



PEGASUS

Legal Services for Children

Annual Report 2021-2022



**Celebrating 20
Years protecting
children's rights!**

Promoting and defending the rights of children and youth to safe, stable homes, quality education and healthcare, and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.



LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Matt Loehman, Board Co-Chair

2022 marks 20 years of Pegasus's legal work and advocacy on behalf of New Mexico's children.

This anniversary is especially important, as it comes after three years of profound societal change: a global pandemic, social justice reckonings, and major shifts in how we live our lives. Our work is about the children and families we serve, and at the heart of our organization are our dedicated and skilled employees. This year, we honor the legacy of Pegasus by honoring our staff. If we have learned one thing in 20 years - especially from the past three - it is that to best care for each other, we must also care for ourselves.

In 2021-22, Pegasus implemented multiple benefits to support staff in and out of work. We offer unlimited leave for any COVID-19-related reason, a practice in place since the start of the pandemic. We have methodically increased staff salaries and benefits. The staff attends training on preventing and healing from burnout, as well as ones on current legal issues and best practices. After much research, we also began an experimental four-day week, which has been a success.

Along with the Executive Director and staff, the Pegasus Board of Directors is working to change the elements over which we have control. While we cannot change the traumatic nature of our cases, we can offer compassionate, innovative work options to our staff that allows them to heal and revive their spirits while providing exemplary services to meet the vital needs of our clients.

***Thank you to
Dan Shapiro for
his work as
Board Co-Chair
this year!***

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Matt Loehman, MBA - Co-Chair
Dan Shapiro, JD, MD - Co-Chair
Donna Peace, CPA - Treasurer
Moses Winston, JD - Secretary
Meena Allen, JD - Director
Darcy Bushnell, JD - Director
Daniel H. Hyman - Director
Andrew Salazar - Director
Rob Schwartz, JD - Director
Lora Church, MPA, MS - Director



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BETTE FLEISHMAN, MA, JD

The 20th Anniversary of Pegasus this year means so much to our staff and friends. Our founders, Tara Ford and Liz McGrath, laid an incredible foundation that is now a legacy of compassionate, skillful legal work on behalf of New Mexico's children. 2022 also marks the ebbing of the pandemic. The most intense days of COVID-19 as an unstoppable illness may be behind us, but so much healing still remains. As often happens, children have borne unequal consequences to actions and decisions made by adults. The last two years during the pandemic are no different.

Pegasus and our partners continue to see increasing numbers of runaway, homeless, and orphaned children, due to parental deaths and other obstacles from the pandemic. Pegasus's Kinship Guardianship program helps those children who have a kinship caregiver willing to step in. Sadly, they are the lucky ones, as they have a willing adult caretaker in their lives.

The children who don't have such an adult in their lives face a choice between running away to live on the street or entering the foster care system. Pegasus works with our partners to identify those children and educate them on their rights. Even the children who did not lose a parent or caregiver directly to the disease are still impacted by the pandemic's overload on our community resources. As schools return to in-person learning, Pegasus also works to ensure children have access to mental health services, are not suspended or expelled inappropriately, and an appropriate education.

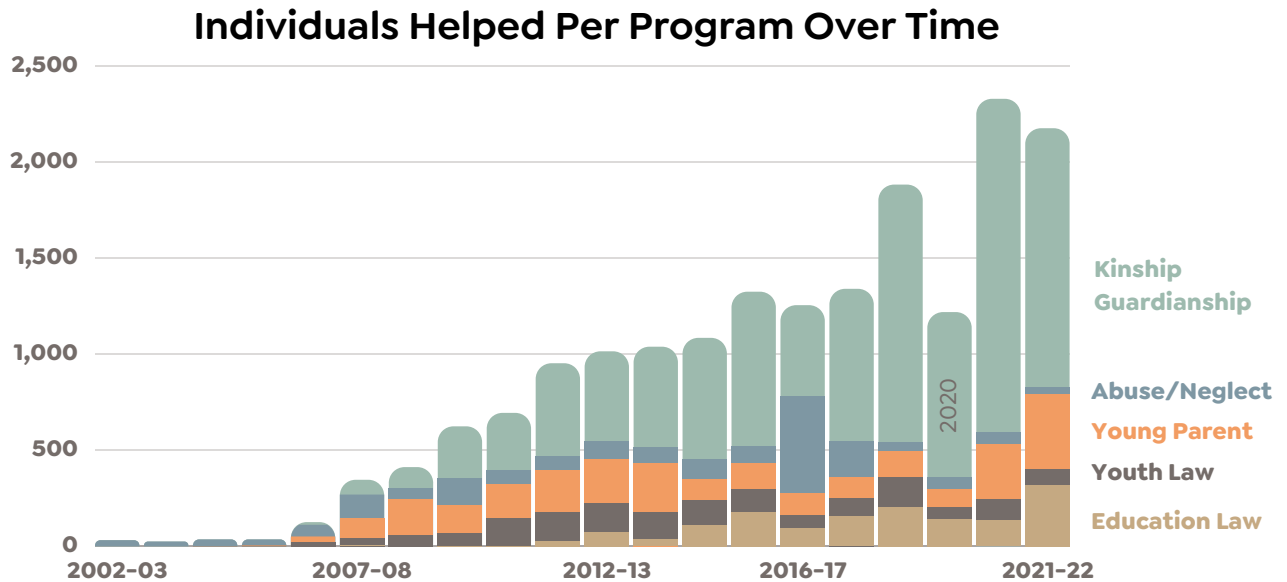
We look forward to another 20 years of advocating for youth and protecting their human rights.

I am so grateful to everyone at Pegasus who continues to listen to and amplify the voices of the children. Twenty years in, Pegasus continues to fight for necessary and equitable resources for children and their families so that all children in New Mexico have a future full of possibility. They deserve no less!

- Tara Ford, Co-Founder of Pegasus

TWENTY YEARS OF PEGASUS

A snapshot of our work over the last 20 years



While services initially dropped in 2020 due to COVID, demand has trended upwards for the last two fiscal years. Young Parent, Kinship Guardianship, and Education case referrals have seen the most growth as the long-term effects of the pandemic make themselves known.

- Pegasus Today -

Pegasus played a major role in educating professionals working with children about their health and education rights, particularly the rights of unaccompanied minors.

TWENTY YEARS OF PEGASUS

A snapshot of our work this year



Over 5,000 people called Pegasus for help.



Approximately 13,000 people searched for us online.



Pegasus achieves successful outcomes in 97% of Kinship Guardianship cases. We also are also one of the only firms that accepts both contested and uncontested cases.

In FY 22, Pegasus served 2,179 individuals across all programs, including:

- 1,475 individuals in Kinship Guardianship
- 472 individuals in Youth Law
- 52 clients in Education

- Pegasus History -

Pegasus helped change the law to ensure kinship guardians could get TANF benefits regardless of income.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Kinship Guardianship

Kinship guardianship work from July 2021 through June 2022 included legal advice and representation for over 350 families. A majority of these clients have had children in their care for most, if not all, of the COVID-19 pandemic, and pursued legal action to establish rights to these children for the purposes of enrolling them in school and receiving medical care. During this time, kinship guardianship work also included telephonic legal advice for those callers who preferred to proceed pro se, in addition to adding their name to our waiting list for full representation.

Youth Law

Young parent work from July 2021 through June 2022 included the closure of several long-term, full-representation cases. These clients, who were once in unmanageable coparenting relationships, now have structure and can share expectations with their respective coparents. During this time, young parent work also included full-representation for less-contentious cases, wherein those clients largely had functional coparenting relationships, but needed to iron out certain issues where there was not complete agreement between the client and their respective coparent. Finally, young parent work included limited-representation document drafting for pro se litigants and telephonic, case-specific legal advice.

Education

Pegasus' Education Project creates high quality educational opportunities for New Mexico's children and youth - especially those who experience barriers due to disability, racism, and limited language proficiency. This year, we worked to ensure safe and positive school environments allowed students to learn and thrive. To this end, we assisted families in obtaining the appropriate special education services necessary for students with disabilities to progress. We also represented students in school disciplinary proceedings to prevent harmful exclusionary removals. And we work in close collaboration with our partners to support educational equity for children and youth of color through policy initiatives and systemic reform.

Child Welfare

In addition to policy reform in the child welfare system, Pegasus continues to represent children as either GAL or Youth Attorney who have been taken into state custody. We are the child's representative in the ICWA court, a specialized court in Bernalillo County that ensures the rights of Indian Children. Additionally, we represent children in family matters for the Pueblos of Zuni, Isleta and Santa Ana.

- Pegasus History -

Pegasus was instrumental in writing the Children's Code and getting the Kinship Guardianship Act passed.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Kevin S.

Four years ago, 13 children filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of the 4,700 children in New Mexico foster care. Pegasus, along with our partners, stood alongside these children.

At the time of filing, New Mexico's child welfare system was among the worst in the nation.

The case settled out of court in March 2020. Since that time, we have been part of the implementation team to improve the child welfare system, hold it accountable, keep our children safe, and develop a meaningful trauma informed system in our state. The team is working toward sufficient numbers of caseworkers, foster parents, and mental health professionals to ensure stable and supportive placements; screening for trauma and swift provision of appropriate, adequate, and coordinated behavioral health services; consistent monitoring of children's health and treatment; and a holistic wraparound model that 1) facilitates collaboration between those responsible for providing care and services; 2) ensures an individualized planning process for each child and; 3) focuses on sustaining relationships.

We know that meaningful system reform is not easy and takes many years. We are committed to working with our partners to see this system reform for our children.

ICWA

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was enacted into law in 1978 to protect the rights of Indian children and families. This law is under attack and being challenged in the United States Supreme Court on November 9th. Pegasus, along with over 497 Tribal Nations, 62 Native Organizations, 20 states and D.C., 87 Congress-people, and 27 child welfare and adoption organizations, and others signed on various briefs submitted to the Supreme Court standing with Native children.

ICWA ensures that if a child is taken into foster care, careful consideration is given so that the unique needs of Native children are met. ICWA places children with their extended families or communities when possible, which is best practice. Research shows that when children are connected to their identity and culture it leads to positive outcomes, including higher self-esteem and academic achievement. It also preserves the tribes and pueblos by continuing to connect these cultures to their roots.

This case has a huge implication for Native children and their families and also has the potential to impact the future of Tribal Nations. If the protections of ICWA are dismantled, it could set a legal precedent that has serious consequences for other issues like tribal economic development and land rights. A threat to ICWA is a threat to tribal sovereignty. We know the importance of ICWA and are proud to stand with ICWA and Native children.

Although ICWA is being threatened on the national level, we are fortunate that this past year, New Mexico passed its own version of ICWA, the Indian Family Protection Act. This means that even if ICWA challenged or weakened, the Indian children of New Mexico will continue to receive the added protections to keep families together and to keep children connected to their culture.

NEW STAFF

Maranda Aguirre, Staff Attorney

Maranda Aguirre (she/her) was born in El Paso, Texas and raised in Chandler, Arizona. In 2016, she received a double major in Justice Studies and Communication at Arizona State University. She earned a JD from the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law – ASU in 2019, where she worked in Family Law, Immigration Law, and Juvenile Law. In 2020, she relocated to Albuquerque where she began her legal work as an Assistant District Attorney practicing in their Metro and General Crimes Division. At Pegasus, Maranda assists caregivers in obtaining kinship guardianship of children and helps children with their emancipation matters.



Febely Ibarra, Paralegal



Febely Ibarra (she/her) is one of our recent additions to the Pegasus team, working as a bilingual paralegal. Originally from Albuquerque, she relocated to Medford, Massachusetts during her college years where she pursued a B.A in Sociology and Spanish Cultural Studies. It was here where she continued her work in helping the immigrant community, volunteering with a nearby non-profit to teach English classes as well as translating for pro se clients at the Edward W. Brooke Courthouse. She returned to Albuquerque in 2021 after graduating as a first-generation student from Tufts University. In her free time she enjoys baking, reading, and creative writing. Current mom of two fur childs, Nala and Yuki. Febely habla español.

- Pegasus Today -

Our average Kinship Guardianship Client is a 48 year old Hispanic Woman seeking guardianship of a 7 year old girl.

NEW STAFF

Arielle Vicente, Paralegal

Arielle Vicenti (she/her) is one of our recent additions to the Pegasus team, working as a paralegal. She is a member of the Jicarilla Apache Nation and grew up on their homelands in Dulce, NM. She received her B.A. in Humanities with a concentration in Sociology at Fort Lewis College in Durango, CO. During her time in Durango, CO, she worked as a Paralegal and Pro Bono Coordinator at Colorado Legal Services for four years. When not working, she enjoys reading, taking care of her plants, making art, and spending time with family and friends.



Yehimi Yang, Office Manager

Yehimi Yang (she/her) is the Office Manager at Pegasus. Yehimi was born and raised in Cd. Juarez, Mexico. Yehimi enjoys spending time with her family and playing with her dogs, Lucas and Milo. She likes to listen to music and read books in her free time. Yehimi joined Pegasus because she has a passion for helping those who are in need, and she believes everyone deserves an opportunity for help, Pegasus provided that discrimination-free environment. Yehimi habla español.

Mary Cianflone, Grants & Accounting Administrator

Mary Cianflone (she/her) has over 15 years of experience with grants management, and seven years of development, fundraising, and finance experience. After supporting a variety of student-focused initiatives at the University of New Mexico, she began working with the local Albuquerque non-profit community in 2016.



- Pegasus Today -

***Our average Youth Law Client is a
17 year old Hispanic Woman
seeking custody of her child.***

THE PEGASUS TEAM



Maranda Aguirre
Staff Attorney



Mary Cianflone
Grants & Accounting
Administrator



Morgan Demic
Kinship Guardianship
Program Director



Lucia Espinosa-Gonzalez
Client Advocate



Bette Fleishman
Executive Director



Jennifer Gamboa
Senior Paralegal



Dani Garcia-Grijalva
Program Specialist &
Outreach Coordinator



Febely Ibarra
Paralegal



Jerri Katzerman
Education Director



Jen Prakash
Controller



Ana Rabut
Program Specialist



William Townley
Staff Attorney



Arielle Vicenti
Paralegal



Yehimi Yang
Office Manager

Thank you to our interns and clerks!

Erica Lucero - Highlands Social Work Intern

Mikayla Ortega-Speight - UNM Law Clerk

Madeline Rock - Highlands Social Work Intern

Mariah Wheir - Highlands Social Work Intern

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

AUDITED FINANCIALS

REVENUE:	\$1,275,069	100%
Contracts	\$829,249	65%
Grants	\$309,695	24%
Contributions	\$99,848	8%
Other Income	\$36,277	3%

EXPENSES:	\$1,154,526	100%
Program	\$932,952	81%
Management & Admin	\$186,422	16%
Fundraising	\$35,152	3%

GRANT & CONTRACTS

Thank you to our partners and funders!



NM Aging & Long Term Services Dept



La Plazita Institute



NM Access to Justice



NM Civil Legal Services



NM Administrative Office of the Courts



ALBUQUERQUE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
leadership • trust • legacy



Pueblo of Santa Ana



BIA-ECHO™



Pueblo of Isleta



Pueblo of Zuni



New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department



Sandia National Labs



Thank you to our friends and supporters for an incredible 20 years!

The Pegasus Team is incredibly proud of all we have accomplished together over the past two decades.

Together, we will keep fighting for the rights of children.

Donate to Pegasus!

Your contributions help us keep our expert bilingual legal services FREE for our clients. Here are some ways to donate:



Checks can be mailed to:

Pegasus Legal Services, 505 Marquette Ave NW, Suite 1350, Alb., NM 87102

Credit Card donations accepted via our website at www.PegasusLaw.org



TOKEN IBIS: Tokenibis.org is a fun and unique website that gives its users free money to donate to the charity of their choice, including Pegasus!



AMAZON SMILE: When you shop at smile.amazon.com, Amazon donates 0.5% of your eligible purchases - at no cost to you.



SMITHS REWARDS: Sign up online at smithsfoodanddrug.com and Smiths will donate a percentage of your purchase to Pegasus .