we did our learning activities when I got home from work and on the weekends.
- Learning happens all the time, so it's OK to have down time doing "nothing."
- Trust yourself. Many of us were brought up thinking only teachers, not even our own parents, had the skills to teach us. But you do have the skills and you can do this.
- Trust your kids. It's OK if they struggle with a topic. That's how they learn. It's OK if they whine and fuss; I whine and fuss about work sometimes, too. They absolutely will learn.
- Have fun. It doesn't have to be all work, no play.
- If you don't know a topic, someone else or the internet does.
- It doesn't need to be fancy. A plain spiral notebook, an online class or a book will do the trick.
- Community is crucial. There are many active homeschoolers who are happy to share their opinions, tips and resources.
- Check in and adjust. Ask your kiddo how they like what is happening and how they think it would work better for them. Ask yourself this question, too. You are part of the relationship and if your child is making it unenjoyable for you, too, let them know – with as much kindness and patience as you can muster (which sometimes is barely a crumb for me).
- Seek help if you are getting overwhelmed. If you just feel like you are about to break, like your kids are getting dumber, like you are failing them and your house and work and life, tap that community and find a mentor or helper.

I invite you to call me or email me if you want to talk about your situation. I love to help folks break through to the good parts of homeschooling. maggie.shepard@lopdm.us

Links, resources, how to find local community

Facebook for the homeschool win

Community is key to homeschooling - even if it is only virtual community. New Mexico has very, very active home school Facebook groups.

A search of FB found an active home school group (many had several) in every single city or county in which LOPD has an office.

Setting up your space

Here are some news links about setting up your own space. But remember, the *kitchen table* does just fine!

- [KOB DIY Danielle builds a school desk](#)
- [KOAT gives some tips on organizing your space](#)
- [Even Martha Stewart keeps it simple](#)

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Work-Life Solutions

Our specialists provide qualified referrals and resources for just about anything on your to-do list, such as:

- Finding child and elder care
- Hiring movers or home repair contractors
- Planning events, locating pet care



Types of corona-related leave available

When coronavirus first hit our state, several types of leave were made available to help us all get our bearings. Some of it remains, some has expired. Here is what is available to inquire about if you are discussing home/work arrangements with your supervisor:

Emergency federal
leave

Can be taken altogether
or in small chunks
Expires in December

LOPD family
first leave

Quarantine-related
leave, or child care
Capped at 80 hours

<http://www.lopdnm.us/pdf/CoronavirusLeaveTable.pdf>

Travel-related quarantine leave changes

This week, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham changed some of the rules for how New Mexicans are to handle self-isolating and quarantining when they return from traveling. If you travel for any reason that is not on this list, you are required to self-isolate for 14 days. If that means you will miss work, you must take your own accrued leave. Because LOPD is considered an essential service, it is possible you could be called into work during the required isolation period. Here is the list of travelers and travel reasons exempt from self-isolation:

- Tending parenting responsibilities
- Obtaining medical services
- Persons employed by airlines
- Persons performing public safety or public health functions
- Military personnel and their dependents
- Federal employees
- Persons employed by a federal agency or national defense contractor
- Emergency first responders and health care workers
- Persons arriving in the state pursuant to a court order
- Persons who are employed or contracted by an essential business, as defined in the state's operative emergency public health order, who are traveling into New Mexico to conduct business activities

You can find the complete order here:

<https://cv.nmhealth.org/public-health-orders-and-executive-orders/>

Farewell Gloria



Because of COVID the Alamogordo office couldn't give secretary Gloria Seifert a proper potluck and send-off, but she did get a beautiful cake to take home and eat with her family and her office was given a special makeover. "We will miss her but are very excited for her to enjoy the next phase in this adventure we call life," Managing Attorney Dayna Jones said.

Open enrollment

The entire month of October (31) days will be open to employees who wish to enroll and/or switch current benefits. LOPD-HR will continue to provide information to employees in the upcoming months. Also, employees can visit this site for information regarding employee benefits and details about the 2020 Open/Switch Enrollment.

<https://www.mybenefitsnm.com>

Tax-free weekend

Until 11:59 p.m. Sunday, New Mexico is suspending gross receipts tax on certain items for the state's annual tax-free weekend. So no tax is added at purchase to:

- clothing or shoes priced at less than \$100 per unit.
- desktop, laptop, tablets or notebook computers less than \$1,000
- computer hardware less than \$500
- school supplies for use in standard, general-education classrooms under \$30 per unit

DD Ibukun Adepoju selected for Gov.'s Council for Racial Justice



Ibukun Adepoju

Ibukun Adepoju, district defender over the 9th and part of the 5th, including Clovis, Portales and Hobbs, was selected this month to serve on the state's Council for Racial Justice subcommittee on public safety and law enforcement.

Chief Ben Baur said her voice and unique perspective "need to be heard."

"I feel incredibly honored to sit on this council but even more importantly the subcommittee on public safety and law enforcement. I hope to represent the interests of criminal defense on this committee. Particularly, I hope we can accomplish some police reform. Changes such as mandatory racial and cultural sensitivity trainings in academy curriculum; revisiting the purpose of qualified immunity to amend or eradicate it; and crisis intervention training for law enforcement officers are paramount on my mind at the moment. These will be some steps in the right direction toward ensuring racial justice in New Mexico," Adepoju said.

New Deputy HR Director named



Zachary Olivas

Zachary Olivas, 47, has been selected as LOPD's Deputy Director of Human Resources. Olivas has been with the department for nearly five years, all of them in HR. "I love being in a position where my work and efforts impact the quality of work-life balance for employees. I am excited to assist our HR Team while we work to set the standard for HR departments and pave the way to make LOPD the best NM State agency to work for." Olivas lives with his wife, children and stepchildren and a bunch of animals, including a horse, llama, goats, dogs and one bearded dragon, in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque. He is active at Legacy Church and mentors people overcoming addictions and difficulties finding employment due to felony convictions. He is pursuing a degree in ministry to volunteer with prison and jail ministries.

Let's have some fun

Contests, prizes, good-spirited competition

Which office can make the funniest zoom theme group picture? How about most interesting (and work appropriate) PPE personalization? Office joke contest? Paper hat folding? Oldest work from home pet? Trivia?

Please send contest ideas to me, Maggie Shepard, at maggie.shepard@lopdm.us. Once I gather enough ideas, I will send out a contest theme, rules, and prize options. Stay tuned.

Prizes include gift cards and other goodies.

Virtual recovery

NM DEFENDERS IN RECOVERY, a virtual recovery meeting, will be held every Friday at 6 p.m. via Zoom. For the Zoom link, more information or for links to other virtual recovery resources, you can contact Craig Acorn at craig.acorn@gmail.com or 650-283-0694; Jennifer Birmingham at Jbirmingham2112@gmail.com or 575-288-7958. This is not a department-sponsored effort. Anonymity is strictly honored.

To contribute, correct, compliment or criticize newsletter content, or to talk to LOPD Communication Specialist Maggie Shepard, contact her at maggie.shepard@lopdm.us or (505) 690-4529. All newsletter content is compiled by Maggie Shepard and approved by LOPD leadership.