



Chief's message

This issue of the Newsletter is looking at how we are building the future of LOPD.

Our paid externship program is already bringing in new people who are committed to public defender work, helping us build a stronger, more diverse team. And we're expanding and strengthening our internal networks, sharing knowledge, and creating opportunities to support one another. From de-escalation training to paralegal collaboration across districts, we're making real improvements in how we work.

Also ... we're getting close to the end of the legislative session, pushing hard for increases to our budget for more positions and higher salaries, supporting funding for behavioral health services and reentry programs, fighting "tough on crime" bills that would just lead to increased incarceration, and doing what we always do — figuring out how to make public defense stronger across the state.

We have a week left, and we'll report out when it's over. In the meantime, thanks for the work you do every day, for your commitment to clients, and for always working to make a difference in our communities.

- Ben

Paid Externships paying off

Waiting list growing for new attorney recruitment program

In the never-ending battle to grow the staff and attorney ranks to meet client needs, LOPD launched a statewide paid externship program for new attorneys in 2024. **It is showing great results.**

The program allows externs to work for LOPD for a stipend in the spring, fall and summer on a full or part time basis for eight weeks. They can earn up to \$10,000 full time in Santa Fe, Las Cruces and Albuquerque. In the other offices they can earn up to \$12,000 full time. The money comes from the Public Attorney Fund that was passed by the New Mexico Legislature in 2023. Deploying it has taken a lot of work from LOPD's fiscal and admin teams.

"We want to attract dedicated public defenders from as varied of backgrounds and experiences as possible," said LOPD Training and Recruitment Dir. Liz Holmes. "We have people who want to work as public defenders but can't afford to take an unpaid externship. Now they can."

When the project was launched in 2024, LOPD placed 13 externs in five offices. Out those 13, eight have joined or will soon join the department fulltime as Limited Practitioners.

In 2025, LOPD received applicants from around the country, and 21 positions have been filled in eight offices statewide so far.

"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. "And thank you to the managers and supervisors taking on these great externs. This is good for all of us."



Recent extern Jasper Takenori Tsuchiya Cook



I did a summer externship at the NM LOPD where I was fairly compensated and given meaningful work to do. LOPD has you work with real clients, on real cases, and they give you real work. I was not given tasks to keep me busy but instead, I was given the opportunity to help clients substantially. I learned more about being an attorney from my externship at the LOPD than any other experience. The LOPD also works to foster camaraderie at the firm, and in my experience, there was always someone around to ask for help or to back you up. If you are thinking about going into this field I would highly recommend an externship at the LOPD.

Dinner with new friends

Chef Fernando Ruiz is using his well-earned cooking fame - he even beat Bobby Flay! - to provide career opportunities for formerly incarcerated people at his restaurant Escondido Santa Fe. And using his own background of having been incarcerated and building a new life, Ruiz is advocating for more robust re-entry programs in the state's prisons.

Chief Baur and Deputy Chief Philip Larragoite visited Ruiz at Escondido earlier this year to discuss supporting his efforts and partnering on possible community events. And, of course, to enjoy the food.

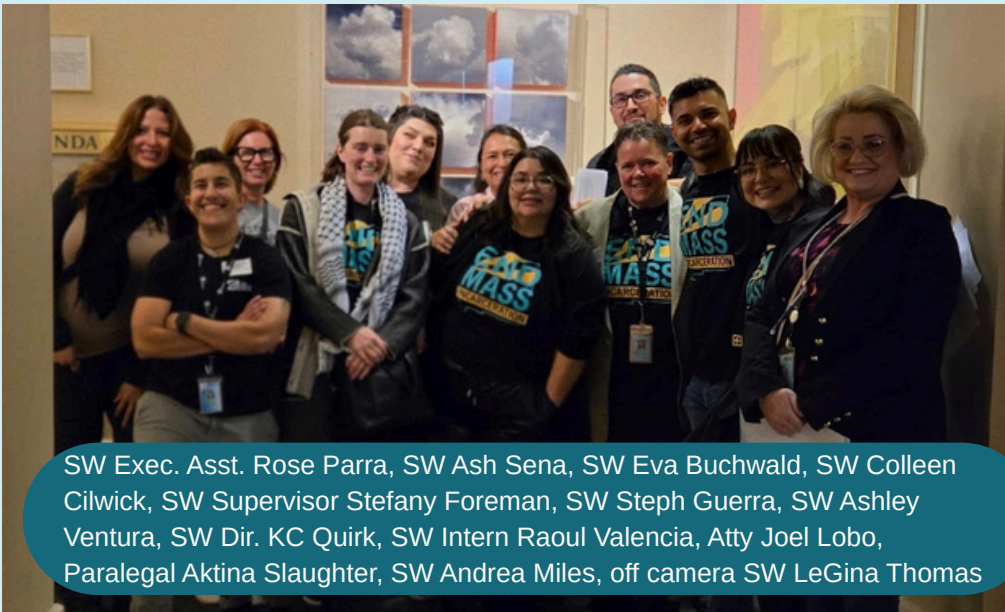
“There were legislators and community members talking about the need to help people transition out of prison and back into the community and to create job opportunities for them, The people at Escondido know it and we know it. This is truly the way to help people coming out of prison succeed,” Baur said. “And the food was excellent.”



From left, Escondido business partner Ralph Martinez, Chief Ben Bar, Chef Fernando Ruiz, and Deputy Chief Philip Larragoite visit at Escondido Santa Fe.

Legislative Session Visits

At left is the LOPD Social Work team and below the Executive and Admin teams



SW Exec. Asst. Rose Parra, SW Ash Sena, SW Eva Buchwald, SW Colleen Cilwick, SW Supervisor Stefany Foreman, SW Steph Guerra, SW Ashley Ventura, SW Dir. KC Quirk, SW Intern Raoul Valencia, Atty Joel Lobo, Paralegal Aktina Slaughter, SW Andrea Miles, off camera SW LeGina Thomas

Chief Ben Baur, LOPD Commissioner Peter Schoenburg, and Deputy Chief Randy Chavez



General Counsel Adrienne Turner, Deputy Chief Jennifer Barela, and Deputy Dir. Policy & Administration Theresa Edwards



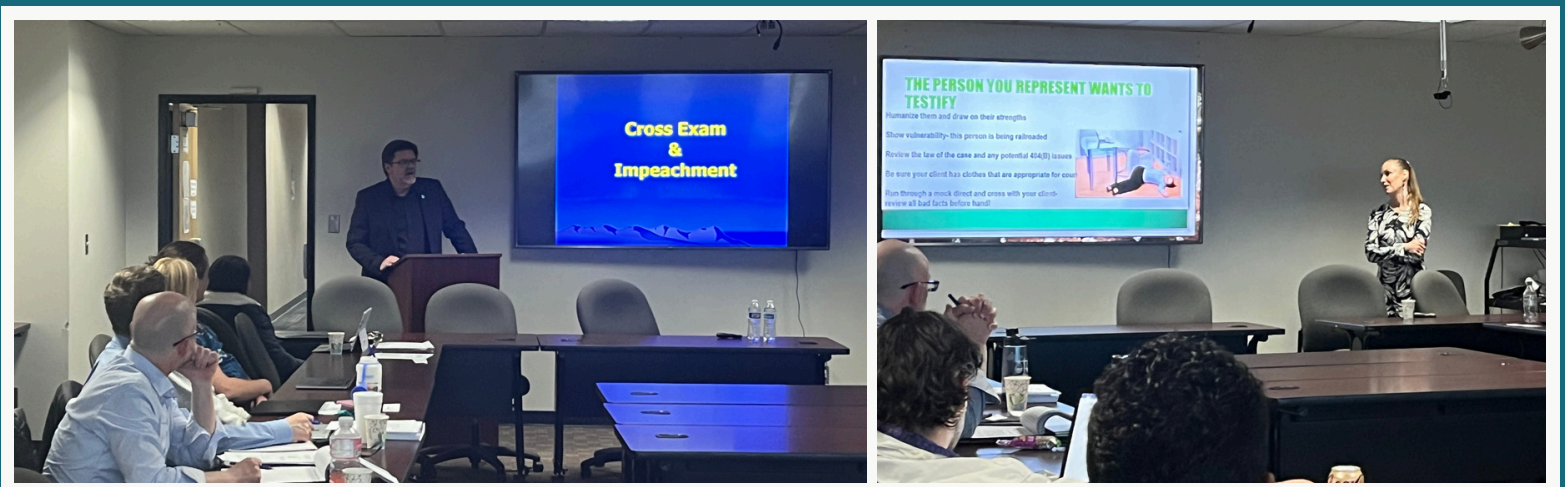
LOPD Commissioner Peter Schoenburg, Deputy Dir. Fiscal Robert Cardon, Deputy Chief Randy Chavez, CFO Debbie O'Dell, Chief Ben Baur, Commission Chair Gina Maestas, Deputy Chief Cydni Sanchez, Deputy Chief Jennifer Barela, HR Dir. Ronald Herrera, Deputy Dir. Policy & Administration Theresa Edwards, General Counsel Adrienne Turner.

LALSA visit



The Latine American Law Student Association from the University of New Mexico School of Law visited Albuquerque in February, chatting with Deputy Chiefs Cydni Sanchez and Jennifer Barela, both former members of what was known in their time as MALSA, the Mexican American Law Student Association.

New Attorney Training in Abq



Chief Ben Baur, left, and 12th DD Dayna Jones address the new attorney training in Albuquerque in February.

KUNM reporting on competency

Sorry for the bad lighting



Attorneys Tess Williams and Michael Gay, off camera, give an interview with KUNM about competency legislation and court procedures.

Abq renovations

Some building renovations are in store for the Albuquerque office.

In a few weeks, the Albuquerque office will begin an office reconfiguration project to make room for LOPD's growing externship program, IT, Fiscal, and HR units and some office shuffling for our Appellate unit.

Once construction and moving is completed, IT will be housed on the 17th floor. Their former space on the 8th floor will house expansions for Albuquerque trial employees.

De-escalation training

A special training is scheduled for core staff aimed at empowering them with de-escalation techniques. The Southern offices will have their training next month, and ABQ and northern offices in June. The training was developed and will be led by NAPP's Social Work Training & Resources Coordinator Stephanie Thornton.

Topics to include: Recognizing signs of escalation; Notes on psychosis and escalation; Introduction to Relationship Management: Emotional Quotient; Introduction of trauma-sensitive work in public defense as an antidote to escalation; Active Listening; Verbal Strategies; Physical Environment; Cultural Humility; Body Language and Nonverbal Communication; Team Communication; Debriefing and Learning from Incidents.

Fire drill - All 17 floors in Abq



2025's t-shirts ready to order

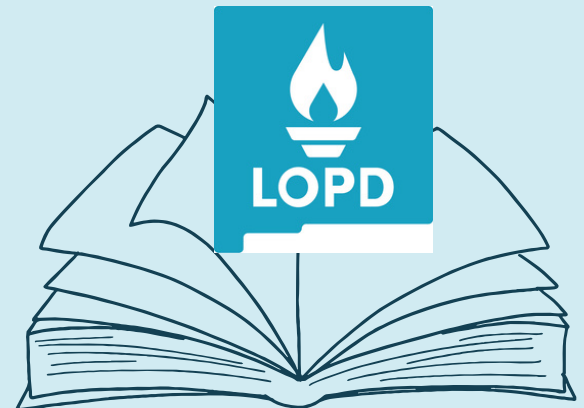
Survey Monkey order form sent out March 7.
See your office manager for more info.



ABA Book acceptances

The American Bar Association is putting out a compilation of writing about public defense - and New Mexico is making a strong showing in it.

Four essays and poem from LOPDers have been accepted to the publication, which should be out sometime this year. Accepted authors include Santa Fe attorneys Jennifer Burrill and Isaac Jeantete; Las Cruces attorney James Tiu; and Hobbs investigator Gabrielle Arsiaga.



Mitel to Zoom for LOPD desk phone service

All recorded and scheduled Zoom meetings will disappear March 22



Starting March 22, our desk phone service provider will be the same company that runs Zoom. This will give us each our own LOPD Zoom account, but it will displace any current LOPD Zoom account data. If you have a current Zoom account, you will need to download your saved meetings and note your scheduled meetings, which will need to be manually rescheduled in your new account.



Statewide paralegal Zoom

Paralegals from almost all offices in the state joined together for an inaugural Statewide Paralegal Zoom. There are more than 50 paralegals at LOPD, with each office organizing their duties and work flow differently. The Zoom allowed the group to compare best practices and problem solve common issues.

The next Statewide Paralegal Zoom is scheduled for April 16th at 3 p.m. Contact Com. Dir. Maggie Shepard for Zoom link.

Spring admin leave

LOPD leadership in February announced an additional 8 hours of administrative leave.

With this addition, LOPD has granted a total of 40 hours of administrative comp time in FY 2025.

Although it was announced as “Spring Activities,” the 8 hours can be used per policy requirements between March 3, 2025, and May 23, 2025.

For more information, contact your supervisor or HR.

Recent DD recruitment trips were a success

Applications to a variety of positions have come in from connections made during recruitment trips by District Defenders, Managing Attorneys, Training and Recruitment Dir. Liz Holmes and Chief Ben Baur.



12th DD Dayna Jones and Alamogordo MA Joel Lobo in Portland



5th DD Nate Banks in Texas



Welcome to the LOPD team!

Stefany Foreman	Social Worker Supervisor
Ashley Linn	Business Operations
Kirstien Dixon	Public Defender 2
Estaban Monrreal	Paralegal 2
Brenda Marrufo	Paralegal1
Amber Ruiz	Senior Secretary
Kayla Cleveland	Public Defender 3
Kandice Lloyd	Case Manager
Alyssa Mileta	Public Defender 3
Sandra Loya Villegas	Legal Associate
Matthew Bream	Public Defender 3
Brittany Gonzales	Secretary 1
Michelle Egizi	Senior HR Administrator
Monica Martinez	Secretary 1
Katalina Hadfield	Public Defender 2
Chastity Chapman	Clerk 2
Joanne Baron	Law Clerk
Derek Chamberlain	Law Clerk

Farewell - Retirement

Thom Kelley - CCLS

LOPD Anniversaries

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

JANUARY
FEBRUARY
MARCH

5 years

Andrea Miles
Stephanie Padilla
Theresa Edwards
Michael Reyes

1 year

Fanny Ayala Rocha	Nina Rougemont
Ugochuku Nwachuku	Sadie Stidstone
Collette Lucero	Romulo Valdez
Dana Oviedo	Tara Jones
Danielle Dowis	Jessica Rogatsky
Joel Beesley	Niesha Esene

Thank you to the HR team for compiling these lists. If your name was somehow left off a list, please know it was not on purpose. Just let Maggie Shepard know, and she'll make it right in the next newsletter.

Abq Administrative Operations Manager Veronica Rosales welcomes first grandbaby



Ayla Rae

Want to share a
baby or furbaby
pic?

Email Maggie
maggie.shepard@lopdnm.us