



NEW MEXICO
**LAW OFFICES OF THE
PUBLIC DEFENDER**

Chief Public Defender
Bennett J. Baur

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For immediate release

CONTACT
LOPD PIO Maggie Shepard (505) 690-4529

NM host to groundbreaking public defense conference

From 41 states, more than 300 social workers, investigators, paralegals convene in Abq

ALBUQUERQUE — The National Association for Public Defense (NAPD) is hosting the largest-ever convening of non-attorney public defense professionals this week in Albuquerque — a move that highlights both New Mexico’s leading role in the public defense community and a national shift in the way public defense fulfills the constitutional right to counsel, serves defendants and their communities, and advances public safety.

More than 300 social workers, investigators and paralegals from 41 states will gather each day this week to hone their craft and strategize how to bring their unique skills to the traditional attorney- and courtroom-centered legal practice of public defense. They will meet for NAPD’s ‘We the Defenders’ conference at the Crown Plaza hotel.

“This conference highlights a national effort to find alternative systems for incarceration that actually solve our community problems. This can’t just happen in court. It’s a team effort. Public defense agencies across the country and in New Mexico are recognizing this,” said KC Quirk, social work director for the New Mexico Law Offices of the Public Defender.

The conference features local recovery advocates, including a keynote address from Natasha Garcia, Executive Director of the New Mexico Reentry Center. Prominent public defense, social work, investigator and paralegal leaders from across the country will be in attendance.

“The pursuit of justice requires an interdisciplinary defense team that includes lawyers, investigators, social workers, and administrative staff working together to ensure that verdicts are accurate and sentences are appropriate,” said NAPD Executive Director Lori James-Townes. “Our clients and our communities both dramatically benefit when we provide this scope of services to society’s most vulnerable people.”

If your newsroom needs a story this week, on-site interviews or studio visits can be arranged with national and/or local participants who can address crime/public defense. ###

NAPD is a national professional association of nearly 30,000 public defense advocates. NAPD seeks to build and sustain a national public defense community that improves public defense in all communities and all types of public defense programs.

LOPD, a state agency, is NM’s largest law firm, representing about 60,000 low-income clients a year. We advocate for criminal system reform and the protection of constitutional rights. www.lopdm.us