



OFFICE OF FAMILY  
REPRESENTATION AND ADVOCACY  
Improving lives through outstanding advocacy

**Oversight Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
June 26, 2023**

**Roll Call**

**Members in Attendance:**

Chair Monica Zamora, Retired Judge, Court of Appeals  
Representative Gail Chasey, NM House of Representatives, District 18  
Ms. Monica R. Corica, JD, Civil Legal Services Attorney  
Hector Diaz, Ph.D., Director and Professor, School of Social Work, NMSU  
Tim Flynn-O'Brien, JD, Retired Civil Rights and Tort Attorney  
Elena Giacci, Trainer and Advocate  
Twila Hoon, JD, CAAP Director, NM Administrative Office of the Courts  
Bernie Lopez, Parent Advocate  
Senator Linda Lopez, NM State Senate, District 11  
Pamela Pierce, JD, CEO Silver Bullet Productions  
Cathyanna Sedillo, Youth Leader

**Members Absent**

Vice Chair Judge John F. Davis, Retired Judge, 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District  
Shaniah Gallegos, Youth Leader

**OFRA**

Beth Gillia, JD, Executive Director  
Lisa Fitting, JD, Administrative Services Director  
Leslie Jones, JD, Legal Services Director

**I. Call to Order/Welcome**

Chair Monica Zamora, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:32pm.

**II. Announcements (Informational)**

The 2024 Children's Law Institute will be held in person January 10-12, 2023. Calls for Proposals will be issued in the next few weeks.

### **III. Adoption of Agenda – Commission Chair Monica Zamora (Approval/Action)**

Hector Diaz moved and Monica Corica seconded the motion to adopt the agenda. There were no amendments. The agenda was approved unanimously.

### **IV. Approval of the Minutes from April 24, 2023 – Commission Chair Monica Zamora (Approval/Action)**

Linda Lopez moved and Twila Hoon seconded the motion to approve the April 24, 2023 Meeting Minutes. There were no corrections or additions. The Minutes were approved unanimously.

### **V. Director’s Report & Introduction of Management Team – Beth Gillia, Executive Director**

Beth announced two new hires: Leslie Jones, JD, Legal Services Division Director and Stacy Ortiz, MSW, Interdisciplinary Services Division Director. Beth summarized the qualifications and experience of both persons. Beth explained that with these hires, the Executive Team is fully staffed. (We did not get the funding for a Deputy Director so this position will wait.) Leslie introduced herself; Stacy will start July 5<sup>th</sup>.

Beth announced that they will post additional new jobs over the next months: a Chief Financial Officer (CFO): a Chief Information Officer/IT person (CIO), an Administrative Assistant, a Contract Manager, two Lead Attorneys, two MSWs, and several Family Peer Navigators. These will be announced on the website and posted by SPO.

There have been two RFPs for Contract Attorneys. There may be a third RFP in December. There has been a lot of movement: some attorneys want to reduce their caseloads and some want to increase them. Some want to move to new or different counties. There has been a lot of work to get contracts compatible with the Executive branch’s contract format. Contracts are now being signed and all attorneys will be paid and all clients will be served by July 1st.

In terms of office space, OFRA will have to RFP since there is no government space currently available in Albuquerque to meet OFRA’s needs. The RFP will be issued once OFRA is official on July 1<sup>st</sup> but it may take many months to find and negotiate a space.

Beth thanked Twila and Celina and AOC for all their assistance in this start-up phase. They have been especially helpful with securing equipment and supplies, and with purchasing the case management system. Training in the system has begun and customization has been initiated. Monica Corica noted that NMLA also has Legal Server, suggesting that NMLA may be able to assist. Monica suggested that Dorothy Larson and Carol Gardner may be available.

Finally, Beth spoke about national connections they have made to include the Family Justice Initiative (Leslie Jones will serve); and the National Association for Counsel for Children (NACC) and National Alliance for Parent Representation (Beth Gillia will serve on both).

Beth asked for questions and comments. Senator Lopez said it seemed like there was available State office space in Albuquerque. Beth responded that they have been told by GSD there is no space. Senator Lopez suggested Beth and Lisa also look at City and County space; Lisa was told there is none, but they will follow up with Senator Lopez about potential county space.

Beth also announced there will be a dedicated email address for filings. Ben Baur (Chief Public Defender, LOPD) complimented Beth and team, noting that creating such an entity is extremely hard. He offered their assistance and also noted the possibility of having contractors work for LOPD and OFRA. Beth noted the importance of collaboration across agencies.

Tim Flynn-O'Brien asked about how difficult and complex cases might be weighted. Beth responded that they will be working on that.

## **VI. Reports from Committees**

### Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

Monica C and Elena reported for the Committee that they are co-chairing. She and Elena reviewed the draft policy and have their respective ideas about how the policy should be edited. They will meet July 24<sup>th</sup> to present their respective ideas to the full Committee.

### Legislative

Mary Ann reported for the Committee pending votes to elect Linda Lopez and Gail Chasey as co-chairs. Mary Ann noted that Linda Lopez, Hector Diaz, Shaniah Gallegos, Gail Chasey, and Arika Sanchez participated. John Davis and Monica Zamora were not able to attend as they were at the Judicial Conclave.

Hector Diaz suggested that perhaps Linda Lopez could chair this Committee. Linda thought maybe she and Gail Chasey could co-chair. This will be decided at a later point. Participants agreed that the role of this Committee was to screen legislation that is introduced that has any impact on OFRA; to promote legislation that furthered OFRA's mission; and to provide education and awareness to legislators. (The Committee briefly discussed upcoming legislation on Direct Representation Children's Code changes and thought it should probably wait until the next 60-day session in 2025.)

The importance of legislation and messaging around families, including Native families, was also discussed. Participants referred to the constitutional right of parents to raise their children. They noted that there are other informal groups also meeting about this and though there is nothing concrete at this time, coalitions are being formed. They agreed that a common message was necessary as was the need to be proactive. The youth voice is needed with Legislators and others.

Participants suggested working with colleagues in the Senate and House; the possibility of meeting with LFC staff; perhaps a meeting with the acting CYFD Secretary; presentations to interim committees (Courts, Corrections and Justice as well as Health and Human Services); and meeting with the Attorney General. They also suggested working with social work educators at NMSU and elsewhere to stress the same messaging around families. Hector suggested two of his faculty as well as the Social Worker Task Force.

Mary Ann also discussed the availability of a webinar from the ABA National Reunification Month website. Representative Chasey has proposed that an Interim Committee review this. She also noted that there is a huge wave of negative information in NM that is out of sync with national trends that needs to be counter-acted. Senator Lopez added that she has recommended that OFRA present to Courts, Corrections, and Justice Interim Committee.

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/project-areas/national-reunification-month/agency-reunification-webinar/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/project-areas/national-reunification-month/agency-reunification-webinar/)

## Governance

Monica Z. reported that the Committee has exchanged many emails inclusive of edits to draft Commission Guidelines, draft Commission policies, and the draft strategic plan/task list. The Committee is meeting later this week.

### **VII. Website Subscriptions – Judge Monica Zamora, Commission Chair (Approval/Action)**

Monica Z. reminded Members and others to subscribe to the website. From this point forward, we will be issuing notices and sending materials from the website: <https://www.familyrepresentationnm.org/>. This will soon be <https://www.familyrepresentationnm.gov/>

### **VIII. Meeting Schedule – Judge Monica Zamora, Commission Chair (Approval/Action)**

Monica Zamora suggested the Commission move to meeting every other month with Committees meeting in the alternate months. Twila Hoon moved and Monica Corica seconded the motion to move to meeting every other month. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved unanimously. The next meeting will be August 28, 2023.

### **IX. Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **X. Public Input (Informational)**

Peter Cubra thanked the Commission and Office for all of its work. Peter noted that OFRA may have a potential legal problem in that a Mandamus action could be brought against OFRA because the statute requires 5 regional offices and we are only opening one. Peter believes we should use this as a strategy to get more funding. He further suggests we work with the Board of Finance and that we do something to establish the five offices. He suggests OFRA and the Commission not be passive. Monica Zamora noted that we are having these conversations and will move actively forward to seek additional funding. Gail Chasey thanked Peter for his offers to help and noted that Peter's experience as a plaintiff's attorney will be helpful. Bernie Lopez questioned how the legislature could require OFRA and regional offices and then not fund us. Monica Zamora noted that this is not the first time and that we need to be creative with the assets we have. Mary Ann agreed with Peter in terms of creating strategy and tactics to get the funding we need. Tim Flynn-O'Brien noted that it will take a long time to get an office in ABQ and even more time in the regions. He suggested that a small group (fewer than a quorum) be formed to work with Beth on strategy and tactics. This needs to be staff and Commission, perhaps a workgroup. Monica Corica agreed that we need a plan that includes the other regions. She noted she would participate in a workgroup to develop budget strategy. Elena Giacci noted that in the interests of diversity, equity and inclusion, we need to call on legislators to provide the funding we need, and possibly call on the Governor as well. Monica Zamora asked that if others want to participate in a workgroup, they should email her or Mary Ann. We could also include others from outside the Commission in this workgroup.

### **XI. Adjournment of Meeting – Judge Monica Zamora, Commission Chair (Approval/Action)**

Elena Giacci moved and Monica Corica seconded the motion to adjourn; the motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:33pm.

The next meeting will be August 28, 2023.