



Chief's message

It's been 11 years since LOPD became an independent agency guided by an independent commission. And my how we've grown. In FY18, about five years into our independence, we were at a \$49 million budget and 439 employees. From then to today, we've added 58 new positions and are operating a nearly \$78 million budget. That's more people to do the work of representing our clients, in more creative and holistic ways. Cont.↓

Launching LOPD

New recruitment strategy begins

Amid a national shortage of attorneys, law firms large and small are getting creative with recruitment. A new plan at LOPD aims to magnify our reach by mobilizing leaders to travel the country spreading word of the rich work opportunities - and need - here.

So far, five District Defender and Managing Attorney recruitment trips are planned from the far northwest to the deep south and a few stops in between. Events include legal job fairs, on campus interview intensives, and class/special interest law school group visits.

"The best people to recruit for work in local offices are people practicing and living in those communities," said Deputy Chief Cydni Sanchez, noting recruitment is for all state offices. "Our leaders are dynamic and make a great impression."

DDs and MAs submitted their recruitment proposal to Training and Recruitment Dir. Liz Holmes. The department is funding travel and recruitment supplies.

The outreach initiative comes on top of ongoing recruitment at UNM's School of Law and regular visits to Texas Tech. The department is also sponsoring the Indian Law conference at the Federal Bar Association.

"We continue to explore different opportunities to find a diverse attorney force dedicated to public defense. This outreach is paying off and we will stay committed to finding new and innovate ways to recruit attorneys to LOPD," Holmes said.

LOPD on Tour

Chief Ben Baur and Liz Holmes - Tucson for Sonoran Desert Career Fair
Dayna Jones and Joel Lobo - NW Public Service Career Fair @ Lewis and Clark Law School
Julie Ball and Ibukun Adepoju - New Orleans area law schools events
Nate Banks - Thurgood Marshall School of Law
Chris Machold - virtual tabling event in southern California
Ibukun Adepoju and Julpa Dave - Rusty Duncan Criminal Law Course job expose in Texas



Chief's message cont.

And we've grown in other ways as well. We have become one of the leading voices on criminal justice reform issues in the state legislature. We work for justice and lead conversations in our local communities — through media appearances, speaking at city council and county commission meetings, our warrant workshops at public libraries, and the many ways we've engaged in community conversations. Our reputation has grown. The word is getting out about what we're building, and people want to be part of it.

I'm very proud of us for what we have all created here, and I hope that we can take a moment to reflect on all the good we've accomplished, this year and the over last decade. Every client we've supported, every case we've fought, every connection built—these moments matter. They're proof of what we can do together.

Of course it hasn't been – and will never be – all smooth sailing. This year's biggest challenge may have been the cybersecurity incident. It was a shock to the system and was really traumatic. But we met it head-on with immediate crisis management and thoughtful and strategic adjustments to try to minimize the effects on our clients and our work, and to avoid a recurrence in the future.

And that's what we do. We face each challenge, try to turn the challenges into opportunities, and keep moving forward.

So thank you for being part of this team, for your dedication to clients and community, and for building something that's making a difference for New Mexicans. I'm grateful for each of you and excited for what's ahead.

Wishing you a joyful holiday season and a bright new year.

- Ben

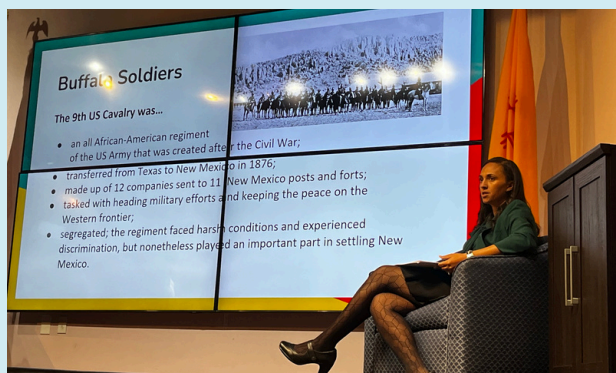
LOPD at the NM Bar Association



Training and Recruitment Dir. Liz Holmes and Deputy Chief Cydni Sanchez staff the LOPD table during the NM Bar Assn.'s Annual Conference.



Chief Ben Baur pitches the benefits of working in public defense.



Atty Nikki Berry, who also serves as a vice president of the NM Black Lawyers Association presents at the conference.

New statewide Social Work supervisor



Stefany Elayne Foreman has been selected as the new supervisor for the Social Work Unit. Stefany has worked in Behavioral Health and Reentry in Albuquerque for the last seven years. She is passionate about helping her community as a lifetime resident of Albuquerque.

“I am looking forward to taking on a new adventure and opportunity to continue working with individuals in our community. I look forward to learning from you all and contributing to the foundation you all have built.”

Social Work Wins

Social Work wins are mighty.
Here's two recent:

Late holiday work

With Social Worker Erika Croft leading the charge, a team of attorneys pulled off a big win just in time for Thanksgiving — getting a client out of jail and into a treatment program. The client had been stuck in custody since August on a nonviolent charge, and his mental and physical health were suffering. Despite multiple delays and roadblocks to get his release, the team kept pushing and finally convinced the court to grant his release with GPS monitoring.

On Thanksgiving Eve, Erika and Managing Attorney Chris Knight made the trek with the client to the treatment center in Española.

Attorney Luke Jobe says this: “Thanks to this fabulous team [my client] will be spending Thanksgiving in a program that cares about him and values his inherent worth as a human being.”

Juvie persistence

Social Workers Eva Buchwald and case manager Linda Stranich persisted in finding a solid plan for an 18yo old client, who had been found incompetent and held at MDC for almost 9 months for charges he obtained while he was 17. To make matters worse, he had been shot in the head after the incident he was charged with and was having frequent seizures while at MDC. Despite that the DA and Juvenile Probation had dug in and opposed his release successfully at a number of hearings.

Eva and Linda were able to put together a comprehensive plan to address his mental health and physical needs. The judge praised them at the hearing and indicated that thoroughness of the plan was the reason the judge was agreeing to release him. All the moving parts came together and he was finally released from MDC.

Reflections from the NAPD Racial Justice Conference

LOPD sent three attorneys to the NAPD Racial Justice Conference this year. Here are reflections from attorneys Mallory Harwood in appeals and Joy Applewhite from Hobbs.



Joy, Deputy Chief Jennifer Barela and Mallory at the RJC



Mallory Harwood

The most impactful thing I learned at the Racial Justice Conference was what I don't know about my own home

I grew up in southeast Texas; I was aware, for example, that Galveston—where I spent many childhood summers—was the site of Juneteenth, when 250,000 slaves learned two years after the Emancipation

Proclamation that they were legally free. But the thing about our country is: the people in power don't want us to know the worst stories. What I didn't know is my hometown—Jefferson County, Texas—maintained a slavers' port, where at least 200 Africans were sold like property. Not only that, but at least six Black men were lynched there between 1896 and 1910 alone. Growing up, no one talked about this; there are no historical markers.

History and truth matter. They matter whether our clients are Black, white, Hispanic, indigenous, male, female, straight, queer, trans. Being public defenders doesn't mean we can't be racist, sexist, or homophobic; in fact, being complacent because we think we're fighting on the right side harms our clients and communities.

Anthony Ray Hinton told us: "Justice only happens when good people take a stand against injustice."

Stand up.



Joy Applewhite

I love going home to the South as a Black woman from Mississippi. I love the overflow of Black people, culture, soul food, and just safe spaces that brings a sense of comfort. Going to the Racial Justice Conference in Montgomery, Alabama, provided that same feeling. Much like the times I go back home to the

South, the Racial Justice Conference told the truth and did not hold back on the realities of America's past. They are realities that continue to seep into our everyday lives.

RJC was a conference full of learning, unlearning, relearning, healing, and a stark reminder that we have to continue to fight the good fight, get in good trouble, and do better. The people who came before us did so much more with much less than we have the privilege to have. Advancements in technology connect us much quicker than what the civil rights activists had at hand as they paved the way. It is because of them and my ancestors that I am able to make strides and achievements forward as a Black woman living, existing, breathing, advocating, and importantly resting — itself an act of resistance.

Keep the hope alive engineers!

From the LOPD Wellness Committee



Arts and crafts



Cup of tea in bed



Put fresh bedding on and tidy your room



Listen to your favourite playlist



Have a pamper night

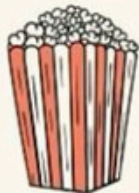


Exercise or yoga

SAFE WINTER 'SELF-CARE' IDEAS



Cook your favourite meal



Put a film or series on



Get lost in a book



Run yourself a bubble bath



Light a candle



Take a nap or get an early night

Transition plan for contractor hourly rates released

LOPD is working to transition its contract attorneys to hourly pay rates from their decades-long base pay rate system. The change was laid out in an analysis and plan released in October. The goal is to offer fair hourly rates to attract more attorneys, especially in rural communities, and to improve the quality of legal representation in New Mexico.

“There are fewer attorneys willing to work for our current rates, especially in rural areas. Switching to hourly pay will attract more attorneys and encourage more thorough work on each case,” said Chief Public Defender Bennett Baur.

For decades, contract attorneys have been paid a base rate per case — no matter the hours worked on it. For example, the base rate for a 3rd degree felony, such as involuntary manslaughter or residential burglary, is currently \$900. Under the new plan, contractors would be required to document the time worked on each case and would receive an hourly rate of \$150 per hour.

LOPD would transition its contractors to hourly rates over a five-year period, starting with a pilot project, if the plan receives the necessary Legislative funding. The change would bring LOPD contractor rates closer to but still less than what the State of New Mexico pays attorneys working on civil cases and less than the rates for federal public defenders.

The plan is available on the LOPD website under the Contract Counsel tab.



Las Cruces Trial Snake

Trial Snake has been the jury trial winner's trophy since 2017.

Halloween highlights



Hobbs



Clovis/Portales



Abq door contest



Santa Fe's lone spellcaster



Roswell



Carlsbad



Aztec



Las Cruces



Thanksgiving in Abq



Annual potluck picture



Funny honorable mention: A very pregnant Atty Kathryn Hardy casually sips on some Liquid Death (it's just sparkling water).

And onto Winter and Christmas holiday gatherings ...



Administrative Services Division holiday gathering



Abq Metro
White Elephant
party



Aztec's Ugly
Sweater Party



Roswell



Las Cruces

Holiday party at La Posta

Warrant workshops

Warrant workshops continue in Albuquerque. Funded by grants through the local CJCC, the workshops bring together our teams, prosecutors and service providers to help clients clear warrants.

The pics below are from the workshop Dec. 19th at the Main Library Downtown Abq.



This round included billboard advertising, the department's first.



From left, Molly Mahoney, Zachary Kolodny, and Malik Baker onsite to help clients



Community providers joined the event



Donated good for giveaway bags

Day at the Zoo for Abq



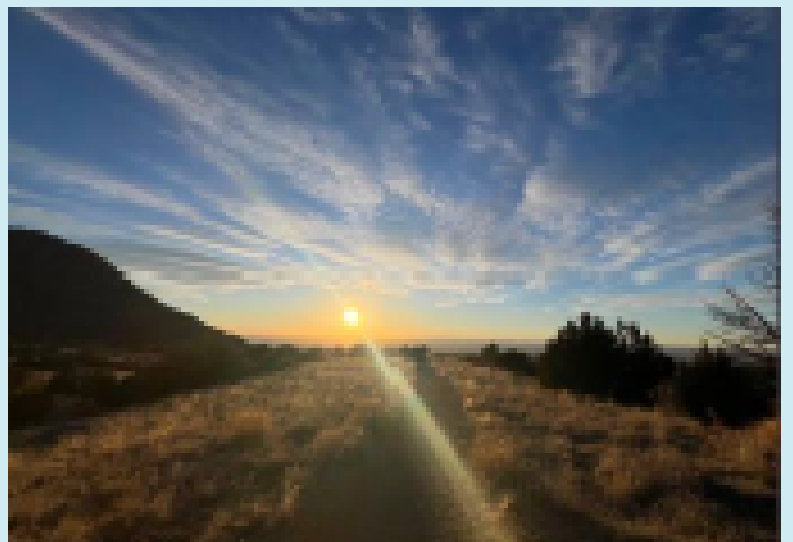
Enjoying some November sunshine, Albuquerque staff and attorneys ventured to the Zoo.

ChatGPT thinks this is us

Prompt was “public defenders in New Mexico”



Abq Run Club



This run club launched this year and is open to all. It meets in the Sandia Foothills. Walkers welcome! Talk to Sam Jay for more info.

Welcome to the LOPD team!

Camilla Allison	Public Defender 2		
Kelsey Neff	Law Clerk		
Colleen Cilwick	Case Manager		
Emma Lopez	Investigator 2		
Melissa Akins	Legal Associate		
Stephanie Gallegos	Training & Recruitment Coordinator		
Jackie Martinez	Legal Associate		
Yolanda Gomez	Clerk 2	Jacob Streeter	Public Defender 4
Emily Pratt	Public Defender 2	Jared Glass	Financial Specialist
Hannah Stephens	Public Defender 2	James VanCleave	Public Defender 3
Henry Emerson	Public Defender 2	Malik Baker	Public Defender 2
Isaac Pushkin	Public Defender 2	Jeremy LaCasse	IS Administrator
Jack Hart	Public Defender 2	Kaytlin Applegate	Senior Secretary
Katherine Walt	Public Defender 2	Gareth Denham	Public Defender 2
Miguel Quintana	Public Defender 2	Eloy Hita	Public Defender 3
Diego Guerrerortiz	Public Defender 2	Pamela Ivie	Clerk 2
Grace Kienzle	Public Defender 2	Maria Pomorski	Public Defender 3
Jacob Lopez	Public Defender 2	Kimberly Simmons Hodges	Public Defender 5
John Gillen	Public Defender 2	Garrett Martinez Bennett	Senior Secretary
Kylie Newman	Public Defender 2	Louis Mallette	Public Defender 3
Maggie Maestas	Public Defender 2	Carlos Montenegro	Public Defender 2
Susan Newman	Paralegal 1	Andrea Vigil	Secretary 1
Jeff Dennison	Public Defender 3		
Leanne Villanueva	Secretary 1		
Andrew Ruiz	Clerk 2		
Sharon Tarango	Paralegal 1		
Amanda Archuletta	Senior Secretary		

LOPD Anniversaries

Celebrating 1, 5, 10,
15, 20+ years

SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
NOVEMBER
DECEMBER

20 years

Trina Gonzales
Carlsbad paralegal

15 years

Jasmine Solomon

25 years

Kelli Christensen
MCDU paralegal

10 years

Linda Valenzuela
Jennifer Barela
Josie Enriquez
Cynthia Cairns
Claudette Tenorio
Jose Macias
Nate (Orin) Banks
Miriam Davis
Ana Cantu-Matta

5 years

Laurene Latasa
Karina Huebert
Erika Croft
Tashika Curlee
Krista Bailey
Sara Thompson
Magdalena Kephart
Earl Rhoads
Dayna Jones
Margaret Shepard
Nicole Hall
Ramsey Younis
Sunnie Calliste

Gale Jones
Jesse Craig
Kelly Deer
Eva Buchwald
Geran Landen
Zoe Glaser
Alyssa Aragon
Amanda Padilla
Andrew Lance
Connor Bridges
Dallas Alfaro
Deidre Olguin

1 year

Hibah Lateef
Kaylina Barry
Killeen Carter
Matthew Gonzales
Michael Gay
Michael White
Zachary Kolodny
Lev Kandkhorov
Amelia Ruffolo
Orlinda Ashley
Roxanna Mason
Michael Tarleton

Timothy Nuccio
Alexandra Saenz
Alexandria Lucero
Gabrielle Arsiaga
Stacy Kalpathy
Abigail Adamo
Carolyn Phillips
Jesus Gandara
Jimmy Ramos
Robert Parrish
Okarise Jaquez
Victoria Gonzales

Farewell - enjoy retirement

Louise Gurule

Legal Associate Appellate

Commission changes



The New Mexico Public Defender Commission elected Gina Maestas to serve as chair.

Maestas was appointed to the commission in 2022 and has since served as member at large. She is the first Hispanic female to chair the Commission.

Maestas is a University of New Mexico School of Law alumna, class of 1986. Early in her career she practiced as a public defense appellate attorney. She then served as Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts and as Chief Staff Attorney and Chief Clerk of the New Mexico Court of Appeals. She now resides in Albuquerque with her husband.

“I am honored to have been elected by my fellow commissioners to serve as Chair. I look forward to leading the Commission’s efforts to support the outstanding and dedicated attorneys and staff of the LOPD as they continue to provide excellent representation of their clients,” Maestas said.