



# CEI IN BRIEF

A NEWSLETTER OF



NEW MEXICO COURT  
EDUCATION INSTITUTE

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

December, 2025

Vol 2



## *Legacy Leadership & Management Program*

The Legacy Leadership and Management Program is a key component of the New Mexico Judicial Branch's commitment to building statewide leadership. **The first level, Legacy Judicial Excellence with Emerging Leaders (JEWEL), is currently accepting applications for the Class of 2026!**

JEWEL is an 8-month hybrid leadership program for emerging court professionals. Through an in-person overnight experiential learning orientation experience, monthly online modules, live check-ins, and a team-based Capstone Project, participants build core skills in communication, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and court leadership. The program prepares learners for future National Association for Court Managers (NACM) and Institute for Court Management (ICM) credential pathways and for expanded leadership roles within the New Mexico Courts.

The Legacy JEWEL program includes a robust online learning component hosted in Blackboard Ultra. The program is designed to be intuitive, accessible, and structured to support busy court professionals. Participants can complete activities at their own pace within each module, review resources on demand, and stay connected with their cohort through discussion spaces, reflection prompts, and built-in guidance from CEI instructors. Course instructors will be CEI's Arlene Baca and Jazmine Herrera. They help facilitate discussion, provide feedback, and support learning goals.

The Leadership Lab and Capstone Project is a new Blackboard course that will guide participants through the entire online learning experience. The first program meeting is in January 2026 so participants can explore Blackboard and become comfortable with the online tools and receive guidance on how to access the NACM and ICM courses. Participants will then join the Experiential Learning Retreat at Manzano Mountain Retreat on April 7-8, where they will participate in hands-on leadership activities, guided reflection, and team development.

A major component of the program is the Capstone Group Project. Working in teams, participants will identify a workplace challenge and develop a practical solution, which all culminates into one final presentation. This project strengthens collaboration, innovation, and long-term professional growth across the New Mexico courts.

Together, the Blackboard course, experiential retreat, national coursework, and group capstone create a complete and meaningful professional development experience for court staff across the state.



Above: One of the lodging sites at Manzano Mountain Retreat, the site of the Experiential Learning Retreat portion of the Legacy Program



Above: The CEI Team kicks off the Legacy Program with an announcement at the 2025 Court Staff Conference



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## COURT STAFF CONFERENCE 2025 RECAP

Court Staff Conference October 28-30, 2025



Erin Jones



CEI hosted the Second Annual Court Staff Conference at the Sheraton Uptown in Albuquerque on October 28 - 30, 2025 with 250 attendees. Plenary speakers included Author, Speaker, and National Award Winning Educator, Erin Jones. Erin kicked off a successful conference with her motivational speech on Bridges to Heal Us. Comments from some of the attendees summed up her session nicely by saying "The message was powerful and delivered by a powerful speaker."; "Think before you speak and always remember who you are" and "Concrete action plan: 1. Practice Gratitude, 2. Be Brave, 3. Pause".

The closing plenary keynote speaker was our very own Judge Conrad Perea from the Third Judicial District who inspired everyone with his closing speech on Moving Forward - working towards realistic expectations within ourselves and those we serve. His sage advice to "Bloom where you are planted" resonated with attendees.

This year we welcomed the National Association of Court Management (NACM) to center stage to present their CORE® Competencies including, Purposes and Responsibilities of Courts; Public Trust and Confidence; Leadership; Caseflow Management; Accountability and Court Performance; Workforce Management; Ethics and Operations Management. Speakers Greg Lambard, Roger Rand, Norman Meyer, and Kerri Lynn Walsh-Wood shared their knowledge and experiences with their own courts.

Other local speakers in the general session included Judge Jarod Hofacket who spoke on Performance Measures; the dynamic duo of Josh Pando and Stacey Boone who spoke on Effective Communication, Liz Garcia who spoke about the Supreme Court, and Katherine Grubelnik who spoke about Workplace Love Languages. The highly rated session: A Conversation with the Supreme Court, brought Chief Justice David Thomson and AOC Director, Karl Reifstack center stage to address the audience and answer questions they had.

There was a special track on day 2 for Coaching. This session was led by Alecia Burke from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). This was a highly interactive workshop that allowed participants time to engage in group discussions and practice the techniques taught during the session to reinforce psychological safety, trust-building, leadership effectiveness and enrichment of court culture. Attendees consistently gave this workshop high ratings and requested that it be repeated in the future for other staff members.

This year, CEI also hosted a special track for Staff Attorneys. The speakers for this track included CEI's own Sarah Pepin (A Trio of Ethics Cases: Considerations for Staff Attorneys) and Michael Stewart (Research and Writing Workshop). We were also honored to present Legal Services staff, Celina Jones, Aaron Holloman, Peggy Cadwell and Lisa Giandomenico, (Pro Se Litigants: Providing Assistance and the Resources to Help You Help Them). We also brought in Tomas Glover, Juliet Casalduc and Liza Bernal-Aguirre from NM MVD (The MVD: DWI Compliance).

Great food, great topics, great company. Thank you to all our speakers and attendees. We can't wait to do this again!



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### FIRST EVER STAFF ATTORNEY TRACK

The 2025 Court Staff Conference featured a first-for-New Mexico Staff Attorney track! This track featured a research and writing mini-course by CEI's own Michael Stewart (he/him).

Michael Stewart is an Attorney Senior with CEI's Judicial Education Team. He has a background as a trial and appellate attorney, and came to CEI from a role as a legal research and writing professor at a law school in Texas. Michael put these skills to use in helping our Staff Attorneys brush up on their legal research and writing skills, encouraging them to try new things throughout the session.

In the first session of Michael's mini-course, he refreshed the Staff Attorneys' memories on stylistic tools often used in judicial writing. After this, he invited the Staff Attorneys to divide themselves into groups, read an opinion by a distinguished jurist, and work together to edit an opinion to reflect the jurist's style. The Judicial Education Team (minus Michael) then judged the ghostwritten opinions and selected the team that authored an opinion which most closely reflected the jurist's style. Staff really enjoyed this experience, with the majority rating this session a 5 out of 5, and one even stating that this was a, "very helpful refresher on tightening language and conveying meaning in a more structured manner."

In session two, Michael reminded the Staff Attorneys of the research tools at their disposal and provided a guide on various search methods that could yield different results in the commonly used legal research engines. He then invited the Staff Attorneys to break into groups and research a problem he had selected using the search tools discussed in the lecture portion of the session. This session also yielded overwhelmingly positive feedback, with one Staff Attorney stating that Michael provided "useful research updates. [T]hings I have not learned since law school," and another stating, "I liked the aspect of trying something new."

### What's coming up for Court Staff training?

The National Association of Court Management (**NACM**) will host their **Midyear Conference in Albuquerque on March 15 - 18, 2026**. The conference will be held at the Albuquerque Convention Center. CEI will be offering scholarships to cover the cost of registration for court staff. The cost of transportation, lodging, and per diem expenses will be covered by the court or AOC division where the employee works.

Courts will receive a select number of scholarships. CEOs should anticipate receiving an email within the next couple of weeks to obtain the names of court staff they have selected to fill their allocated spots for the NACM Midyear Conference.

CEI will also be offering scholarships to the **NACM Annual Conference in Jacksonville, Florida on July 12 - 16, 2026**. Scholarships cover the cost of registration only. The cost of transportation, hotels and per diem will be the responsibility of the court or AOC division where the employee works. CEI will send an email to CEOs about this opportunity closer to that date.

CEI will be offering scholarships to these conferences in lieu of hosting a Court Staff Conference next year. This allows court staff the opportunity to continue to receive top-notch training, and at the same time, allows CEI the ability to focus on developing more upcoming training opportunities for NM Court Staff.





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## *Upcoming Public Outreach*

CEI has some exciting outreach projects in the works for 2026:

### **Civics in Action**

The CEI Team is also working on a series of civics toolkits for high school teachers and homeschooling parents to use in their classrooms. These toolkits cover topics such as: an introduction to the U.S. government, the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and due process. Each toolkit includes a video overview of the topic, discussion questions, and classroom activities. Each toolkit aligns with the NM standards for civics education. CEI plans to include more topics in future toolkits.

### **Cross Generational Education About the Judiciary**

In addition to the two projects above, the CEI Team is working with Judge Jennifer DeLaney to create a three class mini-course on the judiciary, which will be presented to a multigenerational audience over the first few months of 2026. This course will cover state courts, federal courts, and how a case works its way through the court system.

CEI believes it is vital to educate the public about the judiciary and its role in the government in our communities. CEI is excited to debut these projects in 2026. Be on the lookout for announcements as each of these projects roll out!

## **CIVICS IN ACTION**

Your Role In The Government  
Lesson 1: What Is the U.S. Government?



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## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE JUDICIARY**



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