



A Super Attorney's Guide to the Civil Legal Aid Galaxy:
Understanding New Mexico's Legal Aid Landscape and Learning
How to Tap into Pro Bono Opportunities

Presented by the New Mexico Commission on Access to Justice

We all want access to justice. New Mexico has many organizations who provide legal help for people in need. Here's a breakdown of who we are and what we do:



The NM Commission on Access to Justice

- Sets priorities statewide for civil legal providers
- Makes recommendations to the Supreme Court to improve court services
- Troubleshoots statewide legal service issues
- *Does not directly fund any civil legal service providers*

Civil Legal Service Commission (CLSC)



New Mexico Department of
Finance & Administration

- Awards contracts civil legal service providers who represent New Mexicans in need from legislative appropriations and money from court filing fees

Equal Access to Justice

- Provides unrestricted, noncompetitive grants New Mexico Legal Aid, DNA People's Legal Services and the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty through donations to its Annual Campaign from the legal community
- Is an independent, 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization



EQUAL
ACCESS TO
JUSTICE

www.eaj-nm.org

Access to Justice Fund

- Administered by the State Bar
- Created by the NM Supreme Court
- Awards competitive grants to civil legal service providers from interest on attorney fees paid to the State Bar, and from attorney donations on the license renewal form
- The ATJ Grant Commission, an independent board, evaluates and awards all funding requests
- *Is not affiliated with Equal Access to Justice*

Other private grants and government contracts

A number of civil legal service providers receive grants from private foundations and contract with various government agencies to provide particular civil legal services to New Mexicans. Legal Services Corporation is one example. Across the country and nationally, there are like-minded "access to justice" organizations and campaigns.



New Mexico Civil Legal Service Providers

The New Mexico Commission on Access to Justice works collaboratively with civil legal service providers in New Mexico. We are including information about some of these providers for members of the State Bar to share to with people in their communities who may need civil legal assistance or information about resources. The civil legal services providers help low-income New Mexicans meet basic human needs such as health, safety, education, housing, child custody and financial stability.

General

New Mexico Legal Aid

Helps low-income families secure and maintain public benefits, affordable housing, safety for domestic violence victims and their children and protection from consumer fraud. Services include a statewide legal helpline, legal representation, outreach, education, training, and pro se clinics.

Service Area: Statewide

Tel: 866-416-1922 • Website: newmexicolegalaid.org

NM Center on Law and Poverty

Systemic advocacy & related legal services to improve living conditions, increase opportunities, and protect the rights of people living in poverty. The Center provides advocacy, education and litigation across a broad range of issues including healthcare, public benefits, housing, fair lending, workers' rights, and public education.

Service area: statewide

Tel: 505-255-2840 • Website: nmpovertylaw.org

Children & Youth

Pegasus Legal Services for Children

Services to at-risk children & youth including guardianship, homelessness, education, & teen parents.

Service Area: Statewide

Tel: 505-244-1101 • Website: pegasuslaw.org

Disabilities

Disability Rights New Mexico

Individual and system advocacy for persons with disabilities to resolve disability rights problems; advocacy and training to promote, protect and expand the rights of persons with disabilities.

Service Area: Statewide

Tel: 505-256-3100 Website: drnm.org

Homeowners

United South Broadway Fair Lending Center

Direct legal representation and educational workshops for homeowners at risk of losing their homes to foreclosure. Consumer education and advocacy on fair housing and fair lending issues.

Service Area: Statewide

Tel: 505-764-8867 • Website: unitedsouthbroadway.org

Immigrants

Catholic Charities

1. Center for Immigration and Citizenship Legal Assistance:

Low cost immigration legal services, including family-based petitions, DACA, and citizenship.

Tel: 505-724-4600

2. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Survivor Immigration Services (DVSASIS):

Free representation for immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child sexual abuse.

Service Area: Albuquerque metro

Tel: 505-724-4649 • Website: ccasfnm.org

Catholic Charities of Southern NM

1. Immigrants

Full service bi-lingual provider of immigration legal services including asylum cases, defense of deportation, family-based petitions, DACA, and citizenship. We charge modest fees for legal services and many of our clients qualify for pro bono services.

Service Area: Ten (10) southern counties of the State of New Mexico

Tel: 575-527-0500

2. Victims of Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault

In partnership with La Casa, Inc., we provide free bi-lingual legal assistance to victims of crimes including domestic violence and sexual assault. Expertise in U-Visa and VAWA petitions as well as assisting victims of human trafficking.

Service Area: Ten (10) southern counties of the State of New Mexico

Tel: 575-527-0500

NM Immigrant Law Center

Legal assistance to asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, and low-income immigrants facing separation due to deportation.

Service Area: Statewide

Website: nmilc.org

Native Americans

DNA People's Legal Services

DNA is an acronym for the Navajo phrase Dinébe'íiná Náhiłna be Agha'diit'ahii which means "attorneys who work for the economic revitalization of The People". DNA – People's Legal Services serves low income individuals across the Navajo, Hopi, and Jicarilla Apache Nations, and in parts of New Mexico, Northern Arizona, and Southern Utah. Office Locations: Window Rock Arizona, Chinle Arizona, Hopi Arizona, Tuba City Arizona, Flagstaff Arizona, Farmington New Mexico.

Executive Director: Rodolfo D. Sanchez

Toll Free Telephone Intake: 833-362-1102 • Website: www.dnalegalservices.org

DNA's Online Application:

<https://dnalegalservices.org/get-legal-help/>

Native American Disability Law Center

Advocates for legal rights of Native Americans with disabilities.

Service Area: Four Corners

Tel: 800-862-7271 • Website: natedisabilitylaw.org

Seniors

Senior Citizens' Law Office

Civil legal services, including direct representation, systemic advocacy, outreach and education, for persons aged 60 and older in Bernalillo County, and persons aged 60 and older with income restrictions in Torrance, Valencia, and Sandoval Counties.

Service Area: Central New Mexico

Tel: 505-265-2300 • Website: sclonm.org

Legal Resources for the Elderly Program (LREP)

LREP is a free legal helpline for New Mexico residents age 55 and older. LREP has no income restrictions and offers assistance in most civil legal matters. If a problem cannot be resolved through the helpline, referrals to private attorneys (pro bono, reduced-fee or full-fee basis) may be provided.

Service area: Statewide

Phone: 505-797-6005 • 1-800-876-6657

Website: www.sbnm.org • Direct link to the LREP Webpage: www.sbnm.org/lrep

Victims of Domestic Violence

Enlace Comunitario

Provides civil legal services to victims of domestic violence in Central NM, including: legal representation for domestic matters and orders of protection; and outreach and education. All individuals in need of domestic violence services are welcome, however because of the dire need for bilingual services (Spanish/English), Latino immigrants are prioritized.

Service Area: Albuquerque metro

Tel: 505-243-8972 • Website: enlacenm.org

Women & Girls

Southwest Women's Law Center

Supports women and girls in New Mexico through legislative advocacy, pro bono engagement, legal research and reporting and coalition building.

Service Area: Statewide

Tel: 505-244-0502 • Website: swwomenslaw.org

KWH Law Center

From its offices located in Albuquerque, KWH Law Center for Social Justice and Change uses legal assistance, advocacy, administrative and other remedies to protect and support the legal rights of women, children, families with children.

Service Area: Statewide

Tel: 505-205-0868 • www.kwhlawcenter.org

New Mexico Rules of Professional Conduct

Preamble — A Lawyer's Responsibilities

A lawyer, as a member of the legal profession, is a representative of clients, an officer of the legal system and a public citizen having special responsibility for the quality of justice.

As a representative of clients, a lawyer performs various functions. As advisor, a lawyer provides a client with an informed understanding of the client's legal rights and obligations and explains their practical implications. As advocate, a lawyer zealously asserts the client's position under the rules of the adversary system. As negotiator, a lawyer seeks a result advantageous to the client but consistent with requirements of honest dealings with others. As an evaluator, a lawyer acts by examining a client's legal affairs and reporting about them to the client or to others.

In addition to these representational functions, a lawyer may serve as a third-party neutral, a nonrepresentational role helping the parties to resolve a dispute or other matter. Some of these rules apply directly to lawyers who are or have served as third-party neutrals. See, e.g., Rules 16-112 and [16-204](#) NMRA of the Rules of Professional Conduct. In addition, there are rules that apply to lawyers who are not active in the practice of law or to practicing lawyers even when they are acting in a nonprofessional capacity. For example, a lawyer who commits fraud in the conduct of a business is subject to discipline for engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation. See Rule [16-804](#) NMRA of the Rules of Professional Conduct.

In all professional functions a lawyer should be competent, prompt and diligent. A lawyer should maintain communication with a client concerning the representation. A lawyer should keep in confidence information relating to representation of a client except so far as disclosure is required or permitted by the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law.

A lawyer's conduct should conform to the requirements of the law, both in professional service to clients and in the lawyer's business and personal affairs. A lawyer should use the law's procedures only for legitimate purposes and not to harass or intimidate others. A lawyer should demonstrate respect for the legal system and for those who serve it, including judges, other lawyers and public officials. While it is a lawyer's duty, when necessary, to challenge the rectitude of official action, it is also a lawyer's duty to uphold legal process.

As a public citizen, a lawyer should seek improvement of the law, access to the legal system, the administration of justice and the quality of service rendered by the legal profession. As a member of a learned profession, a lawyer should cultivate knowledge of the law beyond its use for clients, employ that knowledge in reform of the law and work to strengthen legal education. In addition, a lawyer should further the public's understanding of and confidence in the rule of law and the justice system because legal

institutions in a constitutional democracy depend on popular participation and support to maintain their authority. A lawyer should be mindful of deficiencies in the administration of justice and of the fact that the poor, and sometimes persons who are not poor, cannot afford adequate legal assistance. Therefore, all lawyers should devote professional time and resources and use civic influence to ensure equal access to our system of justice for all those who because of economic or social barriers cannot afford or secure adequate legal counsel. A lawyer should aid the legal profession in pursuing these objectives and should help the bar regulate itself in the public interest.

Many of a lawyer's professional responsibilities are prescribed in the Rules of Professional Conduct, as well as substantive and procedural law. However, a lawyer is also guided by personal conscience and the approbation of professional peers. A lawyer should strive to attain the highest level of skill, to improve the law and the legal profession and to exemplify the legal profession's ideals of public service.

A lawyer's responsibilities as a representative of clients, an officer of the legal system and a public citizen are usually harmonious. Thus, when an opposing party is well represented, a lawyer can be a zealous advocate on behalf of a client and at the same time assume that justice is being done. So also, a lawyer can be sure that preserving client confidences ordinarily serves the public interest because people are more likely to seek legal advice, and thereby heed their legal obligations, when they know their communications will be private.

In the nature of law practice, however, conflicting responsibilities are encountered. Virtually all difficult ethical problems arise from conflict between a lawyer's responsibilities to clients, to the legal system and to the lawyer's own interest in remaining an ethical person while earning a satisfactory living. The Rules of Professional Conduct often prescribe terms for resolving such conflicts. Within the framework of these rules, however, many difficult issues of professional discretion can arise. Such issues must be resolved through the exercise of sensitive professional and moral judgment guided by the basic principles underlying the rules. These principles include the lawyer's obligation zealously to protect and pursue a client's legitimate interests, within the bounds of the law, while maintaining a professional, courteous and civil attitude toward all persons involved in the legal system.

The legal profession is largely self-governing. Although other professions also have been granted powers of self-government, the legal profession is unique in this respect because of the close relationship between the profession and the processes of government and law enforcement. This connection is manifested in the fact that ultimate authority over the legal profession is vested largely in the courts.

To the extent that lawyers meet the obligations of their professional calling, the occasion for government regulation is obviated. Self-regulation also helps maintain the legal profession's independence from government domination. An independent legal profession is an important force in preserving government under law, for abuse of legal

authority is more readily challenged by a profession whose members are not dependent on government for the right to practice.

The legal profession's relative autonomy carries with it special responsibilities of self-government. The profession has a responsibility to assure that its regulations are conceived in the public interest and not in furtherance of parochial or self-interested concerns of the bar. Every lawyer is responsible for observance of the Rules of Professional Conduct. A lawyer should also aid in securing their observance by other lawyers. Neglect of these responsibilities compromises the independence of the profession and the public interest that it serves.

Lawyers play a vital role in the preservation of society. The fulfillment of this role requires an understanding by lawyers of their relationship to our legal system. The Rules of Professional Conduct, when properly applied, serve to define that relationship.

16-601. Voluntary pro bono publico service.

The legal profession has a responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay. In fulfilling this responsibility, a lawyer should aspire to:

- A. provide legal services without fee or expectation of fee to:
 - (1) persons of limited means; or
 - (2) charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental and educational organizations in matters that are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means; or
- B. provide legal services at:
 - (1) a substantially reduced fee to persons of limited means; or
 - (2) no fee or a substantially reduced fee to individuals, groups or organizations seeking to secure or protect civil rights, civil liberties or public rights, or charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental and educational organizations in matters in furtherance of their organizational purposes, where the payment of standard legal fees would significantly deplete the organization's economic resources or would be otherwise inappropriate; or
- C. participate in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession; or
- D. contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means or promote improvement of the law, the legal system or the legal profession. Rule 16-601 NMRA (2008).