

**Office of Family Representation and Advocacy**  
**Oversight Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**September 26, 2022**

**Roll Call**

In attendance:

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, NM Legal Aid  
Hon John F. Davis, Retired, 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District  
Hector Diaz, Ph.D., Director and Professor, School of Social Work, NMSU  
Shaniah Gallegos, Youth with lived experience  
Twila Hoon, JD, CAAP Director, NM Administrative Office of the Courts  
Bernie Lopez, Parent with lived experience  
Senator Linda Lopez, NM State Senate, District 11  
Pamela Pierce, JD, CEO Silver Bullet Productions  
Cathyanna Sedillo, Youth with lived experience  
Judge M. Monica Zamora, Retired, Court of Appeals

Absent

Elena Giacci, Trainer and Advocate

**Overview**

Mary Ann Shaening, Interim Oversight Commission Facilitator, provided a brief history of how the Office of Family Representation and Advocacy (OFRA) came about. Quality of representation has been a priority of the Children’s Court Improvement Commission for decades and later, for the Family Representation Task Force created by the Legislature. That Task Force recommended that OFRA be created as an independent agency in the executive branch of NM government. HB46 was written and was successfully passed by the Legislature in 2022. The statute also created this Oversight Commission.

Mary Ann also explained the status of OFRA as an official entity, noting that the budget will be designated to OFRA July 1, 2023. At that point, OFRA will take over legal representation of children and parents.

**Introductions**

Each Commission Member took a few minutes to introduce themselves.

## **Election of Chair**

Mary Ann reviewed the requirement for a chair in the statute. She explained that we need a Chair prior to the Legislative session where we are seeking an appropriation. We could also introduce changes to the Children's Code on representation of children.

Judge Zamora suggested that the Commission consider a Chair and Vice-Chair functioning as Co-Chairs. Representative Chasey noted her agreement with this idea and suggested that Judge Davis take one of these positions. Judge Davis noted he had limited availability. Senator Lopez noted that she and Representative Chasey will support the Chair(s) on budget and all other legislative initiatives. Judge Zamora indicated she would be interested. Bernie Lopez nominated Judge DeLaney but she cannot serve. Bernie Lopez then nominated Judge Zamora as Chair. Judge Davis said he was willing to serve as Vice-Chair. Mary Ann asked for additional nominations and there were none. Shaniah Gallegos indicated that she was not ready to chair but wanted to learn this work. Mary Ann suggested Shaniah Gallegos be a "Chair-Apprentice." Bernie Lopez would also like to be a "Chair-Apprentice."

Twila Hoon moved and Pam Pierce seconded that Judge Zamora serve as Chair and Judge Davis serve as Vice-Chair. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **OFRA Director Job Description**

Mary Ann explained that the Director will be initially hired through the AOC with the position transferred to OFRA on July 1, 2023. The Family Representation Commission (FRC) drafted and recommended the job description provided to the Oversight Commission prior to this meeting. The job description is built on the qualifications and duties as articulated in the statute creating OFRA. The salary is in the budget at \$137,592 (plus the standard benefit package). The FRC also recommended sites where the job would be posted. Monica Corica asked about whether we would hire a recruiter; Mary Ann responded that we did not budget for a recruiter.

Mary Ann explained that she would work with the Commission to identify a selection committee, interview protocol, and rating process. Monica Corica suggested that the job announcement describe that the Director will have the support of additional administrative staff. Monica Corica also asked how many attorneys OFRA would hire. Mary Ann explained that to start, only one employed attorney would be assigned per case. The rest would be contractors. Judge Zamora suggested an introduction on the job description stating that this is a new agency and a new position.

Judge Zamora asked about timelines. Mary Ann suggested we could get this posted by October 11<sup>th</sup> and leave it open until early November. We will work with the Commission to develop an interview committee, protocol, and rating system. We will do this at the October meeting. Judge Zamora suggested that one of the chairs be on the committee; Monica Corica wants to serve as well. The hiring and on-boarding will take place as soon as possible.

Judge Davis moved and Twila Hoon and Pam Pierce seconded that the job description be approved with the understanding that the introductory paragraphs will be added. There was no additional discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Discussion and Resolution - Open Meetings Act**

Mary Ann summarized the requirements of the Open Meetings Act. Meeting dates and times need to be posted. We can set that schedule and post it once. [At the time of this meeting it was thought we had to also

post in a newspaper and radio station, but it turns out that this is at our discretion.] Until we have an OFRA website, we can post on the AOC website.

Judge Davis also asked about administrative work which for now can be delegated to Shaening and Associates, Inc. Mary Ann also explained that we will hire a Director by the end of the year. The FRC is also recommending that five additional positions be established and hired: Deputy Director, Legal Services Division Director, Interdisciplinary Services Division Director, Administrative Services Director, and Administrative/Executive Assistant. These five positions would be hired by the Director, not the Oversight Commission.

The Commission discussed setting a regular meeting date and that the time preferably be after 3:00 to accommodate work schedules. The Oversight Commission will meet on the fourth Monday from 3:30-5:00 (except for December). The schedule is as follows.

- October 24, 2022
- November 28, 2022
- December 19, 2022
- January 23, 2023
- February 27, 2023
- March 27, 2023
- April 24, 2023
- May 22, 2023
- June 26, 2023
- July 24, 2023
- August 28, 2023
- September 25, 2023

### **Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be October 24, 2022 and we will develop the interview and selection process. The Co-Chairs will decide what other items will be on the agenda.

### **Adjourn**

Pam Pierce moved and Monica Corica seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 pm.