



OFFICE OF FAMILY
REPRESENTATION AND ADVOCACY
Improving lives through outstanding advocacy

**Oversight Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 27, 2023**

Roll Call

In attendance:

Chair Monica Zamora, Retired, Court of Appeals
Vice Chair Judge John F. Davis, Retired, 13th Judicial District
Representative Gail Chasey, NM House of Representatives, District 18
Cristen Conley, JD, Director, Corinne Wolfe Center for Child and Family Justice
Ms. Monica R. Corica, JD, NM Legal Aid
Hector Diaz, Ph.D., Director and Professor, School of Social Work, NMSU
Shaniah Gallegos, Youth Leader
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

OFRA Director

Beth Gillia, JD

Absent:

Cathyanna Sedillo, Youth Leader

I. Call to Order/Welcome

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

II. Announcements (Informational)

- Chair Zamora introduced Timothy Flynn-O'Brien who will serve as Cristen Conley's designee on the Oversight Commission. Tim then introduced himself and described his background. Cristen explained that she is appointing a designee because her responsibility at the Corinne Wolfe Center for Child and Family Justice, namely training and supports for attorneys and judges, could create a conflict as she will pursue training work with OFRA.

- Mary Ann reported that the Family Representation Commission has completed its work and that a final report with the recommendations will be sent out in the next week. She explained that the recommendations include both policy and practice, with all recommendations in one place, categorized and indexed. Policy statements will be extracted for review and adoption by the Commission. Gratitude was expressed to Judge DeLaney who chaired the Family Representation Commission.
- Arika Sanchez reported that SB31 passed – the Guardianship bill that addresses subsidized guardianship. The bill “cleans up” the previous act. It is waiting for the Governor’s signature.

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

Monica Corica moved and Twila Hoon seconded the adoption of the agenda. There were no amendments. The agenda was approved unanimously.

IV. Approval of the Minutes – Commission Chair Monica Zamora (Approval/Action)

John Davis moved and Twila Hoon seconded the adoption of the January 23, 2023 Meeting Minutes. There were no corrections or additions. The minutes were approved unanimously.

V. Open Meeting Act Resolution - Commission Chair Monica Zamora (Approval/Action)

Chair Zamora asked for questions and concerns about the proposed resolution that had been previously distributed to Members. There were none. Cristen Conley moved and Monica Corica seconded the adoption of the resolution as presented. The resolution was approved unanimously.

VI. Approval of Director as Non-Voting Member - Commission Chair Monica Zamora (Approval/Action)

Chair Zamora noted that the Director needs to attend Commission meetings and serve as a liaison between the Commission and the Office. Chair Zamora asked for questions and concerns about the proposal. There were none. Twila Hoon moved and Hector Diaz seconded the adoption of the proposal to have the Director as a non-voting member. The proposal was approved unanimously.

VII. Approval of Creation of Sub-Committees - Commission Chair Monica Zamora (Approval/Action)

Chair Zamora suggested that several sub-committees of the Commission be formed: Finance, Governance, Legislative, and Education. Governance would acknowledge the roles and responsibilities of the Commission and those of the Director that were heretofore discussed. The proposal at hand is to approve the Commission appointing sub-committees; participation will be solicited at a later date. Elena Giacci asked about where diversity and inclusion issues would be located on the sub-committees. Chair Zamora noted that this should be part of every sub-committee. Elena noted that she did not disagree but that there had to be a point person or “beacon” for these issues. Gail Chasey noted the legislation that Senator Lopez has proposed legislation for years to ensure that cultural issues be addressed throughout state government. Hector Diaz noted the value of diversity and social justice groups at NMSU. Linda Lopez noted that she will continue to pursue the legislation. She also suggested that each sub-committee be given a specific mandate (charter) to consider diversity and inclusion. Beth Gillia suggested a both/and approach – have a DEIB sub-committee and include DEIB in each sub-committee. Monica Corica agreed, especially in light of there being new Members in the future. Mary Ann Shaening noted that the FRC recommendations include one on DEIB. Chair Zamora asked for a motion to approve the ability of the Commission to create sub-committees. Hector Diaz moved and Monica Corica

seconded the adoption of the proposal to allow the Commission to establish sub-committees. The proposal was approved unanimously.

VIII. Report on the Summit – Commission Chair Monica Zamora and Beth Gillia, OFRA Director (Informational)

Chair Zamora reported on the Summit that was held in-person on March 23, 2023 and thanked Members for their participation. Logo and draft website were reviewed and will be launched soon. She reported that Members endorsed the emphasis on families and reviewed the roles and responsibilities of both the Commission and the Director.

Beth Gillia summarized the themes of the Summit:

- Families need to feel confident in our allegiance to them, to know they are not alone, to know they are not just jumping hoops but doing important work; that they are part of the design to improve systems. *The centrality of the family is the critical underlying and priority guiding principle.*
- We need to raise the bar for attorneys and other staff; have clear expectations and accountability. We also need to hold other system actors accountable to provide what families are entitled to under the law.
- We need to engage the community as well as system and policy advocates.
- We need to contribute to a culturally sensitive and responsive system. We need to be the beacon of equality and the public voice for children and families. Those voices are eloquent strong, and courageous.
- Everyone must be treated with dignity at all times: clients, staff, stakeholders, and more.
- We will promulgate a mission, vision, and guiding principles consistent with all of these themes.

Beth Gillia further reported that we did not get the budget we requested (\$11 million in state general fund which included \$5.3 million from the AOC); that we essentially got the \$5.3 plus \$2 million more. This means that the rollout will be more incremental: there will only be one regional office (Albuquerque) with less than full interdisciplinary services. It will take two more years to get to all five regional offices. She assured attendees that attorneys for children and families will be provided statewide, mostly through contract attorneys.

Chair Zamora added that we need to educate leadership and Beth specified the following: the Governor and her staff; the LFC; Chair Munoz and his constituents, HAFC leaders Small and Dixon; and Interim Committees. Gail Chasey agreed with this and said we need to have a network across the state to talk to legislators and others. She also said the LFC Director announced his retirement. Linda Lopez added that we still have funding in NM and we have an opportunity to educate the LFC and all the other leaders mentioned above.

IX. Public Input (Informational)

Peter Cubra: The work of OFRA is vital; failure to fund the Office is catastrophic, a travesty; comparison made to LOPD underfunding. He is committed to working with the advocacy community to assert need and look for additional funding and alternative ways to encumber money.

Chair Zamora: We will work towards success even though we will start on a smaller scale. We will raise the bar for attorneys.

Susan Weiss: Could this need to communicate be part of the Education Sub-committee? Noted one small opportunity to reframe and tell the story differently is by using the platform of National Reunification Month which is supported by ABA.

Chair Zamora: Commission is indeed talking about the need to educate a wide array of individuals and groups. We will follow up with ABA.

Pam Pierce: If we are going to advocate for OFRA, we should be clear on our branding. We need an “elevator speech” that each of us has to speak with clarity what we will do (not the principles, but where actions will take place).

Tim Flynn-O’Brian: if statute requires five regional offices and we only start in Albuquerque, can constituents from those other regions raise the issue with their elected officials.

Monica Corica: perhaps we can get some level of service in small communities with creative solutions – social worker interns for example. Also asked about process for supplemental request.

Peter Cubra: Ben Baur, the Chief Public Defender, has vast experience getting supplemental appropriations for the LOPD. Contract costs often get additional funding.

Gail Chasey: need to look into that and how the supplemental process happens.

Judge DeLaney: issue with supplemental is timing – only have time it is allocated and end of fiscal year to get it spent; not a reliable way to plan a budget.

Chair Zamora: we need to be strategic; we will continue to speak to LOPD; early conversations on resource sharing; more quality oversight of contract attorneys with the budget we have; moves quality forward.

Linda Lopez: Education Sub-committee is critical; this session was anti-CYFD; we are associated with CYFD even though we are not connected; need to get the word out to legislators and others, especially the LFC. It is the education of members that we must do. There are legislators who do not see the big picture.

Beth Gillia: disappointed that we cannot roll out interdisciplinary services across the state but have opportunity to collect data and tell a data story moving forward about impact of these services.

Monica Corica: full impact of interdisciplinary service will not be known unless we also include small/rural areas; need to somehow fund that.

Catherine Pavelski: There are legislators who think that any family who has had any contact with the Department must be horrible people and don’t really deserve quality representation. Only horrible stories in the news, never good stories and never just “horrible parents.”

Cristen Conley: need different language; the law is “abuse and neglect” and need to change that; this is complex area of law; need more education on this.

X. Other Business

Chair Zamora thanked Judge DeLaney for her work and the work of the Family Representation Commission.

The next meeting is April 24, 2023 at 3:30 via Zoom

X. Adjournment of Meeting – Commission Chair Monica Zamora (Approval/Action)

Monica Corica moved and Bernie Lopez seconded the motion to adjourn; the motion was approved unanimously.