



LANGUAGE ACCESS & ADA SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Welcome

ARTHUR W. PEPIN

Director, NM Administrative Office of the Courts



The past year saw important developments in Language Access Services (LAS) with transition to a new Statewide Director, increased post-pandemic demand, and shortages of qualified interpreters nationwide. Through all of this, the dedicated professionals in LAS, in partnership with contract certified interpreters, continued to provide the highest level of support for those without proficiency in English and those with other access to justice challenges. The contributions by LAS to support access to justice continue to be first-class.

Upon the promotion of Paula Couselo-Findikoglu, who developed LAS into a highly productive and respected program, to be Director of the new CEI, Freda Valdez succeeded her as the Statewide Program Manager for LAS. Freda is a certified Spanish interpreter and has the depth of experience and dedication to the program's success to carry forward the work of the LAS.

Through the New Mexico Center for Language Access, Freda oversees recruitment, scholarships, and superior professional education to assist those who want to become certified interpreters and to maintain the skills of those who are certified interpreters. She manages the AOC's statewide coordinators and participates in the national Council of Language Access Coordinators.

LAS supports courts in many ways. This Annual Report provides some insight into the broad scope of language services as well as accommodations provided through LAS under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title VI.

No doubt under Freda's leadership the excellent LAS team will continue to meet the needs for interpreters and translators in courts along with innovating to identify and meet language and other court access challenges.

- *Arthur W. Pepin*

CELINA JONES

General Counsel, NM Administrative Office of the Courts



The Administrative Office of the Courts' ADA Statewide Services has continued its active expansion supporting courts across New Mexico under the direction of ADA Statewide Coordinator Peggy Cadwell. The ADA office is promoting fundamental education through regular trainings for judges and court staff, and is rolling out key initiatives that increase meaningful access to court services and functions.

In 2023, the New Mexico Supreme Court authorized a scribing program to assist self-represented litigants and prospective jurors in completing court forms and paperwork. The program targets self-represented court users with a disability, limited English proficiency, or lack of access to the internet who need assistance filling out court forms. To promote and implement the scribing program, the AOC ADA team developed resource guides and extensive training for court employees and volunteers to become scribes, statewide.

In order to assure that all people have equal access to the court system, under ADA Title II, courts are required to assess their physical spaces, services, programs, and activities and create a transition plan to ensure visitors with disabilities can participate in all aspects of the process without barriers. Over the past year, AOC has been coordinating and facilitating the required ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan and evaluations are currently underway.

I encourage everyone to read this excellent report. The New Mexico Courts are dedicated to promoting and providing access and inclusivity in our courthouses.

- *Celina Jones*

Welcome

FREDA VALDEZ

Statewide Program Manager, Language Access Services



When I joined the LAS Team in 2020 I had no idea how much I would learn, and how much my passion for not only language access but also access to justice would grow. Having worked under different capacities with LAS in the past few years has allowed me to have a better understanding of the language access needs in the state of New Mexico.

Our continued focus on the recruitment and retention of interpreters has remained at the top of our priority list. We continue to work on ways to identify ideal candidates for our Justice System Interpreter Certificate Program in an effort to increase the interpreter certification passing rate in New Mexico. Not only is the state of New Mexico going through a dire need for certified court interpreters, but so is our nation. Despite the many challenges LAS has recently encountered, every LAS team member remains diligent in their efforts to continuously serve the Limited English Proficient population in our courts from their first point of contact through the end.

This year we welcome Laura Chávez, who first joined the LAS team in 2021, as the Statewide Language Access Services Coordinator. Laura received her state interpreter certification in 2010, and brings a lot of experience and knowledge to our program.

I look forward to what the hard work of our program will bring in the future.

- *Freda Valdez*

PEGGY CADWELL

Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator



This report will share a glimpse of the current work to increase accessibility in our courts. In partnership with all of our judicial districts AOC now has ADA Plans and Title II Coordinators who assist court visitors and ensure ADA compliance.

At this year's NCSC's National CLAC Conference in Santa Fe AOC ADA staff had the opportunity to meet with colleagues from all over the US to discuss Title II ADA issues, and formed a group that regularly exchanges information through a national listserv. During judicial conferences I had the opportunity to discuss with judges how they can aid in the effective provision of accommodations in our courthouses.

One of our major accomplishments has been the expansion of the AOC scribing initiative in all districts. The New Mexico model is being shared with our national judicial partners as they seek to provide these services in their courts. We can't thank our court employees enough for their efforts to assist the public with scribing. Our scribing program was also highlighted in an episode of the Talk Justice Podcast.

We would like to thank our community partners for all their help and assistance as we continue to grow our program. Improving accessibility is possible because of the unwavering support and commitment of our Supreme Court, our AOC Director, Artie Pepin, Deputy Director, Karl Reifsteck, and Celina Jones, General Counsel for the AOC. We are grateful for their continued guidance and encouragement as we work to make our courts more accessible.

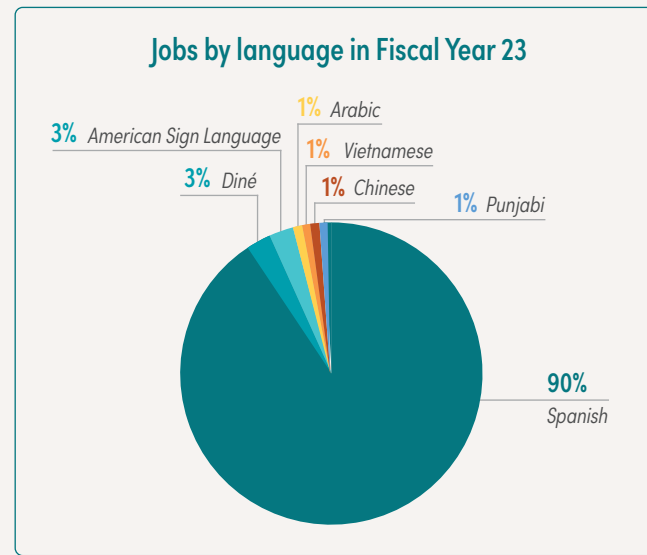
- *Peggy Cadwell*

About Our Programs

LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

Language Access Services (LAS) coordinates and funds court interpreting and other communication access services to ensure equal access to the state courts for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), as well as deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

The program recruits, trains and qualifies courtroom interpreters, as well as bilingual court staff to provide services outside the courtroom. LAS also offers training for judges and court employees, extensive translation services, assistive listening devices, signage, and a wide range of technologies to support the New Mexico State Courts.



New Mexico's Language Access Services program is a recognized national leader, ranked #1 in the nation in the 2020 Justice Index rankings published by the National Center for Access to Justice.

STATEWIDE ADA TITLE II COORDINATOR OFFICE



Credit: ADA National Network (adata.org) 1-800-949-4232

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in 1990. This summer, the ADA celebrated its 33rd Anniversary prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodations, commercial facilities, telecommunications, and state and local governments. As an entity serving the public, the New Mexico Judiciary falls under Title II of the ADA and has specific obligations to provide all people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of our programs, services, and activities.

With the 33rd Anniversary of the ADA being celebrated in 2023, the AOC Statewide Title II Coordinator's Office remains steadfast in our commitment to providing training, implementing policies and providing assistive technology and sign language interpretation, to ensure equal access for all who visit our courts.

The AOC Statewide Title II Coordinator's Office works with the courts in many capacities to provide the latest ADA information, trainings, technologies, effective communication services (such as ASL interpreters and CART), scribing, documents in alternative formats (such as Braille and large print), and other resources to increase access to our courts.

2023 was an exciting year for the Statewide ADA Title II Office, with many new and groundbreaking initiatives being rolled out throughout the Judiciary, such as scribing, updated webpages for all districts, new informational materials, new training topics, new service providers, and professional development for our District ADA Title II Coordinators by way of the nationally-recognized ADA Coordinator Training Certification Program. In 2023, the New Mexico Judiciary scheduled 422 American Sign Language Interpreters, 20 Transliteration jobs, and 27 CART jobs for our courts.

The Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office has been hard at work in 2023 looking ahead to what we can bring to the Judiciary in 2024. We look forward to what's ahead and can't wait to share it all with you next year!



Did you know? 30.4% of New Mexicans over the age of 18 report having a disability. That's nearly 1 in 3 adults in our state.

NM Hosts CLAC Conference

COUNCIL OF LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATORS

In May 2023, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) together with NM AOC Language Access Services hosted the Eighth Annual Conference of the Council of Language Access Coordinators (CLAC). We were delighted to be selected to host this national conference in Santa Fe, NM, where hundreds of language access coordinators and program managers from all over the nation shared their experiences and collaborated to find ways to improve language access in our courts nationwide. This was the first in-person conference since the pandemic, with the last gathering having taken place in 2019. The NM LAS team had the opportunity to present on the topics of LEP Jurors and Improving Candidate Performance on Oral Exams.

As a national leader in language access, the New Mexico LAS Team was honored to co-host such an important event. Throughout the four days of the conference, programs from across the nation were able to learn how other states are dealing with the same issues as they are. Team leaders were able to share their thoughts and expertise on topics that affect us all. Topics such as how to reconnect with each other to build those professional relationships needed to be successful in our programs, how to identify best practices for Video Remote Interpreting, how to revisit and reevaluate the role of the language access coordinator, and learning how states are approaching requirements for legal interpreting for ASL interpreters were discussed in detail. This was an opportunity like no other for our LAS team members.

Conference attendees also got to enjoy a flamenco performance and build their professional networks during the Welcome Reception. Overall this was an experience that without a doubt benefited many: the NM AOC LAS Team is looking forward to the next one!



ADA REPRESENTATION AT CLAC



The Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office was thrilled to participate in the 2023 CLAC Conference in Santa Fe, and we were excited to welcome ADA Coordinators from throughout the United States. This year's CLAC conference brought the largest group of ADA Coordinators ever in attendance, and it was a great chance to connect and meet Coordinators from Maine to Hawaii and everywhere in between. We used this opportunity to create an email ListServ group to stay in contact, offering support, resources, training opportunities, and collaborative ideas throughout the year.

During the conference, the Statewide ADA Office showcased our scribing program with an interactive panel of participants from across our state. Peggy Cadwell (AOC), Kevin Spears (Ninth Judicial District), Elizabeth Garcia (Second Judicial District) and Charlene Henry (Eleventh Judicial District) shared their experiences with scribing and language access. Having the opportunity to present this initiative to a national audience was a fantastic experience and we are excited to share more as our scribing program grows.

In addition to the scribing panel, we collaborated with our trusted partners Julie Ballinger (Southwest ADA Center) and Jeminie Shell (New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability) to present the latest information on ADA Title II and the Courts, and with Jesse Armijo (New Mexico Technical Assistance Program) to demonstrate the latest in ADA accessibility technology and effective communication for the courts.

Court Interpreters

INTERPRETER RECRUITMENT

The recruitment of qualified candidates who demonstrate the skill set needed to begin the long and challenging court interpreter certification process has been Language Access Services' primary focus this year.

The efforts to increase our pool of interpreters are ongoing and have included recruiting and awarding AOC funded scholarships to qualified candidates for the Justice System Interpreter (JSI) Certificate Program. Since November of 2022, AOC has awarded 45 scholarships to cover the tuition of the JSI program and the first round of exams for certification. This program prepares participants for the interpreter certification through skills training and practical exercises. AOC LAS Coordinators supplement the JSI course with in-person training sessions specifically created to better prepare candidates for certification and their future as interpreters.

Additionally, LAS has attended job fairs at schools, presented on panels for college students, and continues to build those connections necessary to reach the perfect candidates throughout the whole state. Interpreter certification is neither quick nor easy, so our efforts will continue to run strong until we have accomplished our goals.



This year, recruitment efforts and community outreach have overlapped. Language Access Services' ongoing relationship with Tierra Encantada Charter School in Santa Fe has given our JSI program its youngest ever student. In a unique twist, our youngest student is participating in the JSI program alongside her former teacher, who also hopes to become a certified court interpreter.

JUSTICE SYSTEM INTERPRETER TRAINING

This past year, Language Access Services had the privilege of hosting three Justice System Interpreter (JSI) Live training sessions: two in Albuquerque and one in Las Cruces. Training sessions offer practical insights into the field of court interpreting with the opportunity to get individualized feedback on practice exercises. Each session is prepared in consideration of each individual cohort's student needs and program phase. This specially tailored programming is a must, especially given the wide range of student backgrounds as we have expanded recruitment.

With recruitment efforts having reached an all-time high, our most recent JSI Live training session also hit record attendance. With a class size of 22, aspiring interpreters from across the state and even across the ocean attended the program held at the NM State Bar on November 3 and 4, 2023. Exam preparation was the main focus, as these students were scheduled to take written and oral exams in December.



Our primary goal for the JSI program is to prepare students for certification and create a lasting network of resources to serve them throughout their career. These resources vary from sharing glossaries, connecting students with certified interpreters and working Justice System Interpreters, and teaching the fundamentals of being a contract interpreter for the New Mexico Courts. It is our hope at AOC Language Access Services that as we continue to connect and share what we do with the communities we serve, our program will continue to grow and flourish.



Court Interpreters

INTERPRETER SPOTLIGHT

In every annual report, we shine a spotlight on one of the many talented interpreters with whom the New Mexico Judiciary is fortunate to work. Heartfelt thanks to each and every one of these skilled and dedicated professionals! For 2023, our featured interpreter is Russian linguist Lioudmila Alexeenko.



I am honored to be presented in this Annual Report.

I started my interpreting career in the Soviet Union volunteering for People's Diplomacy events. I continued it after coming to New Mexico and in 1999 registered my small business to assist various government and public agencies, health care providers, and other organizations in their communication with the Russian language speaking population of the state. From the very start of my work in New Mexico I have considered providing services to the court system of the state my highest priority.

In 2009 I received my State courts certification by the National Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, and have always used every opportunity to learn, receive training and grow professionally so I raise my qualification level and provide the courts with the higher quality of my service.

I love New Mexico, its rich history and culture, its beautiful nature and I am honored and very proud to have the opportunity to work for New Mexico's Justice system and to be a part of NM AOC Language Access team. I am grateful to the LAS Coordinators for their continuous support. Thank you very much Team!

- Lioudmila Alexeenko



Lioudmila has always been very helpful in covering assignments for my region. I really appreciate how responsive she is because Lioudmila always communicates with me very well and this lets me know what is happening with my region. Lioudmila is great to work with and I know that I can always rely on her for her services.

- Pedro Chávez, Valencia, Socorro, Cibola and McKinley County Coordinator

As an LAS Coordinator, I had the pleasure of working with Lioudmila many times. Having her as a local Russian interpreter in the state has been a blessing. Lioudmila was always quick to take my requests for interpretation, and she was also great at communicating. Whenever I got a request for a Russian interpreter, it was a relief knowing Lioudmila was there.

- Freda Valdez, Statewide Program Manager

Lioudmila Alexeenko is an excellent interpreter to work with for many reasons. First, she is constantly willing to assist courts and coordinators regardless of the short or advance notice she receives. She will engage in any and all assignments, be it remotely or in person, and will do so gladly. She responds to requests within minutes, always remembers to check in and out, and remains available while on guarantee as required. In addition, Lioudmila is courteous and professional. I know and appreciate that I can count on Lioudmila.

- Eileen Spoonhoward, former NE Region Coordinator

Lioudmila Alexeenko is a Russian interpreter who is very organized, punctual, and professional. On the occasions that I had the opportunity to work with her, she demonstrated courtesy towards her colleagues and the individuals for whom she provided language services. I believe she is a team player. We are fortunate to have a fellow worker such as herself.

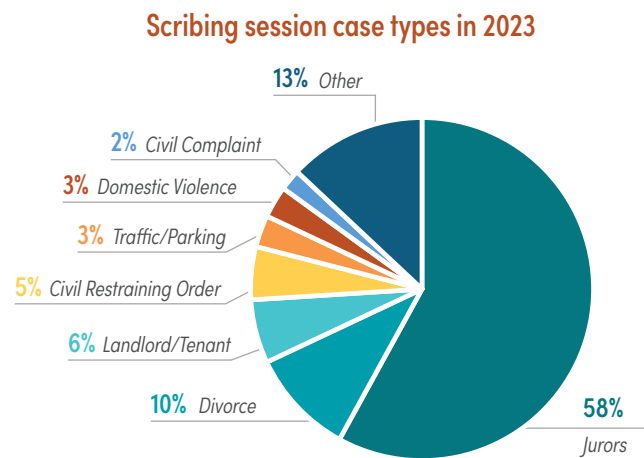
- Fabiola Tortajada, Twelfth Judicial District & Eddy County Coordinator

EXPANSION OF SCRIBING SERVICES

The New Mexico Judiciary remains committed to assisting court users who need help understanding and navigating court processes, which can be unfamiliar and difficult, particularly to those who are self-represented and may have a disability, limited English proficiency, low literacy skills or limited computer access. Accessibility to our courts is further achieved through the scribing program, which was fully implemented throughout the Judiciary this year. With scribing, a court user or potential juror can dictate what they would like to say on their court forms or juror questionnaire, while court staff scribes their responses directly onto the document, word-for-word. Providing accessibility through scribing ensures equal access to and full participation in all court programs, services, and activities.

In recognition of the success of the scribing pilots in the Second and Ninth Judicial Districts, the New Mexico Supreme Court issued an Order on November 9, 2022 authorizing the expansion of the scribing program to any court in the state. The Order further suspended Rule 23-113(C)(3) NMRA to the extent necessary to reasonably accommodate an eligible self-represented litigant in filling out forms. Rule 23-113(C)(3) had prohibited court staff from creating documents or filling in the blanks on forms on behalf of self-represented litigants. Suspending this rule was key to opening the door for court staff to scribe for self-represented litigants who require assistance.

The Supreme Court Order expanded scribing services statewide, and the Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office coordinated with our judicial districts to launch the service in their courts in 2023.



The *Scribing Program Facilitation Guide* to support the statewide, standardized training of court staff; to promote the availability of scribing services and other resources; and to monitor the effectiveness of the training program and resources over time. The *Scribing Program Facilitation Guide* is available to all courts.

As judicial districts rolled out scribing services, the Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office collaborated with courts to provide virtual and in-person trainings, roundtable discussions and supplemental resources such as the *Scribing Intake* form and *Statement of Need*. By signing the *Statement of Need*, the court user affirms that staff will not provide any legal advice. The *Statement* also serves as an attestation that scribing is needed due to disability, LEP, low literacy, or limited computer resources. The *Scribing Intake* form tracks scribing information for statistical purposes, such as case type, case number, and length of the session.

Of the many highlights of 2023, the statewide Scribing Program has been one of the most meaningful achievements for the Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office. Collaborating with our courts and witnessing the hard work and dedication being put in by all staff to make the program a success throughout our state has been remarkable. Thanks to our court partners, the New Mexico Judiciary remains on the forefront of many accessibility initiatives.

WHAT IS SCRIBING?

Scribing is filling out court forms for self-represented individuals or potential jurors who are unable to do so themselves due to disability, LEP, low literacy, or low computer literacy/access. Scribing can be done by any court employee who has completed scribing training.

The AOC collaborated with the National Center for State Courts to create online, self-paced training video modules that provide an overview of the New Mexico state courts and the scribing process, and an introduction to the scribing program. The modules also contain information on the difference between legal advice and legal information; commonly used court forms, and working with populations with diverse needs. The modules provide court staff with the tools they need to proficiently deliver scribing services. Additionally, audio public service announcements in English, Spanish and Navajo help spread the word throughout our communities of the availability of these services.

To assist with implementation throughout the Judiciary, the National Center for State Courts and the Office of the Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator developed the



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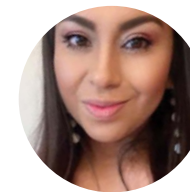
We started the Scribing Project in May of 2023.

The time it takes a clerk to scribe a document is around 30 minutes to one hour depending on the document. The appreciation of the people we are scribing for has been well worth the time. One lady was even crying, she was so grateful. She told me she would not have been able to get a Restraining Order if the clerk hadn't helped her fill out the petition. This person was in a very bad domestic violence situation and is now getting the assistance she needs to better her situation.

- Tamara Reichel, Eleventh Judicial District

I think the scribing session I did went really well. I was happy to be able to help him: he was an older gentleman originally from Mexico who said he didn't learn how to read or write in Spanish or English. He said he was just happy he was able to have someone help him, as he doesn't have anyone in the area that would have been able to help him before the 30 day time limit for his response. We did his response right away that same day. He lives in the next town over and has some medical issues as well, so we didn't want to make him drive back and forth.

- Jazmin Yanez, Fifth Judicial District



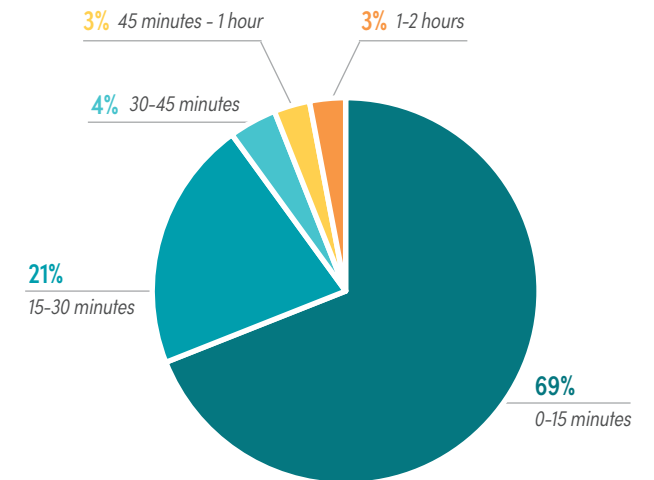
As a Language Access Specialist, I have had the honor to provide language access services to non-English speakers and I am now scribing as part of my regular work. Scribing for persons with disabilities, LEP, or illiteracy has enhanced my sense of purpose to the Court. I am beyond happy to provide service excellence to people in need with reading, writing or understanding court forms. Providing people with scribing services has connected me with our community, and the appreciation and smiles that I have received from the individuals has brought me great joy. I have realized that my help to others has a much further effect, and I am motivated to keep helping in any way that I can.

- Nancy Acosta, Eleventh Judicial District

I have been scribing for some time now. I absolutely love it! I like to see the reaction of the limited English proficient individual when I tell them I can help.

- Mary Diaz-Rodriguez, Ninth Judicial District

The average scribing session is less than 15 minutes, with the added benefit of improving case flow and saving judicial time and resources.



My experience with Scribing has been a positive and successful one. It amazes me how much more friendly our jurors are when they appear for service after having received scribing services through our office. More often than not, jurors are unhappy to be reporting. Scribing bridges the gap and creates a bit of a safe connection to Jury Duty and the clerks they will be interacting with for the term. Letting them know how excited you are to put a name to a face when they report makes all the difference in the world. I have noticed that - particularly with our elderly jurors - the act of scribing provides them with not only peace of mind about paperwork, but also sometimes we are the company and friendly conversation they might not have had that day otherwise. I think scribing creates confidence and alleviates fear of the unknown.

- Sarina Hernandez, Ninth Judicial District

The Ninth Judicial District Court has been using scribing as a way to ensure that prospective jurors are able to serve. One such juror contacted me and was adamant that he could not do jury duty because of his legally blind status. Initially, his reason was that he would not be able to complete the required forms. I advised him that because of our scribing service, I could help him to accomplish that by reading the forms to him and then scribing his answers into the online juror questionnaire over the phone. Because of the scribing service, the juror who initially believed that he could not serve changed his perspective about the jury process.

- Isabell Walla, Ninth Judicial District

CAREER DAY & SENIOR PASSAGE

This past year, my colleague Pedro Chávez and I had the privilege of being invited out into our communities to meet with the professionals of the future. In April, I attended Moriarty Middle School Career Day to speak to students on interpreting in the courts. It was great to interact and share with the students a day in the life of a court interpreter. All the students were surprised that a career like that existed and for a small group of them, it presented an unheard-of career path that they were eager to explore.

In May, Pedro and I both had the opportunity to visit Tierra Encantada Charter School in Santa Fe to observe Senior Passage Presentations. These presentations are part of the senior graduation requirements and consist of a review of their academic history as they work toward graduating High School with a bilingual endorsement.

- Laura Chávez, Statewide Language Access Services Coordinator



“Participating as a community member for the presentations given by the graduating students of Tierra Encantada was a wonderful experience. The students were so impressive and I identified with many of them due to our very similar background. Those students all have so much potential and my hope is that we sparked an interest in them to choose a career in language access.”

- Pedro Chávez, Language Access Coordinator



TIERRA ENCANTADA SPELLING BEE

On March 29, 2023, Paula Couselo and Freda Valdez were guest judges for the *Concurso de deletreo en español* (Spanish Spelling Bee contest) for Tierra Encantada Charter School in Santa Fe. There were two categories: one for native Spanish speakers and one for speakers of Spanish as a second language. This collaboration, together with others that LAS has had in the past with Tierra Encantada, has allowed LAS to reach out to bilingual high school students and make them aware of the career opportunities in court interpreting.



ADA TRAININGS OFFERED IN 2023

01/13/2023 “ADA Advocates and More” – webinar
Instructor: Prof. Bruce Adelson, Esq.

02/04/2023 “A Practical Exploration of Techniques for Interpreting for Deaf Witnesses” – webinar
Instructor: Prof. Carla Mathers

04/04/2023 “Accessibility and Municipal Courts,” Municipal Court Conference – Albuquerque, NM
Instructors: Laura Chávez and Annie Burkhardt



04/11/2023 “ADA Title II and the Courts,” Court Manager Conference – Albuquerque, NM
Instructor: Peggy Cadwell and Annie Burkhardt

04/26/2023 “Scribing” Language Access Services Symposium – webinar
Instructor: Annie Burkhardt

04/28/2023 “ADA: Accommodating Jurors with Disabilities and Courthouse Accessibility” – webinar
Instructor: Prof. Bruce Adelson, Esq.

05/18/2023 “ADA Title II and the Courts” HR Supervisor Mentorship Program - Santa Fe, NM
Instructor: Peggy Cadwell

06/16/2023 “Scribing” Access to Justice Commission – Albuquerque, NM
Instructor: Peggy Cadwell

06/29/2023 “What Happens Now? Bias, Microaggressions, and Organizational Culture” – webinar
Instructor: Prof. Bruce Adelson, Esq.

07/14/2023 “Language and Accessibility in the NM Courts,” Magistrate Court New Judge Phase II Training - Albuquerque, NM
Instructors: Freda Valdez and Peggy Cadwell

08/15/2023 “Everything You Needed to Know About Scribing But Were Too Afraid to Ask,” Court Consortium Meeting – webinar
Instructors: Peggy Cadwell and Annie Burkhardt

08/17/2023 “The Accessible Courtroom,” Magistrate Judge’s Conference – Albuquerque, NM
Instructors: Kim Corwin, ASL Interpreter; Jeminie Shell, NM Governor’s Commission on Disability; Peggy Cadwell

09/21/2023 “Scribing for Jurors” – webinar
Instructors: Isabell Walla, Ninth Judicial District; Annie Burkhardt

09/29/2023 “Understanding and Supporting Individuals with Autism Within the Judicial System” – webinar
Instructor: UNM Center for Development and Disability

10/04/2023 “Scribing and Legal Info vs Legal Advice” – webinar
Instructors: Elizabeth Garcia, Second Judicial District; Annie Burkhardt

10/16/2023 “Language Access and Accessibility in the New Mexico Courts,” – Gallup, NM
Instructors: Freda Valdez and Peggy Cadwell

11/08/2023 “Disability Awareness and Etiquette” – webinar
Instructors: Jeminie Shell, NM Governor’s Commission on Disability

LAS TRAININGS: A FEW HIGHLIGHTS!

On October 31, 2023, I was invited to participate in a panel discussion and Q&A on Language Access for the New England Conference of Chief Justices/ Conference of State Court Administrators. Together with Texas and Arizona, we were able to share our knowledge and expertise on the topics of language access as it pertains to Recruitment, Regional Collaboration, Video Remote Interpreting, Training, Skills Building, and Interpreting from an Interpreter’s Perspective. This was another great opportunity to discuss the shortage of interpreters nationally and what we are doing to solve the issue.

- Freda Valdez, LAS Statewide Program Manager

On April 14, 2023, SE Region Coordinator Janie Hernandez was a presenter at the Magistrate Court Conference in Albuquerque. Ms. Hernandez walked attendees through the Interpreter Intelligence scheduling system, including how to enter and cancel jobs and the importance of calling interpreter cases first.

On July 14, 2023 at a training event in Albuquerque, Language Access Services had the opportunity to present to and answer questions from new magistrate court judges about language and accessibility in the New Mexico courts.

On December 5, 2023, Language Access Services presented at the New Municipal Court Judges Orientation in Albuquerque, covering the basics of language access and how to best serve the LEP population.

LAP AND ADA PLANNING

Collaboration continued this year between Language Access Services, the ADA Office and individual judicial districts on Language Access and ADA Planning. Every district has had its own unique Language Access Plan in place since 2012, which assesses the needs of its local LEP population and documents how services will be delivered and advertised. In 2022, these plans were expanded to include ADA services.

The plans are updated annually through engaging in a collaborative process with key staff in each district. AOC considers it vital to travel to the districts annually to meet staff face-to-face. This gives us a forum to hear about the districts' needs, assess any gaps in service delivery, and facilitate solutions. The meetings are an opportunity for AOC to disseminate information about the latest statewide initiatives and legal requirements while receiving updates on developments at the district level.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank court staff and leadership throughout the state for welcoming us into their communities and enabling us to remain up-to-date on those communities' evolving needs. We extend our sincere thanks for the dedication you show on a daily basis to ensuring that all New Mexicans receive equal access to justice.

SELF EVALUATION AND TRANSITION PLANS: ADA OFFICE IS PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

A key element and legal requirement of Title II of the ADA is for all public entities to assess their physical spaces, services, programs, and activities to ensure visitors with disabilities can participate in all aspects of the process without barriers. The ADA outlines these requirements in what is known as an "ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan," in which a public entity must evaluate all public spaces, services, programs and activities to identify barriers to accessibility, and create a transition plan in which those barriers will be remedied. In addition to evaluating the physical building space and fixtures within it, a self-evaluation can also include adjacent parking facilities.

This year, the AOC Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office began laying the groundwork in preparation for a self-evaluation and transition plan for each court in New Mexico, with the goal of kicking off our evaluation in 2024. In 2023, we undertook many hours of research, collaboration, meetings, trainings and webinars in preparation for our inaugural Judiciary ADA self-evaluation and transition plan. The Statewide ADA Coordinator's Office looks forward to the challenge ahead, as our Judiciary remains committed to ADA accessibility.

DID YOU KNOW?



Wheelchair accessible **DRINKING FOUNTAINS** for adults must have a water spout 36" max above the finish floor or ground.



Accessible **PARKING SPACES** must be at least 96 inches wide with a mounted accessible parking sign at least 60 inches above the ground.

ADA TITLE II SURVEY

In 2021, the ADA Office created a survey to measure ADA awareness and compliance. In 2023, we distributed a new survey to all of our District Coordinators to measure growth and needs in several key areas. We are happy to share several results of the 2023 survey here in our Annual Report. We are thrilled to see how much the ADA has grown in terms of action, awareness, and recognition throughout the Judiciary in the past two years.

Areas of significant growth include the designation of an ADA Title II Coordinator in each district and in the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and Metropolitan Court, with back-up Coordinators also being assigned. Additionally, ADA Title II signage is more prominently displayed in our courts in 2023.

ADA-related forms and important information such as the Request for Accommodations form, Complaint form, and Grievance Procedures are more readily available to the public in 2023 (13 districts reporting) compared to 2021 (3 districts reporting). By 2023, districts had updated their webpages to include these resources, as well as contact information for the public to reach the local ADA Coordinator. Publishing this information online is not only a legal requirement but serves a greater purpose in providing accessibility for our court visitors. We thank all the judicial districts for ensuring this important information is prominently displayed on their webpages.



Additionally, ADA Title II training has been made widely available to District Coordinators and court staff through the ADA Title II Coordinator's Office and supplemental resource materials (such as ADA Title II bench cards and Service Animal FAQ cards) have been created and distributed as a quick-reference guide for when questions arise.

It has been exciting to see the growth of ADA Title II in our Judiciary over the past two years, and we can't wait to see what lies ahead in 2024 and the years to come!

COLLABORATIONS WITH ADA COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The ADA Title II Coordinator's Office continued to collaborate this year with our valued partners across New Mexico and throughout the United States to stay at the forefront of new ADA information, mandates, and creative ideas. Our trusted local partners at the NM Governor's Commission on Disability, Southwest ADA Center, NM Technology Assistance Program, ReadWest, UNM Center for Development and Disability, NM Commission for the Blind, and ADA Title II Coordinators Offices around the state provided trainings, education and resources on a variety of ADA topics.



Throughout the year, our office teamed up once again with the UNM Accessibility Resource Center, UNM Office of Equal Opportunity, Central NM Community College Accessibility Services, Denver Division of Disability Rights, University of Colorado Disability Services, Great Plains ADA Center, ADA National Symposium, Austin TX Parks and Recreation Development Division, and the Judiciaries of California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Maine, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Washington on a variety of ADA topics. We are excited for future collaborations with our new partners in the years to come.

CLARA COMES TO LAS CRUCES!

Clara is Language Access Services' interactive, multilingual website avatar, who provides assistance via speech recognition and voice command technology. The English, Spanish and Diné speaking avatar guides users through the LAS and ADA websites, enabling easier navigation for users who have low vision, low literacy, or limited English proficiency.

Clara also appears on our self service kiosks installed near courthouse entrances. The artificial intelligence kiosk can give directions, locate forms, answer FAQ, and connect the user with a court clerk and interpreter. These kiosks are installed in the district courthouses in Roswell, Taos and Santa Fe, and this year saw the expansion of the service to the Las Cruces Magistrate Court.

An addition that is unique to the new unit in Las Cruces is services for jurors. The prospective juror qualification and questionnaire can be completed via the kiosk, while jurors arriving for service can check in using the machine.

At the 2023 Court Technology Conference hosted by the National Center for State Courts in Phoenix, Arizona, NM AOC was pleased to deliver two presentations sharing the benefits of the Clara avatar with our national colleagues.



"We are seeing more jurors benefit from Clara as a large population do not have good access to a computer. Our staff is positive and excited for the opportunity to provide more options to the public."

- Jacqueline Douglas, Las Cruces Magistrate Court Manager



NEW SERVICE PROVIDERS AND TECHNOLOGY

Throughout 2023, the ADA Office was excited to add new service providers and technologies to strengthen our ADA resources throughout the Judiciary. In July, we added interpreter access through Certified Languages International to provide on-demand ASL interpretation via video for out-of-courtroom interactions with Deaf individuals. With this new service, access to an ASL interpreter is just a click away on your computer.

In late 2023, two supplemental CART service providers were added to provide additional support for CART services in our courts for those who need them.

Additional UbiDuo devices were secured for our Judiciary in 2023, with each judicial district receiving at least one device to use for written communication with courthouse visitors who are unable to speak.

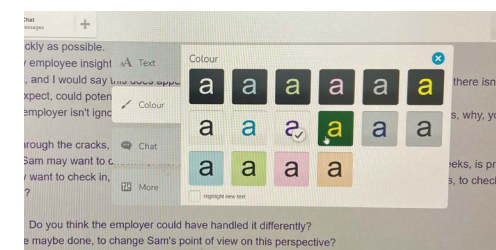
Another great device is the PocketTalker, which is used to amplify voices and sounds for hard of hearing individuals. A PocketTalker is available to be loaned from the AOC Statewide Title II Coordinator's Office: please contact us for more information!



SPOTLIGHT ON CART: COMMUNICATION ACCESS REALTIME TRANSLATION

Effective communication means that anything written or spoken in our courts must be as clear and understandable to people with disabilities as it is to people without disabilities. When a visitor with hearing loss visits our courts, CART helps make effective communication happen.

Similar to the way closed-captioning works on our home televisions, CART displays what is being spoken verbatim during a court hearing onto a screen. A CART captioner listens to the court hearing and types the conversation using a stenographer's device. The typed conversation is then displayed in real time onto a larger screen in the courtroom, or on a personal laptop screen. The individual with hearing loss can then read the words displayed, allowing them to fully participate in the court process if they are unable to hear what is being spoken around them. The CART captioner can be physically present in the courtroom or provide the service remotely. A CART transcript is not an official court record in the way a court reporter's transcript would be.



Typically, the CART captions are displayed on the screen as a default black background with white or yellow letters. However, new CART technology such as StreamText allows the captions to be personalized to what works best for the user.

For example, the font size, font type, font color, and background color can all be adjusted so the user can view a display tailored to their needs. Court staff can request CART services through Interpreter Intelligence or by contacting Language Access Services.



"We did about 15 minutes of test captioning to make sure the captioning was accurate and the font on the screen was the correct size and color. The juror caught on quickly and eventually felt confident navigating the captioning on their own. The jury selection went off without any flaws and the juror was appreciative of the accommodation".

- Luke Tessman, Jury Program Manager, Second Judicial District Court

NEW INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

In our continuing commitment to providing ADA Title II information and ongoing education to the Judiciary, in 2023 the Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office created several new informational pieces. New ADA Title II and Service Animal bench cards were printed and distributed throughout the Judiciary, providing on-the-spot reference information for court staff and security teams.

Additionally, with the exciting new inclusion of Certified Languages International (CLI) On-Demand Video Remote Interpreting in American Sign Language for out-of-courtroom interactions, instruction cards were created to provide step-by-step details for access to the service. We also took this opportunity to freshen up the current instructions for CLI's Telephone Interpreting Hotline for spoken languages and included them on the back of the instruction card.

Service Animal stickers were also distributed to courthouses throughout the Judiciary, welcoming service animals who accompany individuals with disabilities into our courts.

If you would like copies of these latest educational materials, please contact the Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office!



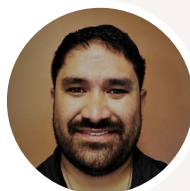
CONGRATS TO OUR NEWEST CERTIFIED COORDINATORS!

When the ADA was enacted in 1990, the designation of an ADA Coordinator became a requirement for all state and local entities with over 50 employees. With the new mandates in place, ADA Coordinators throughout the United States expressed a desire for training specific to their unique responsibilities, and for support and professional development. Taking the lead, the Great Plains ADA Center collaborated with the University of Missouri School of Health Professions Disability Studies and Policy Center to form focus groups and seek assistance from experienced ADA Coordinators in the field in order to create a comprehensive training program for ADA Coordinators throughout the country. The result of this effort is the ADA Coordinator Training Certificate Program (ACTCP), where Coordinators can complete an extensive training program consisting of an ADA Basics Course, 40 credits of Foundation Level courses and 22 credits of Elective courses, capped off with a comprehensive exam that must be passed to earn the certification. The goal of the final examination is to mimic the challenges of the ADA Coordinator position and to be able to research and answer ADA-related questions as they arise.

This year, the Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office was proud to sponsor four District ADA Coordinators to enroll in the ACTCP, with three coordinators earning their certifications over the summer alongside ADA and LAS team members Annie Burkhart and Joshua Kahawai.



Please join us in congratulating our newest certified ADA Coordinators, as they share their experience on becoming a certified Coordinator through the ACTCP:



Having successfully finished the ACTCP, I have enhanced my ability to assist individuals with disabilities within the Judicial system. As a program manager with AOC Language Access Services, our roles frequently intersect with those requiring ADA-mandated services. I am grateful for the chance to guarantee equal access to justice and to enhance our service to the community.

- Joshua Kahawai, Language Access Services

I have to say that the ACTCP was a great learning experience for me, as I gained a vast amount of knowledge in Title I and Title II of the ADA. I encourage anyone who is interested in becoming an ADA Coordinator and increasing your knowledge of ADA to take the initiative and sign up for the program.

- Rachel Gonzales, Seventh Judicial District



Earning the ACTCP Certificate and representing the NM AOC as a Certified ADA Coordinator has been an inspiring experience for me. During the course of the certification process, I learned a great deal about the ADA, and am excited to apply and share that knowledge throughout our Judiciary. With the strong foundation of the ADA Coordinator certification, I will continue to learn and continue my commitment to ensuring accessibility in our Judiciary.

- Annie Burkhart, Statewide ADA Title II Office

The ACTCP certification exam has been a transformative journey for me. It has offered a challenging and rewarding experience, pushing me to sharpen my research methods and expand my knowledge. The thought-provoking questions and comprehensive coverage of the ADA have deepened my understanding. I appreciate the opportunity for personal growth and improvement. Becoming a Certified ADA Coordinator signifies a significant step forward in my professional journey, and I am ready to make a positive impact in this field.

- Moses Reyes, Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court

The ACTCP program and exam were challenging, but provided me with a wealth of knowledge and tools that I will use as I move forward in my new role. I am the only ADA Coordinator in our District, so this certification is vital to me to ensure I provide the services and support that our staff and customers deserve. I recommend that anyone working towards an ACTCP certification attend the annual symposium. The symposium gave me the opportunity to earn many credits towards my certification, as well as the chance to just sit and listen to some very interesting and knowledgeable folks!

- Susan Kirker, Sixth Judicial District

THE HEARTBEAT OF ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR COURTS

The AOC Statewide Title II ADA Coordinator provides resources, guidance, and training to all judiciary employees and to relevant boards and commissions; coordinates compliance efforts; responds to general inquiries from the public; coordinates requests for auxiliary aids and services; develops a grievance procedure and investigates complaints; conducts a self-evaluation and transition plan, and ensures districts are complying with all ADA Title II mandates in their programs and activities.

This important work would not be possible without the assistance of the District ADA Coordinators in each of our thirteen judicial districts, Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and Metropolitan Court. Through partnership and support from the Statewide ADA Title II Office, our District Coordinators keep their fingers on the pulse in their districts to ensure their courts are complying with all ADA Title II mandates. This includes ensuring ADA Title II signage and important ADA information are posted and accurate; ensuring ADA information is displayed prominently on district webpages; managing and recording all ADA Title II requests from the public, and maintaining contact with their staff and judges to ensure services are effective.

Through monthly ADA Title II Coordinator Meetings, our Coordinators from across the state come together to discuss a variety of ADA-related topics such as our scribing initiative, ACTCP certification, effective ways to track accommodations, latest ADA-related technologies, upcoming trainings, district ADA plans, types of accommodation request, self-evaluation and transition plans, and resources. We also use this time to check in with one another and provide support, guidance and sharing of ideas.

YOUR LOCAL COORDINATOR

Supreme Court:
Elizabeth García and Lysette Romero-Córdova

Court of Appeals:
Mark Reynolds

Metropolitan Court:
Moses Reyes and Samantha Osorio-Mendiola

First Judicial District:
Kim Moore

Second Judicial District:
Ramon Maestas and Alison Orona

Third Judicial District:
Jodie Delgado and Marisela Durán

Fourth Judicial District:
Karen Portillo

Fifth Judicial District:
Kennon Crowhurst and Katie Espinoza

Sixth Judicial District:
Susan Kirker and Angelic Munoz

Seventh Judicial District:
Rachel Gonzales

Eighth Judicial District:
Amy Seidel

Ninth Judicial District:
Katherine Grubelnik and Shawn McDonald

Tenth Judicial District:
Amy Gutierrez

Eleventh Judicial District:
Linda Padilla and Ruth Baldwin

Twelfth Judicial District:
Phil Hefter

Thirteenth Judicial District:
Brittany Lucero



This year, the ADA Office sponsored several District Coordinators to attend the Virtual National Symposium held by the Great Plains ADA Center. With the immersive training provided by the National Symposium and ACTCP, 2024 will undoubtedly bring more certified Coordinators to the Judiciary.

My experience at the conference was great! I thought the service animal session was especially informative and helpful. And the session on emergency preparedness and making sure our plans include considerations of this nature felt very relevant. The format of the conference was perfect.

- Ruth Baldwin, Eleventh Judicial District



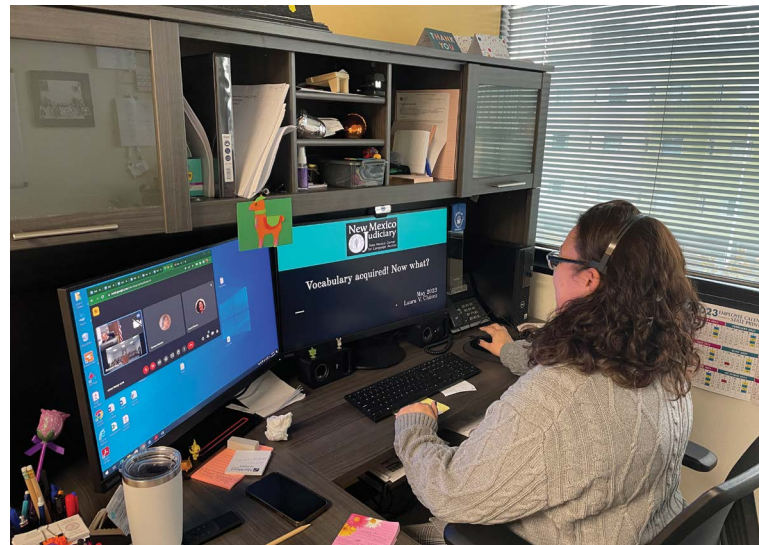
I really enjoyed the symposium. I felt that the speakers did a nice job at keeping me engaged. My favorite sessions were the Title I, II and III Top cases of the year review. I found the examples and situations to be interesting and to shed light on what a court might rule and why.

- Brittany Lucero, Thirteenth Judicial District



2023 INITIATIVES

This past year proved to be action packed for all things related to our Language Access Specialist Program. Webinar content was redesigned to put cultural and language development at the forefront of our training programs and to provide practical knowledge to better equip our specialists for their interactions with the public. Highlights from our cultural components included an in-depth interview with Matilda Matchers on her work as a Diné interpreter and insight into Deaf culture provided by Kim Corwin and his daughter BoMee Rittenhouse. The language development portion of the program saw the introduction of invaluable resources for specialists such as the ability to share and create glossaries within the Judiciary that are division specific. Our greatest acquisition, however, was a Diné Glossary of Legal and Related terms for our virtual library.



Webinars were held from January to September 2023. Language Access Services was able to provide 15 credit opportunities for employees statewide to meet their continuing education requirements. Of those 15 credit opportunities, two were full-day programs that allowed participants to complete all of their requirements at once or just drop in for their preferred content. Planning will soon be underway to develop new content for next year's symposia and we would love suggestions from our LASs on what they want to see in upcoming webinar offerings. One of our greatest goals for next year is to get our wonderful group of LASs under one roof to share and grow their skills. For those interested in becoming Language Access Specialists, classes are offered four times a year and we are now accepting applications for February 2024.

LASs BY THE NUMBERS

In 2023, 25 new Language Access Specialists joined our ranks, bringing the total number of LASs working throughout the New Mexico courts to 179. An additional cohort of students began their course in November 2023 and will qualify early in the new year. New Mexico's Language Access Specialists work in the Spanish, Diné and Thai languages.



WELCOME, NEW TEAM MEMBERS!

This year saw two members of our team transition into new roles: Freda Valdez now serves as Statewide Program Manager for Language Access Services and Laura Chávez is our Statewide Language Access Services Coordinator. LAS also hired three new Coordinators, while the ADA Office expanded its staffing with the addition of a Project Manager.



ANNIE BURKHART joined the AOC Statewide ADA Title II Coordinator's Office in January 2023 as a Project Manager. Annie has over 17 years' experience with the New Mexico Judiciary, previously with the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court. Annie has also earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of New Mexico in Criminology and a Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

"I have learned so much this year, and will continue to learn all I can about the ADA. I am excited for what is ahead for our Judiciary in 2024."



My name is **ERIKA SÁNCHEZ PAVÓN**, my family and I moved to New Mexico this past summer, from Minnesota. I am originally from Mexico, born in Morelia Michoacán. I have three children: Max, 13, Yoan, almost 10, and Erika Inez, 8. We are grateful to call this marvelous State, Home.

I have worked as a Spanish Interpreter for over 20 years, first in the Medical field and then became a Certified Judicial Spanish Interpreter about 18 years ago. Interpreting is my passion. I am very excited to be part of this team and I look forward to learning, growing and servicing the public.



LAURA PÉREZ: As I transition into my new role of Language Access Coordinator with AOC, I am ready to embrace new challenges and am eager to contribute to the AOC's mission of ensuring equal access to justice by providing quality language access services for non-English speaking individuals. My experience in the legal field as a legal assistant has given me the foundation and skills to succeed not only as a court interpreter but also in my role as a coordinator. In a continued effort for professional growth, I am actively pursuing my federal certification. I am very excited for this new chapter in my career, especially the opportunity to collaborate with such a dynamic team of language professionals.



My name is **RAMÓN GÓMEZ** and I joined NM AOC as a Language Access Coordinator in 2023. I am a Certified Spanish Court Interpreter, receiving my certification in 2013.

I have worked directly in the field as a freelance interpreter for seven years. I am a lifelong learner, and during the pandemic I reengaged in English courses to improve my practice. I enjoy using my linguistic and administrative skills to ensure language access across New Mexico.



CONTACT US



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languageaccess.nmcourts.gov



nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org



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