

State of New Mexico

OFFICE OF FAMILY REPRESENTATION AND ADVOCACY

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR



BETH GILLIA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FARRA FONG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR PROGRAMS

LISA FITTING
DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS

OFRA Commission Hybrid Meeting April 27, 2026 APPROVED Minutes

Members in Attendance

Vice Chair John Davis, Retired Judge, 13th Judicial District
Alison Pauk, CIP Director, NM Administrative Office of the Courts
Linda Lopez, NM State Senator, District 11
Beth Gillia, OFRA Executive Director
Cristen Conley, Director of Corinne Wolfe Center for Child and Family Justice
Bernie Lopez, Parent Advocate
Elena Giacci, Trainer and Advocate
Pamela Pierce, CEO Silver Bullet Productions
Mary Nienow, Director and Associate Professor School of Social Work, NMSU

Members Absent

Chair Tim Flynn-O'Brien, Retired Civil Rights and Tort Attorney
Monica Corica, Civil Legal Services Attorney
Pamelya Herndon, NM State Representative, District 28
Joanna DeLaney, Youth Member
Abbigale Martinez, Youth Member

I. Call to Order/Welcome at 3:02pm.

II. Announcements (Informational)

OFRA's newest staff were introduced: Matthew O'Gorman (Staff Attorney) and Nancy Morales (Receptionist). Director Gillia announced that Alyssa Davis, FPSN, won an Excellence Award at the Children's Law Institute (CLI). Commissioner Conley congratulated Director Gillia for winning a Lifetime Achievement Award at CLI for her service to our community and state.

Director Gillia thanked Commissioner Pierce for joining the OFRA Book club meeting to discuss her documentary film, *No Greater Act: Pueblo Resistance*.

III. Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Conley moved to remove Item IV - Approval of Minutes from the February 2026 Meeting. Commissioner Pauk seconded the motion. All in favor, agenda was adopted as amended with no opposition.

IV. Public Input

Commissioner Bernie Lopez mentioned the Attorney General's successful lawsuit against Meta, which aimed to protect children against exploitation.

A member of the public commented that Guardians ad Litem (GALs) are not having sufficient contact with their child clients and questioned whether GALs are adequately representing their clients. The Commissioners were interested in hearing more about OFRA's complaint process. A full report will be provided at the June meeting, which will include data about complaints and their resolution so far.

V. Director's Report

Director Gillia announced the OFRA Convening to talk with our stakeholders and partners about what we've learned in the time we've been in existence and where we're going in the future. The Convening, *Three Years of Leading, Lifting-Up Families & Learning: Moving Forward with Purpose*, will be held on June 24, 2026, from 4:00 - 6:00pm. The save-the-date will go out by email this week.

The Commission considered whether to move the June 22, 2026, meeting to earlier in the day on June 24, 2026, to encourage in-person participation at both the meeting and the Convening. Commissioners suggested that OFRA send a survey for voting on changing the date and time.

Update on case management system

We have prepared a Request for Information that closes on June 8, 2026. The RFI should help us frame our request for special IT funding for FY28. If funding is approved, we will issue an RFP (Request for Proposals) for a case management system.

Staffing

In addition to the two new staff introduced earlier in the meeting, we are hiring an FPSN and two new staff attorneys. We also hope to hire a supervising attorney, a third social worker, and a Lead FPSN before June 30, 2026. The Lead FPSN will provide coaching and mentoring, as well as help with training and shadowing for new FPSNs.

Case Filing Data

Ever increasing case filings are creating extra burdens on attorneys and legal teams. In all FY25, 567 new cases were filed. As of the date of this meeting, in FY26, 647 new cases have been filed, which is 80 more than *the total* last year.

If case filings continue at the average of 65 cases per month, we will have another 130 before the fiscal year is over, for a total of 210 *more* filings this fiscal year as compared to last year.

The CARA directive is one reason for the increase in filings. In the last half of FY25 (after the Directive was issued), 37 CARA cases were filed. In the first ten months of this fiscal year, 152 CARA cases were filed. The CARA cases raise concerns for

children and parents: for example, children are in foster care with only a finding of probable cause for up to a year.

Although we don't have data for the number of cases being dismissed in the same period, anecdotally it appears that cases are lasting longer than in the past. The increased case filings, coupled with cases not being dismissed, ramps up our attorneys' caseloads. Another burden is CYFD's delay in submitting proposed orders that would resolve issues or finalize cases. In Bernalillo County, there are 1200 outstanding court orders in Bernalillo County alone. These outstanding orders delay progress and permanency for children.

FY26 Budget

We are about 83% through the year and have spent 74% of our total budget. However, we have a "catch-up" period in June when we pay both May and June invoices, so we are on target to spend down our budget and are anticipating a small reversion (about \$246,000, based on daily tracking of our expenses, and assuming we collect all budgeted IV-E funds). The Commission and Director Gillia discussed how Title IV-E reimbursement funding works and what we can claim.

FY27 Budget

Our FY27 budget, which starts July 1, 2026, is \$15,049,700, which is \$818,000 more than our current budget. Given the increasing cost of contract attorneys (because of increasing filings and delays in dismissals), this increase will not be enough to open a second office in FY27.

We will likely begin preliminary conversations about our FY28 budget request at the June meeting. Our request will certainly incorporate our pilot funding (GRO funding) into the base budget, include funds to open a second office, and seek funds for preventive interdisciplinary legal services designed to keep children safely out of the foster care system.

Before retiring, Director Gillia will provide a five-year plan for OFRA to the Commission and the next Director.

VI. Adjournment of Meeting

Commissioner Conley moved to adjourn, and Commissioner Alison Pauk seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 4:24pm