

## **Growing case load prompts expansion of Legal Bureau at New Mexico's Risk Management Division**

By Joseph Vigil, Public Information Officer, General Services Department

The New Mexico General Services Department's Risk Management Division (RMD) has been facing a steady increase in the number of cases against the state, necessitating a major expansion of its legal bureau.

To better manage the growing workload, the General Services Department (GSD) has doubled the number of attorneys within RMD's legal bureau, ensuring that the state is properly defended against claims.

Previously, the legal bureau had just three staff attorneys, each managing nearly 300 cases. The overwhelming caseload stretched the division's ability to provide timely legal counsel and actively monitor ongoing claims. With the addition of more attorneys, the case load has been cut in half, allowing for more proactive legal management. This expansion enhances the bureau's ability to track claims, provide quicker legal opinions, and consult more effectively with partner agencies and defense attorneys to determine the best course of action—whether to settle a case or proceed to court.

GSD's Risk Management Division provides coverage to a wide array of public entities, including state agencies and employees, boards and commissions, universities, as well as participating school districts and local governing bodies. The diversity of these covered entities presents unique legal challenges, as each operates within a different risk environment. Expanding the legal bureau not only alleviates the workload of existing attorneys but also enables the hiring of subject matter experts with specialized knowledge in key legal areas.

"With the increasing number of cases against the state of New Mexico, it was critical for us to enhance our legal capabilities," said Anna Silva, GSD's Acting Cabinet Secretary. "By doubling the number of attorneys in the Risk Management Division, we are ensuring that every claim is given the attention it deserves. This move will ultimately save taxpayers money by allowing us to make more informed legal decisions on behalf of the state."

The additional legal resources provide a much-needed boost to the legal bureau's ability to actively monitor cases, offer faster legal opinions, and work closely with state agencies. Having expert attorneys who specialize in specific areas of law strengthens our defense strategy and improves our ability to protect the state's interests.

As the legal landscape constantly continues to evolve, the expansion of the RMD legal bureau marks a significant step forward in safeguarding the state of New Mexico from costly litigation. With more attorneys on board, the division is better positioned to handle claims efficiently, make strategic legal decisions, and ultimately mitigate risks for the state and its covered entities.

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