The Third Annual Southwest Crimes Against Children Conference

SOUTHWEST CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN CONFERENCE



October 22-23, 2025

Santa Ana Star Casino and Hotel, Bernalillo NM

PROGRAM

WELCOME

Welcome to the Third Annual Southwest Crimes Against Children Conference. When I was elected District Attorney of the 13th Judicial District and took office in 2020, this conference was a dream of mine and a key initiative. I am so pleased that we are entering our third year. The energy, commitment, contributions, and appreciation of all who have attended and presented powers the mission and gives me hope that we can continue to make a difference in the lives of children who have been victimized.

I've spent a good portion of my career specializing in the prosecution of crimes against children and in the process, I've come to know that each of these cases requires unique skills and extraordinary commitment from everyone involved in these cases. I've also learned the value of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) approach.

The underlying belief of this free two-day conference is that a collaborative approach to cases from investigation to prosecution, including knowledge sharing, practical and interactive instruction, can only result in better outcomes. Improving understanding and awareness in the handling of criminal child abuse cases can only lead to a reduction in the additional trauma of the criminal justice process for the young victims.

I want to especially thank our presenters who come to the conference to offer their wisdom and expertise gratis, which makes the conference possible. I also want to extend my gratitude to our financial sponsors, Parnall Law, Homeland, Singleton Schreiber, and AODA for their backline support. We could not make this happen without you.

This conference is for all the victims, past and present, and to all the professionals like you who are dedicated to helping children.

Sincerely,

Barbara Romo District Attorney

13th Judicial District of New Mexico



CONFERENCE INFORMATION

WI-FI

SASCH – Guest (no password required)

A NOTE ABOUT DESIGNATIONS

All of the classes are open to everyone in attendance. Some classes are specifically geared toward Prosecutors, Law Enforcement and Victim Advocates.

PROS = PROSECUTORS

LE = LAW ENFORCEMENT

VA = VICTIM ADVOCATES

EIJ = EQUITY IN JUSTICE

EP = ETHICS / PROFESSIONALISM

DINING OPTIONS

Santa Ana Golf Course – Wind Dancer Bar & Grill /
Sun-Thurs 7:30am to 5pm | Fri-Sat 7:30am to 6pm
Twin Warriors Golf Course – Atush Bar & Grill /

Mon-Sun 6am to 6pm

Hyatt Tamaya – Santa Ana Café / Mon-Sun 7am to 2pm

Perks / 6am to 8pm

The Original Mesa Grill / 11am to midnight

Home Plate Bar and Grill / 8am to 9pm

Juniper Steakhouse / 4pm to 9pm (closed Tues/Weds)

Prairie Star / 5pm to 8pm (closed Mon/Tues)

Lounge 54 / 4pm to midnight

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

- DIAMOND -





- GOLD -

- SILVER -







- IN MEMORIAM -

In Memoriam





Dr. Karen T. Campbell, MD

One of our earliest conference supporters was Dr. Karen T. Campbell, MD, who passed away a few months ago after a short-lived illness. For 30 years at UNM Hospital, Dr. Campbell, a Forensic Pediatrician, was a fierce and resolute advocate for children's health and safety, working tirelessly to make a difference in their lives. She was a founder and supporter of the Child Abuse Response Team (CART), and as one of the few certified child abuse pediatricians in the state, she gave freely of her time and expertise. The Southwest Crimes Against Children Conference was a beneficiary of her generosity and wisdom for the first two years of its existence, agreeing immediately when asked to give her time by offering sessions to the conference attendees. She left a lasting impact, and we will miss her light and generous heart. Fly on Dr. Campbell, you contributed goodness to the world.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22, 2025

7:00 am - 8:30 am BALLROOM LOBBY

8:00 am – noon BALLROOM

Conference Check-in

Breakfast Available in the Ballroom at 8:30 am

OPENING PLENARY SESSION

Color Guard – *Jr. ROTC Cleveland High School*, *Lt. Col. (ret.) Jess Capel*, Advisor Anthem – *Jessica Maito-Padilla*

WELCOME – District Attorney *Barbara Romo*Introduction of Keynote Speaker Tatiana Sanchez

KEYNOTE SPEAKER – *Tatiana Sanchez* and Q&A "Surviving Sexual Assault and the Judicial System"

Keynote Speaker - Tatiana Sanchez

Tatiana is a sexual assault survivor who endured the judicial system for six years before getting justice. She went through one criminal trial, which ended in hung jury. She continued on the journey of seeking justice, and eventually, the defendant was found guilty. Along the way, she endured multiple pretrial conferences, which were continued with no communication as to why. The defendant went on the run and was tracked down on a warrant. Multiple victims came forward about the abuse they endured from the defendant. Tatiana was cross-examined multiple times, which made her feel that she wasn't being believed. She had to sit through pre-trial interviews and relive the trauma all over again. Along the way, she began to feel that none of the effort was worth it until the perpetrator finally received a prison sentence.

ALL

ALL

10:00 am - 10:15 am

10:15 am – noon

BREAK

Multi-Disciplinary Team Panel & Q&A

Moderator – *Jessica Martinez*, Chief Deputy District Attorney *Lisa Jaquez*, Director of Child Advocacy, Forensic Interviewer, La Pinon Sexual Assault Recovery Services

Sergeant Felicia Maggard, Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department **Nicole Marquez**, Victim Advocate, 2nd Judicial District Attorney **Scott Patterson-Alatorre**, Director, Family Services Division CYFD of New Mexico

Barbara Romo, 13th Judicial District Attorney of New Mexico

The MDT Panel will be an opportunity for some of the State's experts in child abuse to come together and discuss their experiences handling child abuse cases. Conference attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions of the panel and seek advice on how to better investigate, prosecute, and mentally and emotionally cope with these types of cases as well as discuss how different agencies may better collaborate to serve the victims.

12:00 noon - 1:30 pm

LUNCH BREAK (lunch on your own)

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22, 2025

1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

BREAKOUT SESSION ONE

SACRAMENTO EAST

1A. CASE STUDY: Samantha Rubino:
The Girl Whose Father Threw Her Away Like Garbage
Hunter Spindle, Chief Deputy DA, 5th Judicial District Attorney

This course will examine the investigation and prosecution of Juan Lerma. In this case, Samantha was an 8-year-old girl who was found wrapped in blankets, t-shirts, and towels and inside of 6 trash bags outside in a trashcan under another open bag of trash within the curtilage of the home. We will dive into events of searching for Sam by the police, the charging decisions, the challenges faced during the prosecution, and how the evidence was presented at trial. This course will also review the lessons learned during the prosecution of the case, how the State obtained a conviction and a life sentence plus three years, the lessons learned for future cases, and how this case helped create new nonprecedential ethics case law.

ALL

SACRAMENTO WEST

1B. Artificial Intelligence & CSAM Prosecuting the Digital Frontier *PROS* Sara Kurtzberg, Bureau Chief, Kings County District Attorney, New York, New York

The rise of artificial intelligence has introduced a new frontier in the fight against child sexual abuse material (CSAM)—one where the lines between real, altered, and synthetic content are increasingly blurred. This session confronts the legal and investigative challenges posed by AI-generated and digitally manipulated CSAM, while also exploring how AI can be ethically leveraged to detect offenders and support proactive operations.

MANZANO

1C. Core Practices for Interviewing Suspects LE Lt. Chris Carabajal, Rio Rancho Police Department

This session introduces core practices for conducting reliable and defensible interviews during child abuse investigations. Emphasizing memory science and investigative experience, the content focuses on how question style, interview structure, and evidence handling affect case outcomes. Attendees will examine how early mistakes in the interview process, such as contamination or poor introduction of evidence, can weaken a case before it reaches court.

Participants will be introduced to methods for conducting neutral, developmentally appropriate interviews with both witnesses and suspects. Emphasis is placed on preparation, open-ended questioning, and preserving the integrity of disclosures. The instruction also addresses the risk of confirmation bias and offers guidance on evaluating the quality of information obtained.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22, 2025

Key topics include:

- Conduct developmentally appropriate, non-leading interviews with witnesses and suspects
- Avoiding contamination through planning and questioning
- The role of evidence before, during, and after an interview
- Documentation practices that support credibility and withstand scrutiny

This course is intended for detectives, investigators, supervisors, and professionals involved in sensitive or complex child abuse cases. The material is presented in a way that supports ethical and effective case work, while reinforcing defensible standards of practice.

CIMARRON

1D. Evidence-Based Domestic Violence Prosecution *Marco Serna*, Attorney and Special Counsel for AODA

PROS

An introduction to prosecuting domestic violence (DV) cases: Emphasis on victim contact and working with your VA; affidavits of non-prosecution; jail calls; forfeiture by wrongdoing motions; officer training; The Victim Rights Act.

3:00 pm - 3:15 pm

BREAK

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 22, 2025

3:15 pm - 4:45 pm

BREAKOUT SESSION TWO

SACRAMENTO EAST

2A. Corroboration of Evidence

PROS/LE

Barbara Romo, 13th Judicial District Attorney of NM

When a child discloses, our job begins. Successful prosecutions hinge on finding corroborating evidence from a child's disclosure. This presentation will teach students how to find corroborating evidence that is almost always present but is often missed.

SACRAMENTO WEST

2B. Legal Updates Anne Kelly, Attorney

PROS

Appellate case update, which will focus on crimes against children.

MANZANO

2C. Child Sexual Assault Exams

PROS/LE

Dr. Leslie Strickler, Professor of Pediatrics, University of New Mexico, and Medical Director, Child Abuse Response Team (CART)

As a child abuse pediatrician, this session will provide an overview of medical evaluations for both child sexual abuse and assault. We will review the clinical services provided at UNM. In addition to reviewing how child abuse pediatricians collaborate with SANE programs. We will also discuss strangulation in pediatric patients.

CIMARRON

2D. Counterintuitive Ethical and Legal Duties to Disclose PROS

J. Michael Thomas, Deputy District Attorney, 13th Judicial District

The presentation will briefly survey the milestone decisions from the Supreme Court of the United States related to prosecutor's and law enforcement's constitutional duties to disclose information that is favorable to the defense and impeaches the credibility of the state's witnesses. We will review and discuss the ABA Criminal Justice Standards and Model Rules of Professional Conduct related to prosecutors and our law enforcement partners. We will discuss case examples of withheld information and the standard of 'materiality', and situations from federal and New Mexico cases where information was not shared from law enforcement to the prosecutors and to the defense. We will talk about the use of Giglio letters to disclose witness credibility impeachment material to defense counsel in individual cases. We will discuss the use of in-camera review processes for judges to review private or sensitive information before disclosure. Finally, we will address proactive methods to meet our duties and obligations to learn and disclose what is required in our cases. The goal is to continue to obtain convictions that withstand appellate review.

THURSDAY, OCT. 23, 2025

8:30 am - 10:00 am

BREAKOUT SESSION THREE

SACRAMENTO EAST

3A. Effective Cross-Examination

PROS

Henry Valdez, Chief Deputy District Attorney, 8th Judicial District

This session will discuss preparation, strategy, purpose, and the use of cross-examination. We will explore how to use cross-examination to advance your case and discredit the defense's case.

SACRAMENTO WEST

3B. Working with Child Victims of Crime

ALL

Patricia Lyke & Nicole Marquez, Victim Advocates,

2nd Judicial District Attorney

Child crime victims are a unique demographic requiring extra care and attention. This session aims to address specific considerations for working with child victims, provide practical tips, and help educate attendees on working together to better support children through the criminal justice process.

CIMARRON

3C. Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms of Maltreatment

ALL

Dr. Rebecca Girardet, Medical Director, Para Los Niño's Clinic and Director of the Child Abuse Pediatrics Fellowship Training Program

In this session, we will review the epidemiology of child abuse and neglect in New Mexico and how to recognize signs and symptoms of maltreatment. The talk will also include basic information about child development and its implications for proneness to injury, and common abuse mimics. Participants will also receive information about resources to help them evaluate cases of suspected child maltreatment.

MANZANO

3D. CASE STUDY: Smith Cases-Overcoming the Belief

ALL

That Drug Users Only Harm Themselves

Megan Kirtley, Deputy District Attorney, 5th Judicial District

Carlsbad police responded to a 911 call for an unresponsive child in a shed behind a home. They frantically tried to revive 12-year-old Brent; however, he was pronounced deceased at the hospital. Investigation later found his young sister, Braya, within the home, and she too tested positive for substances. Both children were under the care of their grandmother, Kelli Smith. This investigation led to the heartbreaking details that led to the overdose death of Brent from both Fentanyl and Methamphetamine, and the prosecution and conviction of his mother, Alexis Smith, and his grandmother, Kelli Smith. Use of cell phone evidence, immunity for witnesses, experts on drugs, and cross-examination were all paramount in getting justice in these cases, where the defense was that the child did this to himself.

10:00 am - 10:15 am

BREAK

THURSDAY, OCT. 23, 2025

10:15 am - 11:45 am

BREAKOUT SESSION FOUR

SACRAMENTO EAST

4A. Through Their Eyes: Understanding and Responding to the Impact of Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence on Children Mary Ellen Garcia, Chief Executive Officer of the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Learning Objectives

- 1. Recognize the Unique and Lasting Impact of IPV on Children and Youth
 - Understand the diverse ways children experience and internalize IPV, even when not directly harmed.
 - Explore developmental, emotional, and behavioral consequences that are often misunderstood or minimized by systems and professionals.
- 2. Center Survivor and Child Voices in Systemic and Individual Response
 - Learn how to honor the voices, strengths, and lived experiences of survivors and their children in service provision, policy, and case management.
 - Discuss how rigid systems often separate survivors and children in ways that can undermine safety and healing.
- 3. Apply Trauma- and Resilience-Informed Practices to Interdisciplinary Work
 - Gain tools for creating safety, trust, and empowerment in interactions with children exposed to IPV.
 - Understand how children's resilience is shaped by adult protective relationships, cultural connection, and community-based responses—not just system interventions.
- 4. Identify Structural and Institutional Gaps that Undermine Safety for Children and Survivors
 - Explore the historical and ongoing ways institutional systems (child welfare, law enforcement, courts) can unintentionally reinforce harm or remove children from protective caregivers.
 - Engage in values-based dialogue about how to create integrated, culturally responsive, community-driven solutions.
- 5. Strengthen Collaborative, Values-Aligned Responses Across Sectors
 - Examine how law enforcement, child advocates, domestic violence agencies, and courts can build coordinated responses that affirm the dignity of children and survivors.
 - Reflect on how collective responsibility and cultural humility must guide our approaches to children impacted by IPV.

SACRAMENTO WEST

4B. Effective Officer Testimony

Marcus Montoya, 8th Judicial District Attorney

LE

ALL

Effective officer testimony begins with strong incident report writing, comprehensive knowledge of the case facts, and pre-testimony preparation. This course aims to help officers feel confident and prepared for the rigors of direct examination, cross-examination, pretrial interviews, and other statements made in relation to a case. The course will touch on some dos and don'ts of testifying, the basics of testifying, and offer some thoughtful pointers on always looking to improve the skillset helpful to telling a story that makes sense to a judge and to a jury.

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CIMARRON

4C. Navigating Delicate Conversations: Effective Communication ALL with Young Children in the Justice System

Kate Bunch, Trauma Treatment Center

This comprehensive presentation offers practical strategies and essential insights tailored for law enforcement officers and legal professionals who interact with young children involved in the justice system. Recognizing the unique sensitivities and developmental considerations inherent in these interactions, this session aims to equip professionals with the tools necessary for effective, ethical, and child-centered communication.

Key Learning Objectives:

- Mastering Age-Appropriate Language: Delve into the nuances of simplifying complex legal terminology and concepts for young minds. Learn to identify and avoid jargon, using concrete examples and clear, concise phrasing that resonates with a child's understanding. We will explore techniques for asking non-leading questions and facilitating truthful responses without inducing confusion or fear.
- Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches: Understand the profound impact of trauma on a child's memory, perception, and ability to communicate. This section will introduce principles of trauma-informed care, emphasizing empathy, safety, trustworthiness, and collaboration. Participants will learn how to recognize signs of trauma, adapt their communication style to minimize re-traumatization, and create an environment that fosters a sense of security and psychological safety for the child.
- Building Rapport and Trust: Discover effective techniques for establishing genuine rapport with young children, a critical foundation for successful communication.
 We will explore non-verbal cues, active listening skills, and the importance of patience and respect. Learn how to approach children in a way that encourages openness and trust, making them feel heard, valued, and understood rather than interrogated.
- Understanding Developmental Stages and Cognitive Abilities: Gain a deeper understanding of child development, including cognitive, emotional, and social milestones relevant to their ability to provide accurate information. This segment will differentiate communication strategies based on age groups (e.g., preschoolers vs. early elementary) and discuss how a child's limited vocabulary, understanding of time, and conceptual thinking can influence their testimony. We will also address common misconceptions about children's memory and suggest ways to mitigate these challenges.

By the end of this presentation, participants will be better equipped to navigate delicate conversations with young children, ensuring sensitive and accurate information gathering while upholding the child's well-being and rights throughout the justice process. This session is vital for anyone committed to safeguarding children and promoting justice in a child-centric manner.

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MANZANO

4D. Hope in the Margins: A Journey from Pain to Purpose *Veronica Krupnick,* National Child Welfare

ALL EIJ

Youth & Tribal Advocate

One young person's journey through foster care, juvenile justice, and transracial adoption fueled her relentless mission to overhaul the child welfare system. Entering "the system" at just six years old, Veronica Krupnick has since become a five-time award-winning advocate, a prominent voice in national child welfare policy, a legislative director, and a rising young political leader. Her story is a powerful testament to how pain can be transformed into purpose through interconnected hope and determination.

This session invites participants to critically engage with the nuanced intersections of identity, belonging, autonomy, and healing within the context of system involvement - in foster care and juvenile justice. Through lived and expert perspective, participants will develop a lasting understanding of how these complex topics impact the trajectory of lifetime well-being and safety for system-involved children and youth.

12:00 noon – 2:00 pm QUEZADAS COMEDY CLUB WORKING LUNCH
HOSTED AND SPONSORED BY PARNALL LAW
Special Lunch Session at Quezadas Comedy Club

Bertrand Parnall: Practical Justice

A look into what civil justice is for victims of crime, including sources of compensation, such as umbrella coverage, crime victim reparation, children's settlements, and the reasons for crime victims to file a lawsuit. We will also discuss the role of the civil justice system in crime victim compensation and the stages of a crime victim's claim.

THURSDAY, OCT. 23, 2025

2:30	nm	_4	:00	nm
2.30			.00	

BREAKOUT SESSION FIVE

SACRAMENTO EAST

5A. Holding the Line: Protecting Ourselves Against the Hidden Impacts of Trauma Exposure

Pamela Moore, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Director of the State Bar of New Mexico's Professional Programs Group

Lawyers, first responders, and those in helping professions often bear witness to others' suffering, trauma, and crisis—yet the toll this takes on their own well-being is often overlooked or minimized. This session explores the real and measurable effects of vicarious trauma and secondary traumatic stress on professionals in high-stakes, high-responsibility roles.

Participants will learn to recognize early warning signs—such as sleep disturbances, emotional numbing, hypervigilance, or withdrawal—and how these symptoms may show up subtly while doing the work. We'll explore the neuroscience behind trauma exposure, helping you understand what's happening in the brain when you're absorbing the weight of others' trauma, even indirectly.

Practical strategies will be shared to help you proactively build psychological resilience, set protective boundaries, and know what steps to take if you find yourself emotionally or physically overwhelmed. Whether you're managing clients in crisis, responding to emergencies, or litigating distressing cases, this session will equip you with tools to stay grounded, focused, and well—without sacrificing your sense of purpose.

SACRAMENTO WEST

5B. Al and Dealing with Ethical Considerations

Sara Kurtzberg, Bureau Chief, Kings County District Attorney,

PROS/LE EP

PROS

ALL

New York, New York

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly embedded in criminal investigations—from predictive analytics and facial recognition to automated content analysis—prosecutors and law enforcement face both unprecedented opportunities and complex ethical dilemmas. This session provides a roadmap for navigating the evolving AI landscape within the law enforcement community.

CIMARRON

5C. Building your Case by Building your Relationships Barbara Romo, 13th Judicial District Attorney

This class will discuss the importance of building a strong relationship with the child victim or witness, including strategies and techniques that can be used to foster a strong bond with the child and thereby increase the likelihood of a successful prosecution. Building a strong relationship with the child also lets the child know h/she have adults in their lives who will protect them and fight for them, regardless of the outcome of the case. This can go a long way to helping the process of recovery and healing.

MANZANO

5D. Legal Updates Anne Kelly, Attorney

PROS

Appellate case update, which will focus on crimes against children.

KATE BUNCH



Kate Bunch, a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) in New Mexico, is a passionate entrepreneur. She is a Registered Play Therapist Supervisor (RPT-S), an Endorsed Infant Mental Health specialist, Endorsed Reflective Supervisor (IMHE-III RS/C), and an EMDRIA-approved consultant. Kate has developed a clinic, Trauma Treatment Center, in New Mexico and has had her model of therapy published in the Journal of Counselor Practice and The Journal of Trauma Studies in Education. Kate is a contributing author and editor for Professional's Guide to Trauma-Informed Decision Making (2024). Kate owns the Mind Body Trauma Institute. The institute's primary focus is to support the training and development of providers across genres from a holistic and trauma-focused approach. It offers training that focuses on developing an understand-

ing of trauma and the lasting effects of trauma on providers themselves. Kate is the founder of The Jackie Project, a non-profit started in honor of her Grandmother. The Jackie Project is developing ways to increase access to treatment for underserved areas in New Mexico and working to support continued efforts in complex trauma research. Kate was awarded the George R. Keppler 2019 Outstanding Counselor of the Year from the New Mexico Counseling Association and the Behavioral Health Worker—Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Excellence Award for 2023 from The Children's Law Institute.

LT. CHRIS CARABAJAL



Chris Carabajal is a lifelong New Mexican with more than 24 years of experience in law enforcement. He currently serves as a Lieutenant with the Rio Rancho Police Department, overseeing the Professional Standards Division. In this capacity, he leads internal investigations, reviews department-wide practices, and ensures accountability and compliance with established standards.

Recently, Chris graduated from the National Public Safety Innovation Academy through Polk State College.

Throughout his career at RRPD, Chris has held key assignments in patrol, recruiting and training, and spent seven years in the Criminal Investigations Division. As a detective and later as a sergeant within CID (Criminal Investigations Division), he conducted major case investigations involving homicides, child abuse, and officer-involved shootings. His efforts directly supported complex prosecutions and collaborative investigations.

Chris is a certified instructor with Forensic Interview Solutions (FIS), providing national-level training in the PEACE model, a science-based, non-coercive framework for ethical investigative interviewing. In addition to his national instruction, he is a New Mexico state-certified instructor in multiple law enforcement disciplines and has taught a wide range of topics throughout his career. He also serves as an adjunct faculty member at Central New Mexico Community College, where he provides instruction

MARY ELLEN GARCIA



MaryEllen Garcia has worked in New Mexico's network of survivor services for over 25 years. Currently, she is the Chief Executive Officer of the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Her work there has focused on developing a strategic plan to address policy in New Mexico that impacts survivors. Before her work at the Coalition, she spent the past ten years as the Grants Bureau Chief for the New Mexico Crime Victims Reparation Commission, administering state funds to support survivor services, as well as federal funds from VOCA Victim Assistance, STOP VAWA, SASP, and other federal discretionary awards. Before her work with the Commission, Ms. Garcia administered discretionary grants from the Office on Violence Against Women for the State of New Mexico, including projects that developed

best practices for access, issuance, and enforcement of orders of protection and a statewide domestic/dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, strangulation, and child victimization project. She started her career in victim services as a volunteer with a non-profit law enforcement-based victim advocate program. She worked as a crisis negotiator for law enforcement and developed a law enforcement Crisis Outreach and Support Team, focused on providing access to families whose loved ones are experiencing mental illness. Ms. Garcia has worked on several projects at the state, local, and national levels to improve the provision of services for survivors of crime. She has worked and collaborated with the VERA Institute, Asian Pacific Institute on General Based Violence, Casa de Esperanza, the Women of Color Network, the Office on Violence Against Women, the Office for Victims of Crime and numerous other state and national programs to address language access, improving access to survivors in underserved and un-served communities, improve the delivery of services, create sustainable funding and various other initiatives addressing violence in our communities. She sat on the national board of Violence Against Women Administrators as the President and often mentors other states in the administration of their federal funding. She has worked with governmental and non-governmental victim service agencies around the state, either in training, providing services, developing best practices in serving victims, program development, and leadership within New Mexico.

DR. REBECCA GIRARDET



Rebecca Girardet completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Biology with honors at Stanford University in 1987 and her Doctorate of Medicine at the University of Arizona in 1992. She was awarded a year-long fellowship in 1989 by the American Heart Association to conduct HIV research at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, France. She completed her residency in pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine in 1995. Dr. Girardet worked in private practice and in the Baylor College of Medicine Division of Pediatric Emergency Medicine before joining the McGovern School of Medicine at UT Health Sciences Center – Houston in 1998, where she founded the Division of Child Safety and Integrated Care. She directed the Texas Forensic Assessment Center Network, a consultation and education service for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, from 2006 – 2022. Dr. Girardet joined the

University of New Mexico Department of Pediatrics in 2021, where she serves in the section of Child Safety and Well-Being as Medical Director of Para Los Niños Clinic and Director of the Child Abuse Pediatrics fellowship training program. She is also the lead convener for the multidisciplinary UNM Child Health Grand Challenge Team that conducts research on child maltreatment prevention in New Mexico. Dr. Girardet is board-certified in general pediatrics and child abuse pediatrics, and she is an internationally recognized expert in child maltreatment.

Dr. Girardet has conducted original research on STI diagnostic methods, HIV prophylaxis, the epidemiology of child maltreatment, children with complex health needs, and unmet healthcare needs. She is a past co-chair of the Child Abuse and Neglect Committee of the Texas Pediatric Society, a past president of the board for a Houston health charities organization, and a recent member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Executive Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect.

LISA JACQUEZ



Lisa Jaquez is the Director of La Pinon's Children's Advocacy Center and a Child Forensic Interviewer. She has conducted over 1300 forensic interviews on children, adolescents, and vulnerable adults when there is a suspicion of abuse or maltreatment, believing in the importance of providing a safe place for those impacted to share their truths. She oversees a staff of forensic interviewers and family advocates and coordinates the Dona Ana County Multidisciplinary Team. As a native New Mexican and graduate from New Mexico State University with a degree in Social Work, Lisa has worked with children and families in different capacities, including those impacted by domestic violence and children in treatment foster care. Above all, Lisa's most fulfilling role is that of a wife to a supportive husband and a mother to two wonderful children.

ANNE KELLEY



Anne graduated from the University of Colorado School of Law in 1989 and began her legal career in the First Judicial District Attorney's Office in Santa Fe. After gaining valuable experience as a trial prosecutor, she moved to private practice for three years and handled insurance defense, civil rights, and employment law claims. In 1994, she joined the New Mexico Attorney General's Office (now the New Mexico Department of Justice) in the Criminal Appeals division. She was a staff attorney in that division until 2015, when she became the director of the division. During her tenure in the Appeals division, she handled hundreds of direct criminal appeals and post-conviction matters. She argued over 100 cases in the New Mexico appellate courts as well as ten cases in the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. In 2020, she was appointed to the Criminal Affairs Deputy position

and was responsible for overseeing all the criminal divisions within the Attorney General's Office. She retired from that office in early 2023 and has been working as an independent consultant for the 8th Judicial District Attorney's office and the New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs as part of their Prosecution Mentoring team.

MEGAN KIRTLEY



Megan Kirtley is a Deputy District Attorney from the Lea County office in the 5th Judicial District Attorney's Office who prosecutes all levels of crime in the office, from first-degree homicides to misdemeanor battery on a household member cases. Before attending law school, Ms. Kirtley began her career in the 5th as a victims' advocate in the office in October 2015. She decided to attend law school to further help victims of violent crimes. Ms. Kirtley grew up in Hobbs, New Mexico, and then attended West Texas A&M University, where she earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in animal science. She began working for the local district attorney's office and then attended Michigan State University College of Law to obtain her law degree. She became an attorney for the 5th District in May of 2022 and quickly went to work fighting for crime victims. Ms. Kirtley

will be presenting the cases involving the tragic drug overdose of 12-year-old Brent, the abuse of baby Braya, and the prosecution and conviction of their mother and grandmother.

VERONICA KRUPNICK



Veronica Krupnick is a National Child Welfare Youth & Tribal Advocate, specializing in foster care and juvenile justice policy. She is proudly from the State of New Mexico and is a Hopi tribal member with Jemez Pueblo and Diné lineage. Drawing on her personal experience navigating the child welfare system and her extensive professional background in the field, Veronica passionately advocates for preventative services, lived experience-led policy, and the holistic well-being of children, families, and their communities. In 2024, Veronica was the recipient of the Casey Family Program's Excellence for Children Alumni Award, the New Mexico Children's Law Institute's Hope in Action Award, and was selected as a United States Delegate attending the 2025 International Foster Care Alliance Summit. In the 2024 primary election cycle, she was the youngest State Sen-

ate candidate, running her first campaign in New Mexico Senate District 24. Veronica is currently the Vice President of the Board of Directors at CASA First, a member of the New Mexico Partners, and serves as the Legislative Director to the House Majority Whip, Representative Dayan Hochman-Vigil, in the New Mexico House of Representatives.

Veronica aspires to be a fiercely dedicated voice for those who have been system-impacted - specifically for children, youth, and young adults – and a leader centered in compassion, courage, and community

SARA KURTZBERG BIO



Sara Kurtzberg is a native of Staten Island and a SUNY Binghamton and Albany Law School graduate. She joined the Kings County District Attorney's Office in July 2007. She was promoted to Senior ADA in 2012 before joining the Homicide Bureau in 2015. Ms. Kurtzberg has tried more than 35 felony jury trials as lead, including at least seven homicides, and has been particularly adept in using technology to advance case investigation and prosecution. She was promoted to Deputy Bureau Chief in the Trial Bureau Green in 2019. She has been a pioneer in using video evidence and technology at trial. In 2021, Ms. Kurtzberg was selected as one of just 21 prosecutors nationwide to attend training on the latest digital evidence technologies for prosecutors at the National Computer Forensic Institute (NCFI). In 2022, she completed Advanced Digital Evidence Training

for Prosecutors, presented by the Secret Service in Alabama. The Kings' County District Attorney's Office was eager to build upon her substantial use of visual evidence, like her video compilations, to support others in the Office as they develop and use this increasingly important evidence in various cases. Acknowledging that the role of digital evidence will only continue to expand, Ms. Kurtzberg became the Chief of the newly created Bureau of Litigation Technology (BOLT) in May of 2022.

BOLT's mission is to equip Brooklyn Assistant District Attorneys with the tools, leadership, and core values necessary to aid them in doing their job better and more efficiently, or as Ms. Kurtzberg would say, "Easier, Faster, Cooler." Ms. Kurtzberg has been a leader in using compilation videos at trial, which is instrumental in prosecuting cases without witness cooperation. She has also spearheaded the implementation of an office-wide case management system and outfitted it with practical tools to aid the ADA in organizing his/her case faster (such as in-program file requests and Al-generated transcription software), all while leading a staff of over 75 paralegals, technicians, analysts, and attorneys.

Ms. Kurtzberg is also tasked with modernizing Brooklyn's courtrooms to handle the ever-increasing amount of digital evidence admitted, which will now display better, clearer, and more easily understood by juries with more seamless interactivity between the prosecutor, Judge, and witness. Moreover, in an age of deepfakes, ChatGPT, and photo-realistic CGI, Ms. Kurtzberg has introduced the use of hash values to authenticate digital evidence, raising it above reproach. She has helped create legal precedent supporting the introduction of such evidence in a trial. Ms. Kurtzberg has also given training in digital evidence and technology for the National District Attorneys Association, the Kings County District Attorney's Office, the NYPD, the Kings County Criminal Bar Association, and different defense bar agencies.

PATRICIA LYKE



Patricia Lyke was born and raised in the Albuquerque/Rio Rancho area and holds a B.S. in Psychology from the University of New Mexico. Her early career focused on trauma-informed care, working at a residential treatment center for at-risk youth, where she also received training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention. During this time, she volunteered as a Crisis Counselor with Crisis Text Line, deepening her commitment to supporting vulnerable populations. She later served as a pediatric psychometrician, conducting neuropsychological assessments for children as young as six. Her academic contributions include published posters and a scholarly article exploring critical child-related issues such as body image, disparities in educational resources, and neuropsychological differences among pediatric populations.

For over five years, Patricia has served as a Victim Advocate with the 2nd Judicial District Attorney's Office, working to provide compassionate support to a wide range of survivors. In this role, she has trained incoming attorneys on best practices for working with victims, participated in several multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), and engaged in community outreach efforts. She also represented the District Attorney's Office as an ex-officio member of Mayor Keller's Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Commission. In all aspects of her work, Patricia strives to bring warmth, patience, and understanding to the survivors she serves.

FELICIA MAGGARD



Felicia Maggard is a proud wife and mother. Her husband is a New Mexico State Police Officer. She lives in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, where she and her husband are raising their family. Felicia has been employed with the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office for 12 years. She has had the privilege of serving in many assignments, including Public Information Officer, Homeland Security Task Force, Animal Cruelty Task Force, Peer Support, Crisis Negotiation Team, Therapy K9 Handler, and the Special Victims Unit. She was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 2022 and is currently assigned to the Field Services Division.

NICOLE MARQUEZ



Nicole Marquez was born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Nicole is a UNM graduate, where she received her degree in Criminology and Psychology. She currently serves as a Victim Advocate for the Second Judicial District Attorney's Office and previously as a Family Advocate at All Faiths Children's Advocacy Center in their Safehouse, where she supports children and families navigating legal and investigative processes related to abuse, neglect, and trauma.

With over seven years of experience in the child welfare system—including her role as a Permanency Planning Worker with the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department—Nicole brings a deep understanding of the long-term impact of trauma and the importance of

early intervention. She has experience in multidisciplinary team collaboration, forensic interview support, and connecting families to vital resources.

Nicole is trained in Crisis Intervention, the Nurtured Heart Approach, and Youth Engagement, equipping her with tools to help children and caregivers feel seen, heard, and empowered in times of great vulnerability.

Her passion lies in ensuring that every child she serves feels safe, valued, and supported, and she brings both professional knowledge and heartfelt dedication to every family she works with.

JESSICA MARTINEZ



Jessica is the Chief Deputy for the 13th Judicial District Attorney's Office, encompassing Sandoval, Valencia, and Cibola Counties.

Jessica was born and raised in Las Vegas, New Mexico, where her family still lives today. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of New Mexico in 2008 and her JD from the Phoenix School of Law in 2011.

On admission to the New Mexico Bar, Jessica began her career with the district attorney's office in Sandoval County. Like most new attorneys, Jessica started out prosecuting DWIs and misdemeanor domestic violence cases. She quickly moved

up to felonies, eventually specializing in prosecuting crimes against women and children.

In her current role as Chief Deputy, she trains new attorneys and law enforcement officers. She is a certified lecturer with the New Mexico Department of Public Safety and was awarded Community Prosecutor of the Year in 2021 for her active role in the community, her involvement in the local domestic violence and crimes against children task forces, and her continuous training of local law enforcement. This year, Jessica was awarded Prosecutor of the Year in New Mexico.

MARCUS MONTOYA



Marcus Montoya is the 8th Judicial District Attorney, now in his second and a half term as 8th JDA. Marcus is also the President of the New Mexico District Attorney Association, a board member on the National District Attorneys Association, a commissioner on the Governor's Organized Crime Prevention Commission, and a citizen of New Mexico who is proud to stand alongside all Law Enforcement agencies in aligned efforts toward public safety. Marcus enjoys time away from the office by golfing, hunting, playing poker, dining and visiting with friends and family.

PAMELA MOORE



Pamela Moore, LPCC, CCTP, currently serves as a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Director of the State Bar of New Mexico's Professional Programs Group, where she educates the legal community on positive health and well-being and assists in providing resources and services to any legal professional struggling with mental, emotional, or behavioral issues. Ms. Moore served as an advisory member to the National Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs in 2019 and 2020 and is the current New Mexico representative for the Institute for Well Being In Law.

BERT PARNALL



Bert grew up in Albuquerque and graduated from Albuquerque High School, where he was co-captain of his district football team. He earned his undergraduate degree from Rice University in 1993 with a double major in History and French. Bert returned to New Mexico for law school, where he graduated on the Honor Roll and passed the bar in 1997. After private contract work, he was a partner in a law firm that assisted victims of wrongful injuries and insurance company abuses. He then served as a Senior Trial Prosecutor in Valencia and Sandoval Counties from 2000 - 2004, convicting murderers and rapists through trial by jury. He re-entered private practice in Albuquerque in 2004 to help

victims of negligence and crime, in the context of civil trial litigation. His experience with both the civil and criminal justice systems has enabled him to share a larger perspective and explore a wider range of resources for his clients.

Since 2009, Bert has built his exceptional team of 15 lawyers and a total of 105 team members to help thousands of victims recover over \$300 million, focusing on vindication and validation of their injuries by providing their "day in court." He and his team of trial lawyers have earned a reputation for skill and experience in leveraging the best possible outcomes for victims of wrongdoing, on which his practice is focused. Bert Parnall

SCOTT PATTERSON-ALATORRE



Scott J Patterson-Alatorre is the Director of the Family Services Division for the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department. He has spent the last 20 years working with New Mexicans in communities throughout the state to provide interventions and support services aimed at mitigating the impact of trauma on the daily lives of children, adolescents, and families. He has provided direct clinical services, clinical supervision, administrative supervision, and cross-system leadership for programs focused on improving outcomes for individuals. He has participated in multiple federally funded research projects piloting promising neuroscience-based interventions for system-involved youth. Recent work includes the development, implementation, and oversight of com-

munity-created programs aimed at connecting individuals to support, which include engagement and navigation from individuals with lived experience. His current work is centered on creating opportunities for meaningful connection to culturally responsive and trauma-informed prevention and intervention support for children, youth, and families to create pathways for increased stability and connection to the community.

BARBARA ROMO



Barbara Romo was sworn in as District Attorney of the 13th Judicial District (Cibola, Sandoval, and Valencia counties) in January 2021. She began her second term in January 2025. Before being elected District Attorney, she was the Chief Deputy District Attorney for Cibola, Sandoval, and Valencia Counties. She also served the district as a Deputy District Attorney for 5 years. She's been practicing law in New Mexico for over 27 years, having worked for eight years in the 1st Judicial District Attorney's Office (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, and Santa Fe Counties), prosecuting a variety of felonies and heading up the Felony Crimes Against Children Unit, exclusively prosecuting felony crimes against children and homicides.

Before joining the 13th Judicial District, Barbara also served as the Chief Deputy in the 7th (Catron, Sierra, Socorro, and Torrance Counties) Judicial District for 4 years. Barbara also served as the Lead Attorney for the New Mexico Victims' Rights Project for two years.

As a prosecutor, Barbara has prosecuted every type of felony and has tried over 100 cases before juries, specializing in crimes against children, sexual assault, and homicides. She has worked for the New Mexico Victims' Rights Project as a victims' rights attorney, providing legal representation to crime victims as well as providing training and assistance to prosecutors, law enforcement, and other agencies who assist victims of crime.

At the 13th, among other achievements, she led the prosecution team to obtain a jury verdict of First-Degree Murder for slain Rio Rancho police officer Gregg Nigel Benner. This resulted in the first sentence of life without parole obtained in the State upon a jury verdict, after the State's repeal of the death penalty.

She has served as the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Prosecutor's Section of the New Mexico State Bar Association and currently serves on the New Mexico Supreme Court's Rules of Evidence Committee and on the Supreme Court Rules of Criminal Procedure Committee.

Barbara has been much lauded, receiving the Community Service Prosecutor of the Year award in 2018, Prosecutor of the Year in 2016, and Rookie Prosecutor of the Year in 1997, all from the New Mexico District Attorney Association. Barbara was also awarded the Homer Campbell Child Abuse Prosecutor of the Year in 2015 from the Prosecutors Section of the New Mexico State Bar Association.

TATIANA SANCHEZ



Tatiana Sanchez is a mother of three pursuing her third bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of New Mexico. She graduated in 2016 from the University of New Mexico with a bachelor's degree in criminology and history. She worked as a legal assistant for the 13th Judicial District Attorney's office and a 911 telecommunications operator for the city of Albuquerque. She aspires to be a forensic nurse and obtain her Doctorate in Nursing Practice.

MARCO SERNA



Marco Serna is a career prosecutor, holding positions in several District Attorneys' offices across the state, as well as the Attorney General's Office (now the New Mexico Department of Justice). He is currently Special Counsel with the Administrative Office of the District Attorneys. Marco prosecutes all types of cases as a special prosecutor, provides training, and is a proud father of two amazing children.

J. HUNTER SPINDLE



Hunter Spindle is the Chief Deputy District Attorney for the Roswell office in the Fifth Judicial District Attorney's Office. Hunter leads an office with five other assistant district attorneys, three victim advocates, twelve admin staff, and an investigator. His caseload includes primarily violent felonies, including first- and second-degree murder, vehicular homicide, sex offenses, and child abuse. In addition, he reviews all petitions for expungement, writs of habeas corpus, and various other motions after sentencing. Hunter is the primary contact for all homicides that occur within Chaves County and goes out to the scenes as much as possible. He successfully prosecuted three first-degree murder trials and two second-degree murder trials, one of which resulted in a guilty conviction for a lesser offense of voluntary manslaughter, and he has

negotiated pleas for either second-degree murder or voluntary manslaughter in multiple other homicide cases. Before becoming Chief in Roswell, he was Senior Trial Prosecutor in the Carlsbad Office for the Fifth Judicial District Attorney in Eddy County, New Mexico, an Assistant Public Defender in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and a private defense and civil attorney for two different firms in Northern Virginia. Hunter received his law degree from Charlotte School of Law in North Carolina, where he focused his studies on Trial Advocacy and Constitutional Law, and his bachelor's degree in political science with a focus on law and theory, double minoring in Criminal Justice and Environmental Policy from the University of Alabama.

DR. LESLIE STRICKLER



Leslie Strickler, DO, FAAP, is a professor of pediatrics at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, where she works as a child abuse pediatrician. She serves as the Section Chief for Child Safety and Well-being and as the medical director for the Child Abuse Response Team (CART) provides medical evaluations of children who are alleged victims of physical abuse or neglect. Para los Niños provides medical evaluation of children who are alleged victims of sexual assault or sexual abuse.

Dr. Strickler also serves as the medical director of SafeCare NM, a Project ECHO telehealth program that provides mentorship to stakeholders throughout New Mexico tasked with responding to child abuse and neglect.

Dr. Strickler frequently serves as an expert witness in civil and criminal legal proceedings relating to child maltreatment. Additional professional activities include membership on the Child Abuse and Neglect Panel for the New Mexico Child Fatality Review, membership in the legislature-appointed John Paul Taylor Taskforce on child wellbeing, and participation in multiple county Multidisciplinary Review teams. Dr. Strickler is active in educating, training, and practicing healthcare providers and serves as the associate director for the Child Abuse Pediatrics fellowship, director of pediatric resident and pediatric emergency medicine fellowship rotations in child maltreatment. An area of particular scholarly interest is the evaluation of presentations of unique medical conditions and accidental trauma concerning abuse.

Dr. Strickler attended medical school at the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine (1999- 2003). She completed pediatrics residency at the University of New Mexico Children's Hospital (2003 -2006). She is board-certified in general pediatrics and child abuse pediatrics.

J. MICHAEL THOMAS



J. Michael Thomas was born in Roswell, New Mexico. He attended the George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he studied international affairs and history. He studied law at the New England School of Law in Boston, Massachusetts. He began his career as a prosecutor in Sullivan County, New York. In 2014, he returned to his hometown of Roswell to contribute to the community and be closer to family. J. Michael has served as a Deputy DA in Roswell, Chaves County, and as Chief Deputy DA in Hobbs, Lea County. He currently serves as the Deputy DA in Grants, Cibola County, for the 13th Judicial District, and recently joined the New Mexico Supreme Court's Rules of Evidence Committee.

HENRY VALDEZ



Henry Valdez is the past Director of the Administrative Office of the District Attorneys in New Mexico. AODA provides administrative support for all 14 District Attorneys by maintaining the case management system, providing technical support, and implementing the Personnel and Compensation Plan. Before that position, he was the supervising Deputy District Attorney for the Sandoval County Office in the 13th Judicial District. Valdez served as the District Attorney for the First Judicial District, which encompasses Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, and Los Alamos Counties, for four consecutive terms beginning in 1992.

Mr. Valdez is a past President of the New Mexico District Attorneys' Association; past Vice-President of the National District Attorneys' Association; past Vice-Chair of the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy Board, and Committee Chairman of the Criminal Justice Information Systems, National Policy Advisory Board.

In 1992, Mr. Valdez was the first recipient of the Prosecutor of the Year award given by the New Mexico State BAR. He was recognized by the Anti-Defamation League as Public Servant of the Year, and in 2004, he was Lecturer of Merit for the National College of District Attorneys Association. He has worked with Esperanza, a shelter for Domestic Violence victims. He has provided training for Rape Crisis Center Advocates and the Citizens Academy in the City of Santa Fe regarding the Criminal Justice System. He has lectured on various topics to prosecutors and law enforcement officials at the local, state, and national levels. He has tried high-profile cases such as State v. Ricky Abeyta, State v. Edwin Arietta, State v. Jerome Martinez, State v. Dean Salazar, State v. Daniel Martinez, and State v. Arthur Bozo Lopez, and served as a special prosecutor in the Robertson High School Football hazing case.

Mr. Valdez attended public schools and graduated from Santa Fe High School in New Mexico in 1975. He earned a bachelor's degree from New Mexico State University in 1979. He then graduated from the University of New Mexico School of Law with a Juris Doctor Degree in 1982. Valdez is a lifelong resident of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Currently, Mr. Valdez is serving as Chief Deputy District Attorney for the 8th Judicial District Attorney's Office in Taos, NM.

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