

The Defender: Coronavirus Edition

A mini  newsletter

Corona week 3
March 30, 2020

The new normal?



We all know the importance of our work as public defenders. It's even more important in this unprecedented time, but it looks, and feels different as you can see above. A colleague of ours has the virus and is recovering. And today we got the first COVID-19 diagnosis of an inmate in a county jail. This thing is far from over, but we are now digging in for the longer battle. And as we do so, it's so important to keep focus on and value the human "contact" between us all.

So here are some reminders of the friends and colleagues — and their kids and pets and snacks— behind the emails and video screens from these first few weeks under the coronavirus regime. Keep the faith — and keep up the contact, communication, and caring for each other.

— Ben

It begins



Delerium starts to set in after hours of crafting the department's Coronavirus Response Plan and advocacy plans.



Trying to prevent - or at least minimize - this...

Attorney in Santa Fe Public Defender's Office tests positive for coronavirus

By Phaedra Haywood phaywood@sfnwmexican.com Mar 25, 2020 Updated Mar 26, 2020 1

Home / News / Coronavirus



An attorney in the Santa Fe Public Defender's Office has tested positive for the coronavirus, prompting that office and the First Judicial District Attorney's Office to temporarily close.



Inmate at MDC tests positive for COVID-19



Christina Rodriguez
Updated: March 30, 2020 01:10 PM
Created: March 30, 2020 09:50 AM

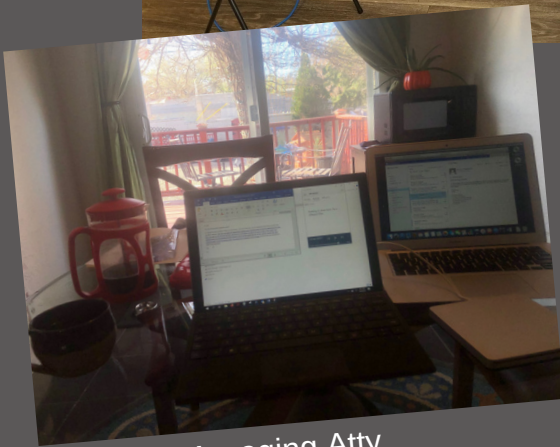
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) has had an inmate test positive for COVID-19. The Bernalillo County jail learned of the positive test Sunday.

Ordered home

Employees start to work from home as much as possible



IT's Ron Day might win for home setup



Abq Metro Managing Atty
Tonie Abeyta's sunny view



Deputy Chief Randy
Chavez at home

Ergonomics for the home office

- Find a work surface that is the right height for you
- Choose the best chair available in your home
- Use a rolled-up towel or pillow to provide lumbar support, if needed.
- Sit on a cushion to elevate yourself if the work surface is too high.
- Look for reams of copy paper, cardboard boxes, etc. to use as a footrest if you don't have one at home.
- Raise your monitor using books, boxes or reams of paper

New coworker for Appellate Defender Kim Chavez-Cook who says she set up office in the cat room at her house.



New employees



Jenn Birmingham is now supervised by Amira, the red tail boa, and doggos supervisors



5th District Defender Deirdre Ewing is now overseen by Supervisor Lilith



Deputy Chief Cydni Sanchez gets a dose of cuteness from her son, Louie, and dog, Chewie.



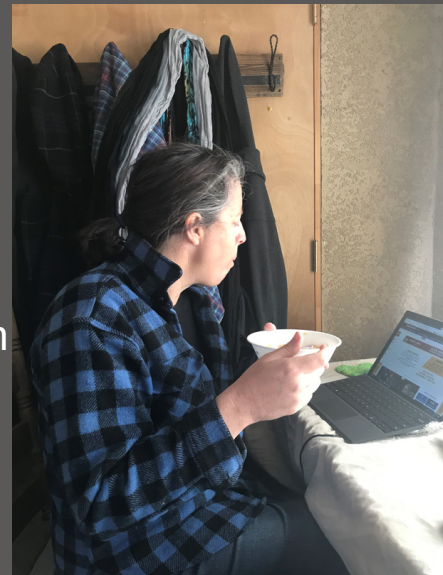
Moral support staff Spatchy, aka Spatchington Manor, distracting Comm. Specialist Maggie Shepard from something important.

Provisions for working from home

Julie Kitch says she went to the store to stock up and "somehow ended up with all of these."



Communication Specialist Maggie Shepard on her 5th bowl of cereal (when one would have done the trick).



Coffee, Jenn Birmingham style

New ways to work

Zoom!



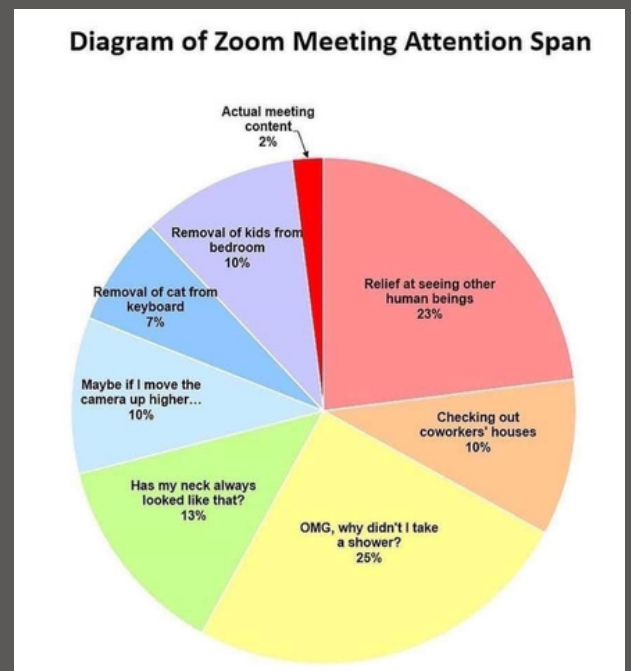
After constant pushing from attorneys, admins and advocates, the courts start to empty. Abq atty Jonathan Ibarra took this pic today during arraignments for out of custody clients in Albuquerque.



11th District Defender Matt Cockman's crew in Aztec today



Office meeting in Clovis today. 9th District Defender Ibukun Adepouju says the "baby made it all better."



Just for a Zoom laugh

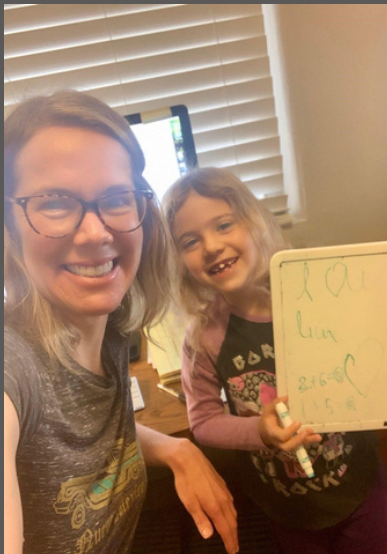
Gov. cancels school for the year



Juvenile Division's Dennica Torres works from her home office. Also with her



daughters working on learning at home.



General Counsel Adrienne Turner and daughter Rosemary with some smiles at the start of their Monday.



Comm. Sepcialist Maggie Shepard's daughter, Signe, brings a visitor amid the work day.



Felix "definitely helps keep my spirits up!" says Alec Orenstein, managing attorney in Gallup.

Parenting while working resources

Caring for children or other dependents while trying to keep up your dedication to this important work is not easy. It's a pull in two very important directions. Numerous agencies and resources exist to help strategize with and listen to you in this hard time. An NAPD webinar is scheduled for Wednesday at 12-2 MST on [Parenting and Defending in the COVID Era](#): Defending and parenting are tough enough to juggle even in the best of circumstances. Throw in home-schooling, working from home, and a global pandemic and it feels like we're juggling flaming chainsaws. Please join us in a conversation where we can commiserate over our struggles and share strategies for the defender-parenting juggling act. Contact LOPD's new Training and Recruitment Director Liz Holmes for more information. The state's Employee Assistance Program is available and the CDC has even addressed this reality [here](#). Don't hesitate to reach out to the LOPD Human Resources Department for more information. Also check out this [link](#).

A note from HR on FMLA

On March 18, 2020, the federal government signed into law the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201), which requires employers with fewer than 500 employees and government employers to grant 80 hours of paid sick leave under the conditions identified in the Act. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was also expanded to include the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLA).

Here is a [link](#) that will provide more information. The Chief will also be sending out an email explaining how it applies to LOPD employees.

A word from Jennifer Burrill

On March 24, the LOPD community learned of its first - and we all hope last - COVID-19 positive test results. While LOPD cannot, did not and will not release private medical information, this employee voluntarily spoke with media. Public defender Jennifer Burrill, of Santa Fe, talked of her COVID-19 experience and the cautions our department has been pushing for so the coronavirus doesn't make its way into our incarcerated populations (a battle we saw the first signs of losing today with a positive test of an inmate at the jail in Bernalillo County). Here is a message from Jennifer Burrill, from the comfort of her home:



Jennifer Burrill

At times like these it becomes obvious to the public the risks public defenders take in the pursuit of justice. We have known all along that that people without big bank accounts or friends in high places deserve justice, too, and that helping them is not always easy or safe. Working from home while juggling my coronavirus diagnosis and symptoms makes this job even more difficult. At times I feel ineffective and even incompetent without my files, without a scanner, without face to face interviews with witnesses, and without being able to sit down and work on a case with my client. You may feel this way too. However, remember it is you, the public defender, that shows up everyday to protect the Constitution and battle those who are fighting to trample it during this time of crisis. Only those in the fight have the opportunity to win. It is this bond of unity of purpose that makes us unique and a family. I have never been more proud to work with such an amazing group of people.