

For Immediate Release

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Equal Access to Justice Distributes Over \$190,000 to New Mexico Legal Aid Organizations

The Board of Directors of Equal Access to Justice (EAJ) is pleased to announce the distribution of over \$190,000 in unrestricted, non-competitive grants to the following civil legal aid, non-profits: *New Mexico Legal Aid*, *DNA-People's Legal Services*, and the *New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty*. These organizations provide free, civil legal services to and advocacy for low-income New Mexicans who otherwise could not afford to hire an attorney.

“Advocates at *New Mexico Legal Aid* work every day with victims of domestic violence, families losing their homes, people who lose their savings to predatory lenders, and people suffering many other kinds of legal catastrophes. The money we receive from Equal Access to Justice provides essential support for all the work we do for low-income New Mexicans, and helps our efforts to expand services to meet the increasing need across our state,” said Lewis Creekmore, executive director at *New Mexico Legal Aid*.

Rodolfo Sanchez, executive director of *DNA-People's Legal Services* highlights that “Equal Access to Justice funds are powerful. Unlike other funding, EAJ funds have no onerous or time-consuming administrative requirements, freeing limited staff to focus on providing meaningful legal services in remote and extremely rural areas of New Mexico and various Native American nations. At *DNA-People's Legal Services*, EAJ funding helps provide an attorney for those who need one to secure safety, stability, and a measure of dignity in their lives.”

“We could not do our work without the support of New Mexico's legal community and Equal Access to Justice,” says Sireesha Manne, executive director of the *New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty*. “These resources are essential to advancing system-wide changes for the health and well-being of our children and families, and help the *New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty* respond quickly and directly to community priorities.”

To help support the growing need for civil legal services in New Mexico, Equal Access to Justice increased its annual campaign goal by 56% this year, and, thanks to the generosity of New Mexico's legal community, exceeded it by 9%. Money raised during EAJ's annual campaign directly impacts funding to EAJ's partner civil legal advocacy organizations and supports EAJ's long-standing efforts to increase access to justice for New Mexicans at the low-end of the income ladder.

One out of five people in New Mexico live at or below the 125% federal poverty guideline and qualify

for free civil legal aid. Yet, less than 20% of individuals and families that qualify for these essential services are receiving them, due to a lack of resources. Legal aid helps thousands of New Mexicans avoid legal problems or keep problems from getting worse by providing information on websites, conducting community educational sessions on legal topics, hosting free legal clinics and pro bono assistance, as well as providing legal assistance, representation, and systemic legal advocacy. The collective effort of New Mexico Legal Aid, the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, and DNA-People's Legal Services, helps resolve problems, change unfair policies, and ultimately, promotes family and economic stability.

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Equal Access to Justice is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that was started in 1988 by concerned attorneys who saw firsthand how many New Mexicans with civil legal problems could not get legal help. Today, Equal Access to Justice continues to raise vital funds to make sure justice is not denied to low-income New Mexicans. In the last decade alone, EAJ has distributed over \$1.6 million to three of the largest civil legal service providers in the state: New Mexico Legal Aid, New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, and DNA- People's Legal Services. For more information, or to make a donation, visit www.eaj-nm.org .