



**Minutes of the Meeting of the
New Mexico Sentencing Commission
October 30, 2025, 10:00 a.m.**

**UNM Science & Technology Park
Rotunda – 801 University Blvd.
Albuquerque, NM**

Members Present	Members Absent	Others Attending	NMSC Staff Present
Bob Cleavall, Chair (Governor)	Brady Horn (NM SCt)	Elizabeth Dorado (Gordon Bernell)	Douglas Carver, Executive Director
Martin Suazo, Vice Chair (Pro Tem)	Ramona Martinez (Pro Tem)	Theresa Edwards (LOPD)	Amanda Armstrong, CFO
Cindy Aragon (State Bar)	Anita Mesa (BHSD)	Sheri Crider (Gordon Bernell)	Grace Cairo, Research Scientist
Jennifer Barela (designee for Bennett Baur, LOPD)	Angela “Spence” Pacheco (Speaker)	Scott Sanchez (LFC)	Jamie Goldberg, CJCC Liaison
Hon. Daniel A. Bryant (DMCJA)	Sheriff Americk Padilla (NM Counties)	Lancee Whetman (DOJ)	Jeremy Gonzales, Research Scientist
Ambrosio Castellano (Speaker)	Marissa Padilla (PED)	Alayne Ballantine (Gordon Bernell)	Nancy Shane, Director of Research
Hon. John Chavez (NM SCt)	Hon. R. David Pederson (DMCJA)	Nancy Martinez (LCS)	Keri Thiel, Deputy Director
Mark Donatelli (Speaker)	Clint Wellborn, (AODA)	Stephanie Maez (ICASA)	
Claire Harwell (Governor)	Sydney West (Pro Tem)		
Aaron Holloman (AOC) (NM SCt)			
Scot Key (Senate Minority)			
April Land (UNMSOL)			
Krista Lawrence (Governor)			
Annette Martinez (CYFD)			
Melanie Martinez (NMCD)			

Adolfo Mendez (DOJ)			
Amanda Romero (CYFD)			
Octavian Valencia (DPS)			
Raul Vigil (House Minority)			

I. Welcome and Introductions. The meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m. Chair Bob Cleavall welcomed members, guests, and staff to the meeting.

II. Approval of minutes for the August 7, 2025 meeting. The minutes of the August 7, 2025 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

III. Staff report.

Douglas Carver, Executive Director, New Mexico Sentencing Commission (NMSC), informed the members of the Commission that Amanda Armstrong, the NMSC CFO, has been with the Commission for ten years, the longest-tenured staff member. He thanked her for all of the work she has done and still does to make the Commission a success. He also informed the members that the Commission now has all 27 members appointed, the first time in a long while. Executive Director Carver additionally informed the members of the Commission that the Commission will be hosting the 2026 annual conference of the National Association of Sentencing Commissions. Deputy Director Keri Thiel and Research Scientist Grace Cairo will be helping with organizing the conference.

Executive Director Carver gave the members of the Commission an overview of the budget hearing before the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC). He noted that although LFC was using their format for small agencies, where the agency does not make a presentation, the subcommittee that heard the NMSC’s budget presentation had a number of questions, including the types of research the Commission undertakes and why the Commission needs an additional research scientist; what the NMSC’s opinion was on why the Commission has not received the funding for FTEs that we have requested in prior years; and why the Commission had requested monies for an unfunded compensation increase. In addition, Rep. Meredith Dixon (Vice Chair of HAFC) asked LFC staff to present her with a report on the efficacy of the crime reduction grants.

Executive Director Carver noted that he had appeared on a Courts, Corrections, and Justice Committee (CCJ) panel concerning the felon in possession statute, along with the Law Offices of the Public Defender and District Attorneys. During the panel, Senator Joseph Cervantes, the CCJ Chair, thanked the Commission for being more involved in the Legislature’s deliberations in the last year.

Executive Director Carver informed the members of the Commission that the audit had been completed. He thanked CFO Armstrong for her work on the audit. There will be two findings, a major finding concerning when payments were made to grantees of crime reduction grants, and a minor one concerning the signing of the audit contract.

Finally, Executive Director Carver informed the members of the Commission that the Research team had started work with the Crime Victims Reparation Commission to help them create and analyze a survey as part of their Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Implementation Plan.

Nancy Shane, NMSC Director of Research, updated the members of the Commission on the progress of the many reports on which the research team is working, including the Earned Meritorious Deductions report, the beginning of data collection for the County Detention Reimbursement Act survey, the analysis for the FY 2023 crime reduction grants, parole processes, the Prison Population Forecast, literature reviews, the CVRC survey, the study of juvenile gun violence for the Juvenile Committee, and the Select Crimes Issue Papers. She also discussed conversations she has had with the Corrections Department concerning the algorithm used to analyze probation violations, and the work with New Mexico Tech's Institute for Complex Additive Systems Analysis surrounding the re-launch of the Justice Information Sharing Council.

Amanda Armstrong, NMSC CFO, informed the members of the Commission that the FY 2025 audit was nearing completion. The audit was an unmodified audit, which is the gold standard, but there will be two findings. She noted that the Commission had been without an accountant for some months since Jeremy Seymour had departed for another position, but that a new half-time accountant would be beginning in the coming weeks.

IV. Grantees of Crime Reduction Grants.

Law Offices of the Public Defender

Theresa Edwards, Deputy Director of Policy and Administration, Law Offices of the Public Defender (LOPD), discussed the crime reduction grants that have been awarded to LOPD over the course of the crime reduction grants program. There have been 13 grants of varying sizes and purposes awarded to LOPD that have impacted programs across the state. She focused on a program that has been grant-funded since FY 2025, connected to the Resource Re-entry Center. The grants help to provide direct services to individuals, and focus on pre-prosecution diversion and specialty courts clients. Some funds are used to support transitional living. Grant funds are used to maintain an LOPD paralegal at the Resource Re-entry Center, which is the first stop for people who have been released from the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC). The paralegal gives these clients information to contact LOPD and helps them to connect with services. The paralegal meets both in person or on the phone at the center. The paralegal will help clients to understand their conditions of release and any requirements included in their Judgement and Sentence documentation. The paralegal also facilitates entry into the pre-prosecution diversion program, if that is applicable to a particular individual, and will help the client get connected with a social work team. Contact with this client base can be a challenge for the judicial system and associated support programs, so the paralegal helps to provide contact which has reduced the number of warrants that need to be issued.

The paralegal who has been in position for the duration of the crime reduction grants funding is a retired state employee, formerly with LOPD. She is able to answer most questions that clients have, and can help with drafting motions when that is necessary for someone. Her work is connected to the work being done under a separate crime reduction grant, concerning warrant workshops. She will advise clients of the time and location of the warrant workshop events, and can help the client to address issues around any active warrants. Deputy Director Edwards noted that the paralegal is critical to the work of the LOPD, and that her importance cannot be quantified.

Deputy Director Edwards informed the members of the Commission that the paralegal has seen approximately 1,000 clients in person, and had assisted 3,500 to 4,000 clients over the phone.

Members of the Commission and guests asked questions about and discussed whether clients were ordered to connect with the paralegal, or whether it was merely highly recommended; which judicial districts were represented by clients; whether there were plans to ramp up similar operations across the state; other

funding sources for the Resource Re-entry Center; and how this grant demonstrates the kind of program and results that the grants program was intended to support.

Gordon Bernell Charter School Housing Vouchers for Students Releasing from Metropolitan Detention Center

Beth Dorado, Gordon Bernell Charter School Director, and Sheri Crider and Alayne Ballantine, of Golden Forward, discussed the supportive housing program that is supported by a crime reduction grant. Ms. Dorado informed the members of the Commission that Gordon Bernell is a unique Albuquerque Public Schools charter school that serves both incarcerated and community-based students. The ages of their students range from 16 to 21 in the community, and 18-21 for those incarcerated in MDC. They help student to grow in their career pathway, providing adult basic education. They have a GED testing center in MDC – being able to test while they are incarcerated helps increase the graduation rate. Additionally, they have a new career development center at 4th and Menaul, where students can connect with state and private funders.

Ms. Dorado told the members of the Commission that it is difficult for people to break from the cycle of the criminal justice system once they are involved with it. It is difficult to leave a facility and still retain your goals. Gordon Bernell has been trying to boost its services beyond academics and career support to housing support.

Ms. Crider took up the presentation. She discussed her background as an artist in the community who has received a mental health arts grant and has worked at MDC as a therapeutic artist. She also noted that she has lived experience as a three-time felon in Arizona – and that she is a testament to how transforming educational intervention can be. She noted that there are six pathway navigators at MDC, who see 1,000 people a week. Ms. Ballantine then discussed how she also has lived experience, having been incarcerated for five years, and she knows how important it is for someone to have a plan to help change their life.

Ms. Dorado then informed the members of the Commission of the various challenges that are presented for their students. 78% of Gordon Bernell’s students report needing help to find stable housing, 56% want career counselling. 67% need help in finding employment, and 24% report needing addiction treatment as a top need. Without stable housing and behavioral health care, educational and employment progress stalls. She noted that research out of the University of New Mexico has found that students who attend Gordon Bernell see significant drops in bookings and days of incarceration after program participation, even if they do not graduate.

Ms. Dorado then discussed the Gordon Bernell Charter School Housing Program, which is supported by crime reduction grants. Historically, students have been given vouchers for motels, but these motels are often very triggering and are difficult places for people to maintain their goals. They are working with landlords to find affordable housing options. She further noted that in their second round of funding, Bernalillo County is acting as their fiscal sponsor. They are starting to house people with this second cycle of funding. There were 13 participants in FY 2025, with five successful exits into longer term housing situations.

Ms. Dorado discussed the lessons learned after the first round of grants funding that Gordon Bernell received. They learned that the motels were not ideal, and that housing vouchers would be better; and the importance of one-on-one mentorship, which is where the work with Golden Forward is so important. She is interested in exploring other housing supports that can be offered to students, partnering with other organizations. There is also a need for transitional housing.

She concluded by letting the members of the Commission know that the Commission, through its grants, have made significant investments in Gordon Bernell's programs. It has made a difference in the lives of their students. Even for those who were not successful in the programs, the programs have planted a seed that may sprout later.

Members of the Commission and guests asked questions about and discussed the importance of transitional living arrangements and how that intersects with New Mexico's housing crisis; how Gordon Bernell's programs show how a little bit of grant funding can go a long way; the requirements for entering Gordon Bernell's programs; how the programs demonstrate how crime reduction grants are supposed to work as conceived when the program was initiated; and federal restrictions on housing.

V. Select Crime Issue Papers

Executive Director Carver introduced the topic of the Select Crimes Issue Papers, noting that the concept for the papers came from Research Scientist Jeremy Gonzales, who thought it would be a good idea to publish in depth research on the various crimes that are continually the subject of bills during the Legislative Sessions. Director of Research Shane (Weapons Offenses), Research Scientist Grace Cairo (Juvenile Violent Offenses), and Research Scientist Gonzales (Shoplifting Offenses) discussed the methodology of each of their papers and gave broad overviews of some of their results. Each paper looks at the crimes covered by the given paper for one fiscal year – these cover FY 2024. Data is drawn from NMCD and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Members of the Commission and guests asked questions about and discussed how charges that are pled down or dismissed are handled; whether it is possible to pull data on actual use of a gun in the weapons offenses; that the papers generally examine when a given crime is the lead offense for a case; whether for juvenile offenses it is possible to get data from the Children, Youth, and Families Department and the Juvenile Probation Office or Juvenile Justice Services to see what they show for referrals versus what is shown as filed in the courts through Odyssey; whether juvenile cases can be separated by judicial district; the importance of being able to discuss why cases are dismissed; the importance of adding context when discussing these kinds of raw numbers; the question of how plea bargaining impacts these numbers; and the limits around accessing confidential juvenile information.

VI. Grants Committee.

Vice Chair Suazo, Grants Committee Chair, gave the members of the Commission a brief overview of the history of the grants program, noting that it began with roughly \$300,000 but progressed to disbursing almost \$5 million in grants. This past year there was only \$675,000 to disburse, against \$8.5 million in grant requests. He informed the members of the Commission that the grants are consistently monitored and tracked, and that we are now getting feedback and data on the grants to ensure that they are fulfilling the needs they are meant to address. As the presentations showed, a grant as small as \$30,000 can have a big impact. He added that there will be a strong push during the Legislative Session to see whether the Commission can get the grants funding back to the level where they can better support the many needs in the state. He encouraged the members of the Commission to speak with legislators about the program.

VII. Legislative Committee.

Vice Chair Suazo, Legislative Committee Chair, informed the members of the Commission that the upcoming Legislative Session would be a 30-day Session, and it was not clear how much crime-related legislation there would be. The Legislative Committee will be meeting in the CYFD conference room in the basement of the PERA building, starting the first Tuesday after the opening Tuesday of the Session.

Chair Cleavall added that the bill concerning the Juvenile Community Corrections Act that the Commission had supported in the last Legislative Session would be run again, with only a few small changes.

VIII. Juvenile Committee.

Cindy Aragon, Juvenile Committee Chair, informed the members of the Commission that the Juvenile Committee had met once since the Commission's last meeting, to hear a presentation from the Second Judicial District Attorneys Office on their Gun Violence Prevention Program, which is also supported through crime reduction grant funding. At that presentation they noted that they deal with many children who have extensive juvenile records. The Juvenile Committee also heard a presentation from programs through Youth Development, Inc. and their programs working with juveniles.

IX. Public Comment.

There was no public comment offered at the meeting.

X. Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held shortly after the Governor's signing deadline after the Legislative Session.

XI. Adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.