

# Annual Report 2015

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NM Administrative Office of the Courts

## Language Access Services



## About LAS

The Language Access Services (LAS) Unit of the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts coordinates and funds courtroom interpreting services and recruits, trains and qualifies interpreters to ensure equal access to the state courts for Limited English Proficient (LEP), deaf and hard of hearing individuals. LAS also supports court staff, judges and court users by providing training, language access planning, document/website translation, signage, on-demand remote interpreting services, and assistive listening equipment. LAS has a current (Fiscal Year 2016) annual operating budget of \$3.1 million.

This year, LAS has provided courtroom interpreter services to an estimated 31,000 individuals in 50 different languages. Read on to learn more about the many additional innovative projects recently launched by LAS.

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# Welcome



## WELCOME TO OUR FIRST ANNUAL REPORT!

I am excited to share with you who we are and what we do. In this report, you will learn about our programs and hear stories from members of our community who deliver and use our services.

**Language Access Services** operates under the **Court Services Division** of the **NM Administrative Office of the Courts**. Our mission is to ensure equal access

to justice “at all points of contact” for individuals with limited English proficiency and the deaf and hard of hearing, in compliance with **Title II of the ADA, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 13166** and **DOJ policy**.

The **NM Center for Language Access**, our training branch, continues to build financial resilience by forming strategic national partnerships that help us expand resources for program development in our state. Throughout the years, we have been able to build a portfolio of technologies that allows us to offer training opportunities for interpreter candidates, court staff and judges in an inclusive and cost-efficient manner. For example, through the **Language Access Specialist Certificate Program**, recipient of a **Creative Award for U.S. Copyright** from the **University of New Mexico** in 2012, we have trained and certified one hundred **Language Access Specialists** throughout the state!

As you explore our annual report, I hope you will gain insight into the breadth and depth of our programs. None of this would be possible without the unwavering support and commitment of our Directors, the Supreme Court, and the Language Access Advisory Committee. Your support is also essential to the work that we do and helps make a difference in the lives of those who use our services. Thank you for being part of our program!

**Paula Couselo-Findikoglu**  
**Senior Statewide Program Manager**  
**Language Access Services - NM Center for Language Access**  
**New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts**



## The AOC Language Access Services Team

Standing L-R: Alex Araiza, Paula Couselo, Peggy Cadwell, Pip Lustgarten  
Seated L-R: Anabel Vela, Eileen Spoonhoward

Not pictured: Josh Kahawai, see page 16



New Mexico’s robust Language Access Program (LAP) sets a high standard for meeting the needs of those with limited English proficiency through certified and highly qualified interpreters in court and outside of the courtroom through the assistance of bilingual court employees trained and compensated as Language Access Specialists. The NM Center for Language Access provides top quality, interactive on-line training to support language access services in New Mexico and nationwide through such grant-funded programs as Language Access Basic Training and the Native languages training program.

In May of 2015 the LAP received accolades for hosting a national conference of the Council of Language Access Coordinators in Santa Fe. During the past year the LAP focused on expanding the ability of courts to take advantage of video remote interpreting services, providing language access for jurors who require interpreter services, and helping all courts develop and implement language access plans. Among the many challenges that remain are procuring sufficient qualified interpreter services, refining on-line scheduling of interpreters, and clarifying rules and practices surrounding translation of documents in court. The past success of the LAP provides confidence these and other challenges will be met through continued excellence in delivering an extraordinary level of language access in New Mexico courts.

**Arthur Pepin, Director**  
**NM Administrative Office of the Courts**  
**Language Access Advisory Committee Permanent Member**

It is an honor and a privilege to have been appointed to serve on the Language Access Advisory Committee. This is a very hard-working Commission that is dedicated to making our system of justice accessible to all participants regardless of their ability to hear or speak the English language proficiently. New Mexico has considerable challenges in this area because of limited human, technological and financial resources, yet I remain confident that the selflessness and persistence of those who are truly dedicated to this important cause will make our efforts the model for the rest of America.



**Justice Edward Chávez**  
**NM Supreme Court**  
**Language Access Advisory Committee**  
**Permanent Member**



# Unique New Mexico

New Mexico has a long and proud history of multilingualism, which is enshrined in and protected by the state constitution. Here are just some of the characteristics and initiatives that make NM unique and a national leader in the area of language access.



## Limited English Proficient Jurors

Article VII, Section 3 of our constitution provides that “the right of any citizen of the state to vote, hold office or sit upon juries, shall never be restricted, abridged or impaired on account of religion, race, language or color, or inability to speak, read or write the English or Spanish languages.”

In keeping with their constitutional rights and obligations, New Mexico seats jurors who are Limited English Proficient: the only state in the United States to do so. Jury forms and orientation materials are available in Spanish, and this year AOC Language Access Services additionally secured the translation of the jury forms into Navajo.

Here is how one recent LEP juror describes the experience of serving, in her own words (translated from Spanish):

“It was a good experience for me. I learned how the law works since they assigned an interpreter for me to understand the case. It was a learning experience to contribute my assistance as a good citizen and as a good citizen I received the best care. Thank you.”

Cristina Bernal, Las Cruces

At the National Council of Language Access Coordinators conference hosted in Santa Fe this May (see page 8), NM Supreme Court Justice Edward Chávez spoke with great passion on this topic:

“In America, a jury verdict represents one of the most important contributions the judiciary makes to our democracy—because justice is a community project. And if you think about it, we can only compel participation in our democracy in one instance. We cannot compel people to run for public office. We cannot compel people to vote. But we do have the responsibility to summon adult

citizens to serve as jurors, and we have the power to hold them in contempt of court if they do not participate.

In jury rooms throughout the country, the community directly participates in the community project called ‘justice.’ Because of these powers and responsibilities, juries should truly reflect the diversity of our communities. All adult citizens should participate, because above all, justice requires an unapologetic and undaunted courage to exercise one’s moral genius. All people, no matter their station in life or their ability to speak and understand the English language, have that moral genius.”

Justice Chávez concluded his keynote speech with a call to our national colleagues to join NM in ensuring that juries truly represent their communities by seating LEP jurors.



## Indigenous Languages and Cultures

By Dr. Chistine Sims

Uniquely exceptional in the landscape of New Mexico is the state’s Indigenous population that represents a diversity of languages and cultures. There are for example, 22 federally recognized tribes, including 19 Pueblo Indian Tribes, and the Diné, Mescalero, and Jicarilla Apache Nations. The languages of these tribes represent six major linguistic families: Keres, Tewa, Towa, Tiwa, and Zuni, spoken among the 19 Pueblo tribes and the Athabaskan language spoken among the Diné and Apache Nations. All of these languages are uniquely different and have been inter-generationally transmitted for thousands of years. They are spoken and have been maintained primarily as oral traditions, even into the present time.

The cultures and traditions of New Mexico’s Indigenous peoples have existed for centuries, and were already well established in their present day locations at the time of First Contact when Spanish explorers entered the American Southwest in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the continued existence of Indigenous languages and cultures comprises a major sector of New Mexico’s demographic landscape. This also presents some unique challenges when it comes to issues of language access for Indigenous people who may find themselves in today’s state or federal court systems.



Dr. Christine Sims (Acoma), Associate Professor in the College of Education and Director of the American Indian Language Policy Research and Teacher Training Program, UNM

Contemporary issues of legal representation and individual rights to appropriate interpretive services have been the focus of recent efforts by the NMAOC to address the need for training Native language speakers as court interpreters. In New Mexico, for example, there are no interpretive training programs currently available for speakers of oral-based Pueblo Indian languages, meaning that most of these languages do not have long traditions of native literacy if at all. By contrast, the American legal system which privileges the use of both oral and written English, presents a very different venue in which the cultural capital of the courts is integrally linked to one’s ability to understand and communicate in a language that is vastly different from Indigenous oral and cultural traditions. These and other closely linked issues of language access are the focus of a new project, “Improving Access to Justice for Native Peoples in State Courts.”

## Improving Access for Native Peoples

The primary objective of the Improving Access to Justice for Native Peoples in State Courts project is to develop a sustainable training and qualification process for court interpreters of the Navajo language and the languages of New Mexico’s Pueblos, which is culturally appropriate and protects the rights of tribal members as they function within the state court system. The project is intended to be replicable in other states, and will ultimately include training for judges and state court personnel.

The AOC, in collaboration with the UNM School of Law is developing a language neutral, culturally appropriate educational model to prepare interpreters of Tribal languages to provide language access services in a variety of legal settings. The Alaska Court System has also participated in this project as it relates to their work with Yup’ik speakers in the Bethel region of Alaska.

Underlying this work is the common thread of culture within each language group. Cultural morés have an impact on defining the abstract legal concepts, understanding modes of interpreting, and framing ethical parameters that respect the relationship of interpreter and “client” within the specific cultural context.

On September 21, 2015 KOAT Action 7 News ran a feature on this innovative project (see page 17).

The Improving Access to Justice for Native Peoples in State Courts project is funded by a grant from the State Justice Institute. Matching funds are contributed by the Judicial Education Center, the UNM School of Law, the NM Center for Language Access and AOC Language Access Services. AOC extends sincere thanks to all our funders for supporting this vital work.



## New! Bilingual Self Help Guide!

A brand new resource launched in December 2015: a bilingual Self Help Guide for district court users throughout the state. Visit the Judiciary's Self Help page to view and download the guide: [www.nmcourts.gov/cgi/prose\\_lib/](http://www.nmcourts.gov/cgi/prose_lib/)

This Self Help Guide is the product of a collaboration between the NM Judicial Translation Project Team and the Access to Justice Commission, who worked diligently for two years to produce New Mexico's first ever uniform statewide guide (in any language) for people navigating the court system without an attorney.

The guide is mandatory by Supreme Court Order, meaning every district court should link to the guide on their website and make it available to the public in hard copy at the courthouse. Though mandatory, the Guide is not exclusive: courts can continue to provide district-specific informational handouts as they see fit.

Available in both English and Spanish, the guide covers the following topics:

Representing Yourself – Basic Information; Domestic Violence; Dissolution of Marriage; Kinship Guardianship; Name Change; Probate; Appeals, and a Resource List of community organizations.

2015 District Court Self Help Guide in English and Spanish:

[www.nmcourts.gov/cgi/prose\\_lib/](http://www.nmcourts.gov/cgi/prose_lib/)

# Addressing Our Communities' Varying Needs

## Video Remote Interpreting for Sign Language

On November 13, 2015, AOC conducted a test of on-demand video remote interpreting (VRI) services for Sign Language at the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court. The main objective was to test a service that addresses the needs of deaf or hard of hearing individuals who walk into the courthouse without having requested an interpreter.

The service allows the court to access an interpreter who may be located anywhere in the United States instantly, 24/7, via video. Because VRI interpreters work with various states, they are accustomed to taking into account and accommodating regionalisms.

The service is intended for use outside the courtroom only: at the Metropolitan Court, it will be made available in divisions serving people without a lawyer. Whether VRI is a viable option for the specific deaf or hard of hearing person needing assistance will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

During the testing session, a skilled Sign Language interpreter portrayed the client while court staff role-played assisting the client, all under the supervision of AOC Language Access Services staff. The test proved to be extremely successful:

video and audio quality were excellent, response time was within one minute, and interpreters were able to provide a quality interpretation.

The Metropolitan Court will now train their staff on how to use the service, and AOC will continue to test and pilot the service in other courts.

“The Metropolitan Court is very excited that it was chosen as the Pilot Court to implement video remote interpreting services for the deaf and hard of hearing community in our customer service division, self-help division and probation division.”

Christy Armijo, Bernalillo County  
Metropolitan Court



## Literacy Challenges

The Literacy Challenges Working Group was created to address providing language access to individuals who are illiterate and blind as noted in the State Language Access Plan. Our initial project created a mechanism for court staff to assist self-represented litigants who are unable to complete forms due to disability, limited English proficiency, or illiteracy through reading and/or scribing so that these individuals can enjoy equitable access to self-help aspects of the state courts. The group recommended a minor change to one Supreme Court rule to permit such action, the creation of another to establish a procedure, and a form to capture the statement of need and attestation of the court staff providing the service. The recommendation was accepted by the Language Access Advisory Committee on its first presentation in November 2015 and will go to the Supreme Court for approval.

Lisa Dignan, Chair; Director of Community Engagement  
NM Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

## Making an Impact in Farmington

The majority, if not all, the Navajo people I have assisted with interpreting have stated they are very thankful for a Navajo speaking clerk to assist with communication.

One elderly Navajo couple have been working Pro Se in a Guardianship case. They stated it's so much easier to understand and it's not so intimidating to come to court to handle their family issues. The Navajo couple shook my hand with tears in their eyes being very thankful that District Court is able to provide a Navajo interpreter to assist. The couple did state there are many other businesses that need the same kind of service for the Navajo speaking people.

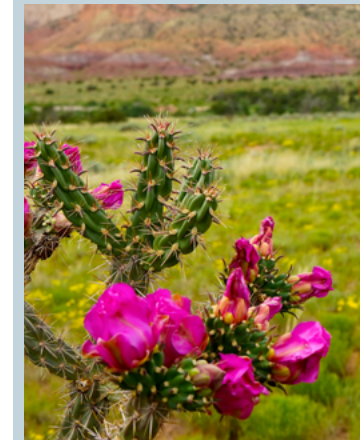
I am thankful to be able to assist Navajo speaking parties and customers. I am confident the people are receiving the same level of service as English speaking customers.

Charlene HenrySmith,  
Language Access Specialist,  
Eleventh Judicial District Court



## A Story from Las Cruces

We had a elderly gentleman who had had a unpleasant experience with the judicial system in his youth. As such, he was frightened to be in the courthouse and was even more hesitant as he could not read English or speak it very



well. Yet, he was here at the self help center as his son had passed away and he needed to apply for a kinship/guardianship for his grandson. Thankfully, we had an AOC interpreter who could help us bridge the

language gap with this litigant. The volunteer attorney, through the interpreter, explained the process of guardianship and the litigant was able to ask specific questions in Spanish that were interpreted to the staff. Without this assistance this gentleman would most likely have given up on this important legal process for his family and the minor child would have ultimately suffered. This case was filed and a kinship guardianship was granted. At the Third Judicial District Court, the public we serve is primarily bilingual with limited English proficiency. They benefit directly from all the assistance AOC Language Access Services provides and on behalf of the staff here, we are eternally grateful for this resource.

Robert Lara, Esq.,  
Staff Attorney,  
Third Judicial District Court



# National Conference

New Mexico had the great honor this year of hosting the annual conference of the National Council of Language Access Coordinators. Close to one hundred of our national colleagues assembled in Santa Fe from May 17-20, 2015 for training, brainstorming, networking and a little Flamenco dancing!

NM Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Vigil and AOC Director Arthur Pepin welcomed participants and delivered opening remarks. Justice Edward Chávez, the Supreme Court's liaison to the NM Language Access Advisory Committee, gave the keynote speech, which included these reflections:

“Our country is blessed because it is a nation of immigrants. Our multicultural, multilingual nation reflects the heart, the soul, and the genius of our Republic.

I quote from Oscar Handlin: *Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America, then I discovered that the immigrants were America.*

Americans have many commonalities, things that bind us together. But the most important one is the realization that – when it is all said and done – we all came from somewhere else to join our Native-American brothers and sisters.”

Huge thanks to all who helped make the conference such a success. The New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts is proud to have been selected as host, to collaborate with such committed national colleagues, and to be among those at the forefront of efforts to ensure equal access for LEP, deaf and hard of hearing persons throughout our nation.



NMAOC Director Arthur Pepin addresses the conference



Chief Justice Barbara Vigil delivers opening remarks



CLAC conference attendees in session



It wasn't all work and no play.



Mr. Pepin welcomes attendees at opening reception.

# Language Access Specialists

## Language Access Specialist Symposium & Code of Ethics

On September 25, 2015, NMCLA hosted an all-day symposium open to the one hundred Language Access Specialists (LASs) working throughout the NM court system.



Language Access Specialists work on a Code of Ethics

The symposium provided the opportunity for LASs to meet their colleagues working in various languages and areas of the state, discuss challenges and receive training, all while fulfilling Continuing Education requirements.

The morning session, led by AOC NE Region Language Access Coordinator Eileen Spoonhoward, was dedicated to training and practice on legal terminology and modes of interpreting.

During the afternoon session, attendees began developing a written Code of Ethics governing the Language Access Specialist role. Although LAS training does already include information on the function, protocols and ethics of the LAS, the next step is to formalize these and share them with judges and court staff to ensure that the role of the LAS is clear to all. Following the symposium, the work on the Code of Ethics has continued over a series of continuing education web seminars.

Alonzo García of the Thirteenth Judicial District Court in Los Lunas has been a Language Access Specialist since 2010, one of the earliest to become qualified.

Here is his take on the LAS role and the symposium:

“The struggle we have as LAS providers is rooted in the truth that we are neither interpreters nor laypersons. Thus, the LAS symposium recognizes our usefulness in bridging the gap for people to help them at present rather than send them away with potentially inaccurate information or rely on a family member to interpret. Because we are specialized hybrid communicators, the need within the LAS community to develop a lexicon – personal or shared – is encouraged through discussions such as the one we had at the symposium.

Giving the LAS community the opportunity to develop a standard Canon, Code of Ethics and system of Best Practices allows us to feel recognized by our court as being individuals who have a clearly defined and codified standard of behavior. Clearly delineating boundaries helps to clarify expectations for everyone involved.”

Interested in qualifying to work as an LAS in your court? Visit [nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org](http://nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org)

## What Are Language Access Specialists?

Language Access Specialists are bilingual employees of the courts who have successfully completed training through the NM Center for Language Access. They are a category of employee specifically created by the NM Judiciary to ensure the delivery of meaningful language access services outside the courtroom. Language Access Specialists are the primary staff members who are equipped and should be called on to assist LEP court users in out-of-courtroom settings (such as at the clerk's window).

In 2015, AOC Language Access Services brought the total number of Language Access Specialists working in the NM courts up to one hundred. These certified employees are located throughout our district, magistrate, metropolitan and municipal courts and offer assistance in Spanish, Navajo and Mandarin.



# Regional Highlights

The Northwest Central region of the state is home to many of the Pueblos and the Navajo Nation and offers a rich diversity of cultures and languages that make New Mexico so unique. I am honored to work with these communities and with interpreters from a wide variety of backgrounds to ensure equal access to the courts for every New Mexico resident.

**Peggy Cadwell**  
AOC Language Access Coordinator  
NW Central Region  
aocpxc@nmcourts.gov

New Mexico Second District Court in Albuquerque is the state's largest district court and provides court interpreters and language access services for a wide variety of languages.

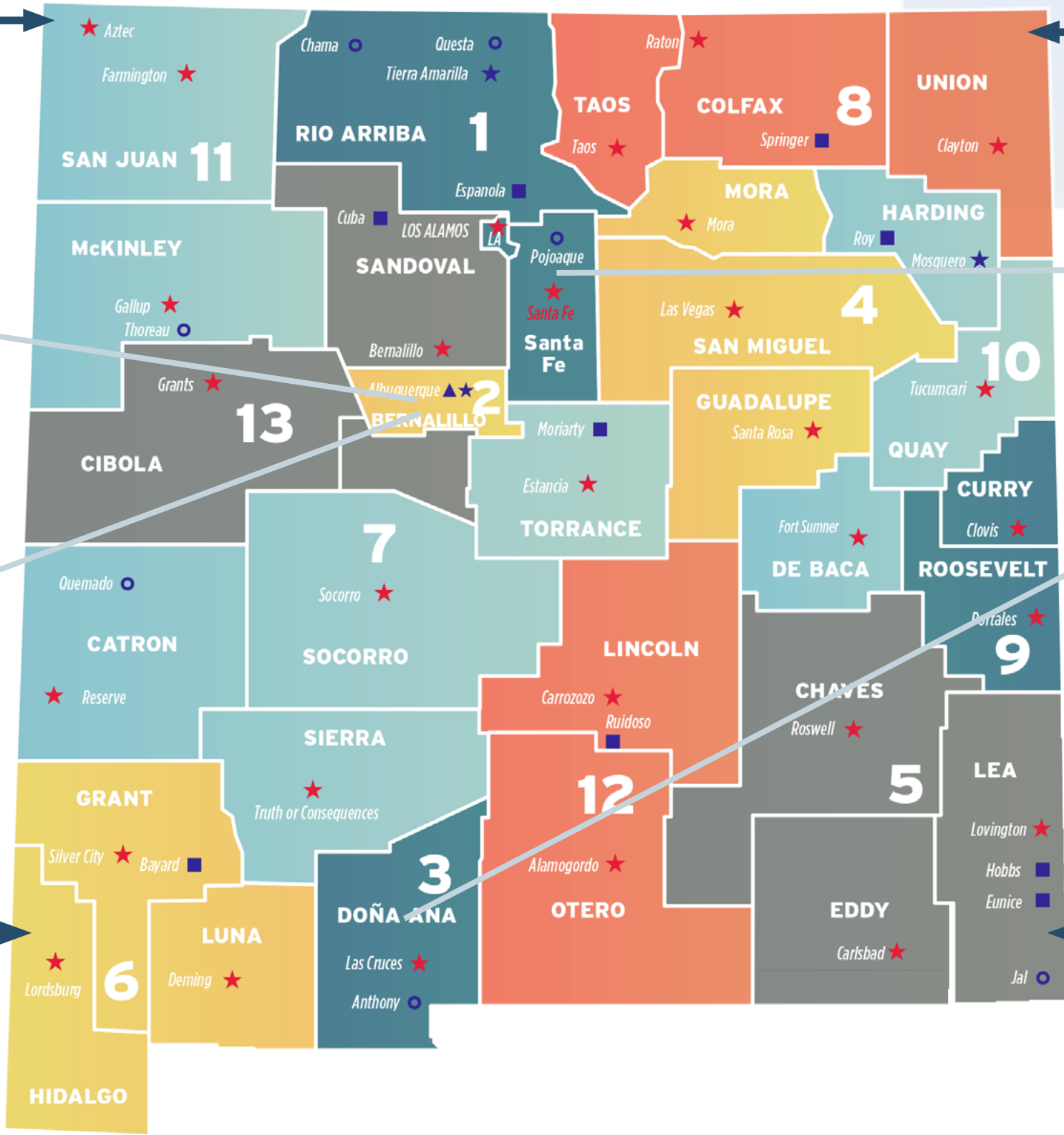
**Rosa López-Gastón**  
Supervising Court Interpreter  
Second Judicial District Court  
albdrlg@nmcourts.gov

I feel very honored to be part of such an amazing team working diligently every day to ensure the rights of limited English speaking persons are protected and ensuring reasonable language assistance is provided to LEP persons who come in contact with the Metropolitan Court. The Court secures court interpreters to provide interpreting assistance an average of 25 times per day (including weekends) in many different languages, interpreting both for courtroom proceedings and court-ordered services.

**Christy Armijo**  
Language Access Plan Coordinator  
Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court  
metrcxa@nmcourts.gov

One thing I particularly want to highlight about the courts in the Southwest of New Mexico are the judges: they are very much aware of the interpreter's role in the courtroom, and they work with the coordinators and the interpreters as one team with the same objective.

**Alex Araiza**  
AOC Language Access Coordinator  
SW Region  
aocmaa@nmcourts.gov



As requests for ASL interpreters continue to rise at Santa Fe Magistrate Court and in the northeast region overall, I as their coordinator am extremely grateful for the insight that ASL interpreters possess and are willing to share so we may better serve the deaf and hard of hearing community.

**Eileen Spoonhoward**  
AOC Language Access Coordinator  
NE Region  
aocles@nmcourts.gov

The First Judicial District covers two large counties and three different courthouse locations. We cover multiple court events on a daily basis with anywhere from two to eight on-site interpreters. We also provide services for a wide variety of judicial events outside the courtroom. The range of language access services we offer has steadily expanded over recent years. This trend will undoubtedly continue in the future.

**Elizabeth Mayes**  
Coordinating Court Interpreter  
First Judicial District Court  
sfdeam@nmcourts.gov

We have an extremely high volume of Spanish speakers in Southern NM, with multiple interpreters providing services here in the Las Cruces District Court on a daily basis. It certainly keeps me busy but is very rewarding! In addition to coordinating courtroom interpreters, I am proud to have recently helped secure equal access to legal services outside the courtroom for our self represented litigants, by ensuring an interpreter is present at every scheduled clinic.

**Anabel Vela**  
AOC Language Access Coordinator  
Third Judicial District Court  
aocaxv@nmcourts.gov

The Southeast Region is spread out over a large territory and the video and audio equipment have made it possible to have an interpreter available to the courts, even on short notice. This is very helpful in providing language access to all non-English speaking participants in our court system. I am thrilled this technology is available and working well for our courts and participants.

**Wendy Nedbalek**  
AOC Language Access Coordinator  
SE Region  
aocwxn@nmcourts.gov



## Becoming An Interpreter

### Multistate Court Interpreter Orientation Project

Targeted to begin in early 2016, NMCLA will be moving to a downloadable court interpreter orientation designed to introduce prospective interpreters to the basics of court interpreting. This collaborative effort is being developed in tandem with seven other states and is designed for potential national application, the goal being for states to adopt a more uniform approach to interpreter orientation and training. The self-paced court interpreter orientation and skills building program will reduce instructor and therefore candidate costs, provide self-assessment and feedback tools, and be available on a flexible schedule.

"This is a great project that will allow my state to reach more interpreter candidates while not increasing the costs associated."

Sandra Barrios  
Idaho representative

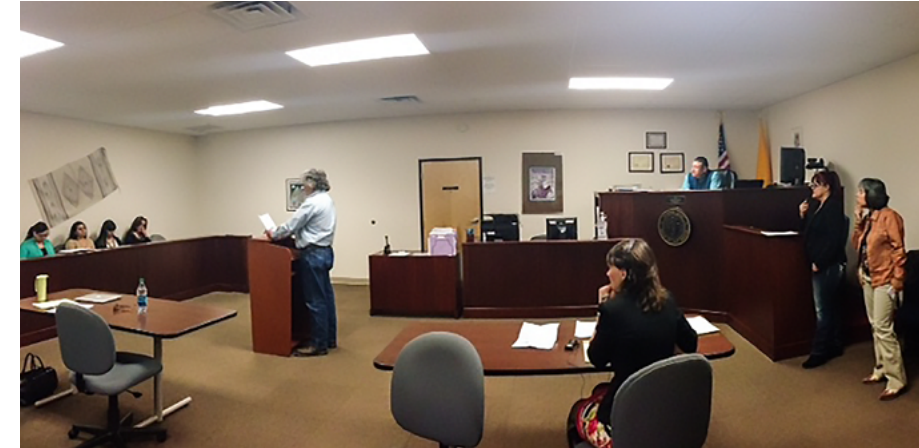
# Training Interpreters

## NM Center for Language Access

The NM Center for Language Access is a program of the Administrative Office of the Courts, created with funding support from the State Justice Institute to ensure language access across the New Mexico justice system. The Center offers a variety of online training options for court interpreter certification candidates, bilingual employees of the courts and other justice system agencies and for already certified or working interpreters. Additionally, NMCLA offers consulting and custom training services for state courts and other agencies that need to provide language access under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

NMCLA is proud to be a source of employment for New Mexico: since 2009, the Center has been receiving students through Workforce Connections. Under

the Workforce Investment Act, Workforce Connections funds qualifying candidates to undertake NMCLA's professional development and certification programs. NMCLA continues to strengthen its relationship with Workforce Connections to be able to reach more potential students and increase the pool of qualified interpreters available to the New Mexico courts. The combination of online and face-to-face instruction in NMCLA's programs enables us to reach a wide audience and offer flexible study while ensuring quality.



## Justice System Interpreting

Justice System Interpreter is a category recognized by the NM Judiciary. Working as a JSI is a useful "stepping stone," providing those pursuing Court Interpreter certification with court interpreting experience. The JSI training program offered by NMCLA includes a flexible internship and is available in Spanish and Language Neutral (all spoken languages).

### Volunteering with the UNM Clinical Law Programs

Students of the Justice System Interpreting Certificate Program are offered the opportunity to gain experience by volunteering at the University of NM Law Clinic in Albuquerque.

Court interpreter candidates assist law students meeting with Spanish speaking clients. The community benefits through access to the Clinic, while students benefit by practicing interpretation skills with a diverse set of legal cases.

Interested in becoming a Court Interpreter, Justice System Interpreter, or Language Access Specialist? **Visit the NM Center for Language Access at [nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org](http://nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org)**

## New! Interpreter Portal

In 2015, AOC launched a brand new Interpreter Portal: a one-stop shop for latest announcements, fiscal information, policies and procedures, continuing education and more.

<https://languageaccess.nmcourts.gov/index.php/for-interpreters.html>

## Training Opportunities for Certified Spoken and Sign Language Interpreters

### Coming Soon! Legal Content Continuing Education Webinars

NMCLA is launching a series of legal content web seminars for spoken and Sign Language interpreters. The webinars are taught by attorneys and their goal is to boost court interpreters' understanding of legal concepts and terminology. The first webinar in the series will be led by Patricia Galindo, AOC senior staff attorney, and will focus on adult guardianship and conservatorship cases.

The one hour webinars are free of charge for NM court interpreters.

### New! Sign Language Legal Interpreting Webinars with Carla Mathers

NMCLA has been working this year toward a collaboration with Carla Mathers, acclaimed national leader in the field of Sign Language legal interpreting. We are delighted to be able to announce a series of legal interpreting webinars with Ms. Mathers launching in 2016!

These web seminars will take place on the fourth Wednesday of January through April and will build up to a more advanced face-to-face session on May 14 and 15.

The webinars are free of charge for NM court interpreters.





## New! Judges' Portal

This year, with funding from the Improving Access to Justice for Native Peoples in State Courts Project, the NM Center for Language Access has developed a Judges' Portal on its website. The portal is intended to help judges in every corner of the state stay informed about Title VI compliance and the resources provided by AOC to support judges as together we strive for excellence in language access services.

NMCLA developed New Mexico-specific videos for the portal that offer tips for working with interpreters and with Limited English Proficient parties. The portal includes rules, policies and procedures, announcements, trainings and useful links.

Visit the Judges' Portal: [nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org/cms/en/courts-agencies/judges-portal](http://nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org/cms/en/courts-agencies/judges-portal)

# Training the Judiciary Language Access Planning & Training

I was brought on as Language Access Planning Consultant in 2011 to assist each of New Mexico's judicial districts to develop a comprehensive, locally-tailored language access plan (LAP). This role has afforded me the pleasure of traveling all over the state and really getting to know the folks working in each court. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for the enthusiasm with which they have embraced language access and the commitment they demonstrate every day to serving the multilingual and multicultural communities that make New Mexico, New Mexico.

I continue to work with all courts to maintain their LAPs, ensuring content is kept up to date, provisions are enforced, and staff are properly trained. Most courts hold a team meeting annually to update their plans, discuss challenges

and successes in service delivery, and receive training from myself and the AOC Language Access Coordinator for their region. These meetings are highly valuable in bringing together representatives from district and magistrate courts, often across widespread geographic areas.

Pip Lustgarten,  
AOC Language Access Planning Consultant

New Mexico has a total of 18 Language Access Plans in place (in some of our 13 judicial districts, separate LAPs were developed for district/magistrate/metropolitan courts). These LAPs – in English and Spanish, as well as Navajo for certain judicial districts – can be viewed at [languageaccess.nmcourts.gov](http://languageaccess.nmcourts.gov)

## Language Access Basic Training

The Language Access Basic Training (LABT) Suite is an interactive training that is downloaded by trainees and provides introduction to language access for all court employees. LABT also provides a training module and an optional skills assessment for bilingual court employees, available in Spanish and Language Neutral (all spoken languages) versions.

The purpose of the training is to ensure that all court employees have a basic understanding of their ethical and legal obligations, as well as current best practices, in

order to improve the quality of language access services outside the courtroom for LEP individuals.

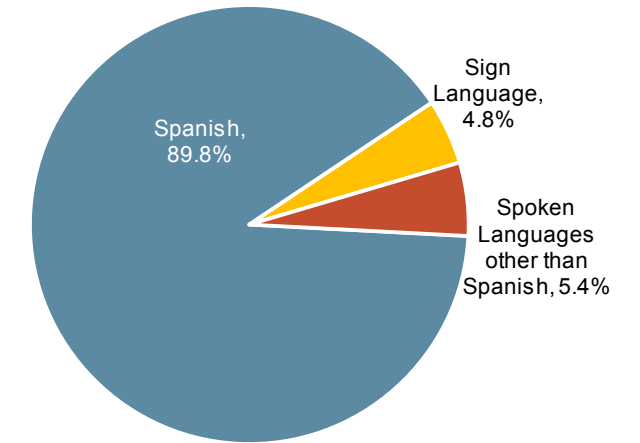


New Mexico was the project manager for the development of the LABT, a collaborative project funded by the State Justice Institute and supported by the National Center for State Courts and the Council of State Court Administrators. It is anticipated that other state courts will take advantage of this training program.

# Language Diversity in Our State

- 36% of the NM population speaks a language other than English at home
- Of these, around 79% speak Spanish, 10% speak Navajo, and 5% speak Pueblo languages
- 92 languages other than English are spoken in the home throughout NM
- In 6 NM counties, English is the minority language spoken in the home
- 9.6% of the NM population is Limited English Proficient (LEP)
- 8.1% of the NM population are LEP speakers of Spanish, putting NM considerably above the national figure of 5.7%

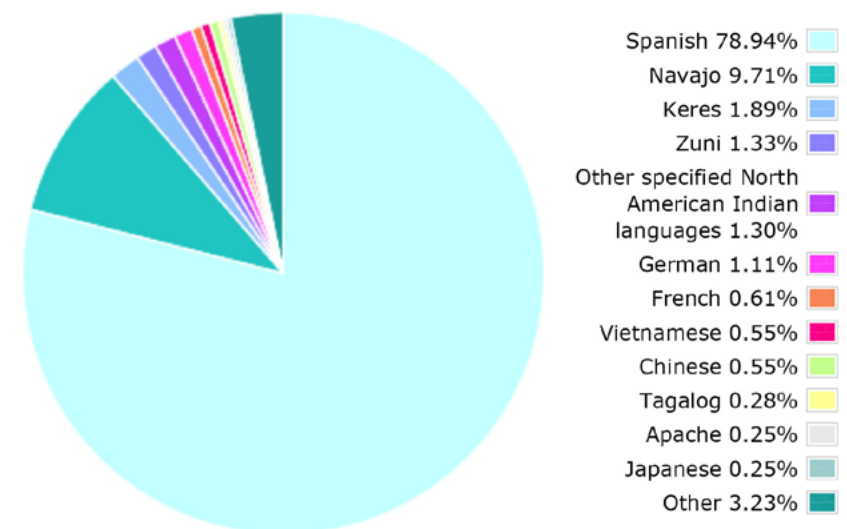
AOC Interpreting Services  
January 1, 2015 - December 1, 2015



Even though 90% of those we serve are Spanish speaking, LAS allocates considerably more funding per person for Sign Language and for languages other than Spanish, in order to ensure we address the unique, varying needs of these court users. Around 3 times as much is spent on interpretation per Sign Language client than per spoken language client. Interpreters for spoken languages other than Spanish may need to be brought in from out of state to meet specific demands and ensure quality.

## Languages Spoken in NM

English is spoken by 63.96% of people over 5 years old in New Mexico. Languages other than English are spoken by 36.04%. Speakers of languages **other than English** are divided up as follows.



Total Language Distribution, including English

Language	Count	Percentage
English	1,197,144	63.96%
Spanish	532,506	28.45%
Navajo	65,493	3.50%
Keres	12,666	0.68%
Zuni	8,908	0.48%
Other Specified Native American	8,846	0.47%
German	7,439	0.40%
French	4,185	0.22%
Vietnamese	3,799	0.20%
Chinese	3,683	0.20%
Tagalog	1,862	0.10%
Apache	1,666	0.09%
Japanese	1,631	0.09%
Arabic	1,582	0.08%
Korean	1,384	0.07%
Italian	1,378	0.07%
Russian	887	0.05%
Polish	812	0.04%
Persian	782	0.04%
Portuguese	768	0.04%
Laotian	758	0.04%
Dutch	730	0.04%
Unspecified Native American	697	0.04%
Greek	696	0.04%
Hebrew	646	0.03%
Thai	638	0.03%
Hindi	558	0.03%
Tamil	547	0.03%
Mandarin	481	0.03%
Hungarian	470	0.03%

Source: The above statistics come from the Migration Policy Institute and the Modern Language Association and are based on the US Census Bureau's 2010 census and 2009-2011 American Community Survey.





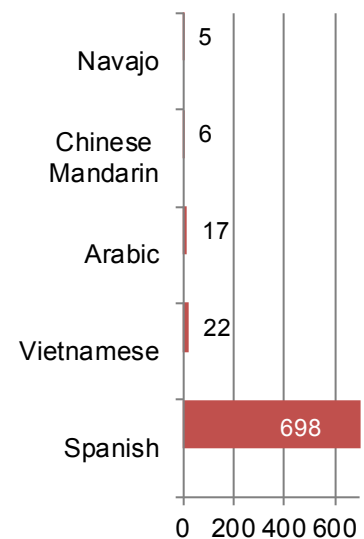
# Streamlining Our Services

I joined the Administrative Office of the Courts in February 2014 as an Interpreter Financial Specialist. I was recently promoted to the Management Analyst position under the direction of the LAS Program Manager. My primary function is to provide support for the Program Manager and all the LAS interpreter coordinators statewide. One of my many duties is to ensure the LAS program is within compliance with established fiscal policies and procedures. I also provide detailed support to the NM Center for Language Access. I look forward to working more with our programs and continuing to improve their efficiency and impact.

Joshua Kahawai  
AOC Management Analyst

## Number of on-demand telephonic interpreter services outside the courtroom

April - September 2015



### Centralized Coordination

Coordination and centralization are essential to ensure that interpreters are assigned in an efficient and cost-effective manner. This includes avoiding

“Gridcheck is easier and more convenient than calling around looking for an interpreter. We are grateful for the centralized system, which is saving our court a lot of staff time.

Crystal Sánchez, Lead Worker,  
Española Magistrate Court

duplication of travel and per diem costs (e.g., two interpreters traveling from Albuquerque to Lovington to work in two different courts on the same day); redirection of interpreters who are receiving guaranteed pay when a proceeding has been canceled to other unfilled or last minute assignments, and facilitating the use of telephonic or video interpreting for short or last minute assignments. By managing interpreter scheduling centrally, AOC is able to ensure that interpreters are appropriately

assigned, e.g., based on the nature of the proceeding and the experience level of the interpreter, thereby enhancing the quality of service. These measures cannot be effective unless we are managing scheduling in a coordinated manner with specific knowledge of interpreter skills and the resources and preferences of specific courts as well as the ability to professionally assess the language assistance needs of particular court customers and proceedings.

### Remote Interpreting

Remote interpreting (by video or telephone) can help us provide access for short, less complex proceedings. Since we have a scarcely populated state with a wide territory to cover, the use of remote interpreting helps AOC to better allocate resources.

“The telephonic interpretation equipment has been a great asset to our court. This process allows us to complete hearings in a timely manner. It’s working great.

Hon. Daniel Reyes  
Artesia Magistrate Court

## Scheduling Tips for Court Staff

### General Tips:

- Check in Odyssey and group LEPs whenever possible.
- Walk-ins may be covered with the on-site interpreter’s remaining time on guarantee.

### Cancellation Tips:

- Develop a system and define who will be responsible for canceling interpreting services: will it be the same staff that makes the requests?
- Cancel requests with **more than 24-hour**

notice whenever possible.

- Let your region’s coordinator know if your court is closing due to inclement weather.

### Last minute Requests:

- Even though coordinators do their best to fill your requests, last-minute assignments may not always be filled.
- Submit your requests as soon as you know you’ll be needing an interpreter.
- Call your coordinator in addition to entering your last-minute request.

# In the News

In July 2015, LatinoUSA for National Public Radio investigated the systematic exclusion of citizens who are less than fluent in English from juries. New Mexico was highlighted as the only state that guarantees protection of LEP citizens’ rights in this area, and Supreme Court Justice Edward Chávez and LAS Senior Statewide Program Manager Paula Couselo were interviewed. Hear it here: [latinousa.org/2015/07/17/excluded-from-jury-duty/](http://latinousa.org/2015/07/17/excluded-from-jury-duty/)



On September 21, 2015, KOAT Action 7 News ran a feature on the Improving Access to Justice for Native Peoples in State Courts Project (see page 5). The station interviewed Frank Morgan, a Navajo interpreter/translator and cornerstone partner in the project, as well as Paula Couselo of LAS. To see the feature, visit: [www.koat.com/news/nm-courts-work-on-native-language-training-system/35403780](http://www.koat.com/news/nm-courts-work-on-native-language-training-system/35403780)



September was a good month for coverage of our work! On September 12, the Santa Fe New Mexican published a “Sunday Spotlight” article titled “Interpreters Expand Access to NM Justice System.” The piece highlights the training and certification work of the NM Center for Language Access and profiles several of our valued court interpreters, exploring the backgrounds that led them to this work and the challenges they have faced in their role. Visit [www.santafenewmexican.com](http://www.santafenewmexican.com) to read Anne Constable’s article.



“There are a number of states and their residents, no doubt a majority of them, that would benefit greatly by adapting the practices of the NM Center for Language Access. Thank you for your equalizing and fair service.

Kate Collins, Santa Fe, letter to the Santa Fe New Mexican titled “Thanks, Interpreters”



# Contact Your Language Access Team

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