NEW MEXICO Sentencing Commission

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Juvenile Committee 10:00 a.m. May 2, 2025

Juvenile Justice Center (Children's Court)
5100 2nd St NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107

Committee Members Present	Committee Members Absent	Others Attending	NMSC Staff
Cindy Aragon, Chair	Ambrosio Castellano (Speaker)	Tonya Covington (Peacemakers Consulting)	Douglas Carver
Bob Cleavall, NMSC Chair	Sheriff Glenn Hamilton (ret'd.) (NM Counties)	Bronwyn Neeser (Hive Consulting)	Grace Cairo
Hubert "Troy" Gray (NMDAA)	Krista Lawrence (Governor)	Nick Costales (JJAC)	
April Land (UNMSOL)	Scott Patterson-Alatorre (CYFD)	Jacsyn Brickhouse (PED)	
Melanie Martnez (NMCD)		Sarah Gallegos (LOPD)	
Ramona Martinez (Pro Tem)			
David Richter (LOPD)			
Hon. Alma Cristina Roberson (Children's Court)			

I. Welcome and Introductions. Cindy Aragon, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

II. Approval of Minutes for the October 24, 2024 and December 4, 2024 meetings. The minutes for these two meetings were approved by unanimous vote.

III. Staff Report.

Douglas Carver, Executive Director, New Mexico Sentencing Commission (NMSC), informed the members of the committee that he had been made Executive Director at the end of April, after an open search and interviews.

Executive Director Carver informed the members of the committee that earlier in the week the NMSC had hosted its third Convening for crime reduction grant recipients and members of Criminal Justice

Coordinating Councils. In conjunction with that event, NMSC also hosted its first-ever CLE. Both events were quite well attended. The plan is to try to host a CLE at least once every year.

Executive Director Carver also mentioned that he and Research Scientist Grace Cairo had attended the Children's Law Institute (CLI), as had Chair Aragon and NMSC Chair Bob Cleavall. This was the first time he or Ms. Cairo had attended CLI, and both found it interesting and informative.

IV. Update from 2025 Legislative Session.

Executive Director Carver informed the members of the committee that the bill the committee had proposed, which became House Bill 255, introduced by Rep. Elizabeth Thomson, ended up not passing. Early in the Legislative Session the bill had a number of provisions that had been in the stalled juvenile justice legislation that had been put forward by Bernalillo County District Attorney Sam Bregman added to it. These provisions made HB 255 controversial, and the bill failed on the Senate Floor. The provisions in the original bill that had been proposed by the Juvenile Committee and approved by the full Sentencing Commission were not the subject of much debate or controversy, and thus the bill would likely pass were it to be re-introduced in a future Legislative Session. He also noted that one reason the bill was easily taken over by other subject areas was that the "Relating To" clause, the opening clause of the title, which names a bill's subject matter, was quite broad: "Relating To Children". He suggested that if the committee were to repropose the legislation, the "Relating To" clause should be narrowed to "Relating to the Juvenile Community Corrections Act". He also noted that as this bill made it through the House and to the Senate Floor, the content had an ample opportunity to be vetted, which could smooth passage if the bill is reintroduced.

The fate of HB 255 occasioned a great deal of discussion among members of the committee. Members discussed the need for greater communication on the fate of NMSC bills during the Legislative Session; whether there was a need for the Juvenile Committee to meet during the Session; whether there was a role for committee members during the Session; the problems imposed by the speed at which legislation moves during the Session; how the dynamics of this Session, according to members of the committee and others in attendance who had long experience with the Legislature, were different than in past Sessions, with more of the power struggle within the Roundhouse being evident in the tone of questioning in committees, and with the pace at which bills were moving; and that once a bill is taken over as HB 255 was, it is very difficult to re-claim the bill and affect its passage through the Legislature.

Upon a motion by April Land, University of New Mexico School of Law, seconded by David Richter, Law Offices of the Public Defender, the committee agreed to re-sponsor the bill, with the change of amending the "Relating To" clause to tighten the subject matter of the legislation. The motion passed unanimously, with an abstention by Hubert "Troy" Gray, New Mexico District Attorneys Association.

Executive Director Carver informed the members of the committee that he would contact Legislative Council Service to have the bill redrafted, and will work with the Chair to schedule a time to have it endorsed by the full Sentencing Commission.

V. Possibility of Special Session on Juvenile Crime Issues.

This item was not discussed at this meeting.

VI. Education of Legislators on the Juvenile Justice System.

Chair Aragon opened discussion of this item to the committee and others in attendance. Much of the initial discussion revolved around what the Administrative Office of the Courts and individual courts were already doing. Hon. Alma Cristina Roberson informed the committee that the Children's Court Improvement Commission has a recorded training, part of which focuses on juvenile issues; that video could be shared.

Chair Aragon recommended the formation of a working group on this issue, with the initial membership of April Land, University of New Mexico School of Law; Ramona Martinez; Judge Roberson; Nick Costales, Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC); and herself. There was discussion of whether something might be packaged to present as a CLE by the NMSC.

The importance of attending the Legislature's interim committee meetings was also discussed. Mr. Costales mentioned that JJAC had developed an information sheet for legislators that was distributed during the Legislative Session. The information sheet concerned the work of JJAC as well as hard facts on juvenile justice. It was mentioned that a diagram outlining what happens upon the arrest of a juvenile would be a useful part of such a sheet. There was discussion around what is already outlined in the Children's Code, especially concerning amenability, which needs a lot of education for policy makers and legislators. It was also mentioned that the Supreme Court's Commission on Behavioral Health and Competency has started looking into juvenile justice issues.

Chair Aragon suggested that a working group could be formed around amenability. She suggested as initial members Judge Roberson; Sarah Gallegos, LOPD; Scott Patterson-Alatorre, CYFD; and herself.

Jacsyn Brickhouse, of the Public Education Department, informed the members of the committee that he had been invited to the meeting to discuss how to get restorative justice practices back into the youth system. Tonya Covington, from Peacemakers Consulting, added that she has been working with restorative justice practices for years, and would like to continue that work as a preventative for criminal activity by youth. She noted that recidivism rates for youth plummet when youth participate in restorative justice.

VII. Ideas for Legislation to Be Sponsored by Juvenile Committee/Formation of Working Groups.

Discussion of this item was subsumed in the discussion for Item VI (see above).

VIII. Next Meeting

The committee will schedule its next meeting for the week of July 17, 2025.

IX. Public Comment.

There was no public comment offered at the meeting.

X. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m.