



Report on Children's Law and Racial Equity Stakeholder Meetings

University of New Mexico School of Law

This report details the findings of a series of community stakeholder meetings conducted by the University of New Mexico School of Law in conjunction with a planning grant award from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

September 2015



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I. Overview

The University of New Mexico School of Law (SOL) received a grant to develop a comprehensive plan to increase the number and diversity of skilled, highly effective lawyers trained to address the effects of poverty and racial inequity on children and families in New Mexico. Currently, the public interest law sector is too small and under-funded to meet the state’s demand for civil legal services and policy advocacy for poor children and their families.

The plan will seek to expand the pool of diverse and outstanding public interest attorneys advocating on behalf of low-income children and families through funding for: recruitment and outreach to communities typically underrepresented in public interest legal careers serving poor children and families, law school scholarships, and post-graduation fellowships. The plan will also aim to ensure that law students receive the highest quality legal and interdisciplinary education, training, and experiential opportunities needed to serve New Mexico children and families effectively.

To begin this planning process, the SOL conducted eight stakeholder meetings, gathering input from 125 participants. The purpose of the stakeholder meetings was to:

- identify areas of unmet legal and policy needs of vulnerable children and their families in communities around the state,

Advocacy for New Mexico's vulnerable children and families



New Mexico’s children and families are especially vulnerable and in need of legal and policy advocacy:

- NM ranks 49th out of 50 states for child well-being (Annie E. Casey Foundation’s 2015 Kids Count Survey)
- Our youth are the most food-insecure in the nation (Feeding America, 2013)
- NM has 63.2 reported cases of child abuse and neglect annually per 1,000 children—a rate over 37% higher than the national average. (National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System)

But, access to justice for them is significantly limited:

- In NM, for every client served by our 2 largest civil legal services providers, about 2.3 eligible persons are turned away. (NM Access to Justice Commission report)
- In FY2014, NM’s civil legal services providers could not provide representation in 2,578 cases related to children and families, leaving approximately 5,022 children without legal redress. In some NM communities, more than half of children and families seeking legal assistance are turned away. (Community Services Analysis report 2015)

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- assess the capacity of the civil legal services sector to meet the needs of low-income children and families,
- identify the core competencies needed by public interest lawyers who will represent and advocate on behalf of low-income children and families, and
- explore methods for better developing these core competencies in the SOL's graduates.

The stakeholders included: tribal members (including tribal judges, social workers, educators, and others); members of the New Mexico Judiciary and a number of its commissions; public service legal providers; community service providers working with children and families; representatives from policy and advocacy organizations; faculty, staff, and students within the Law School; Law School alumni; and faculty and staff from other UNM departments that serve children and families, such as the School of Medicine and the College of Education.

For the purpose of this report, the eight sessions have been broken down into three categories:

- Tribal stakeholders,
- Court, Legal and Community Service stakeholders, and
- University of New Mexico stakeholders.

Dates of Stakeholder Sessions:

September 16, 2014 - American Indian Law Center's 7th Annual Tribal Leadership Conference

October 28, 2014 - Legal Aid, Civil Legal Services and Policy Advocates Session

October 30, 2014 - Isleta Court of Appeals Session

October 31, 2014 - UNM and Community Stakeholder Session

November 11, 2014 - Disability Rights / Community Service Providers Session

November 12, 2014 - UNM School of Law Student Session

November 13, 2014 - NM Court of Appeals / Children's Court Session

May 6, 2015 - McKinley County Community Stakeholders Session

A team comprised of Beth Gillia (Director of the Corinne Wolfe Children's Law Center (CLC) at the SOL), Barbara Bergman and Yael Zakei Cannon (SOL faculty members), and Juan Abeyta (independent evaluator), developed a set of questions to elicit information from stakeholder meeting participants. Questions were posed in two formats: discussion questions used in a facilitated focus group format and questions in a written survey.

Each focus group discussed 3-4 questions. Participants engaged in lively discussions in each stakeholder meeting. Responses were recorded and are reported here. The written questionnaire gathered demographic information, had respondents' rank legal issues facing children and families in their communities, and used a Likert agreement scale to assess attitudes towards broad issue statements. The written questionnaires also contained customized questions based on the audience. For example, those already in practice were asked to rank legal issues facing children and families in



their communities, while law students were asked to identify learning opportunities in children's law they would like to see added to the SOL experience.

Additional support for the stakeholder sessions was provided by:

- Laura Bassein, CLC Senior Attorney
- Cristen Conley, CLC Senior Attorney
- Barbara Creel, Professor of Law
- Andy Hsi, Professor of Family and Community Medicine, UNM Health Sciences Center
- Francine Jaramillo, Staff Attorney, American Indian Law Center
- Tracey Kincaid, CLC Education Program Coordinator
- Ed Marks, Executive Director, New Mexico Legal Aid
- Helen Padilla, Director, American Indian Law Center
- Sherri Thomas, UNM Professor of Law Librarianship

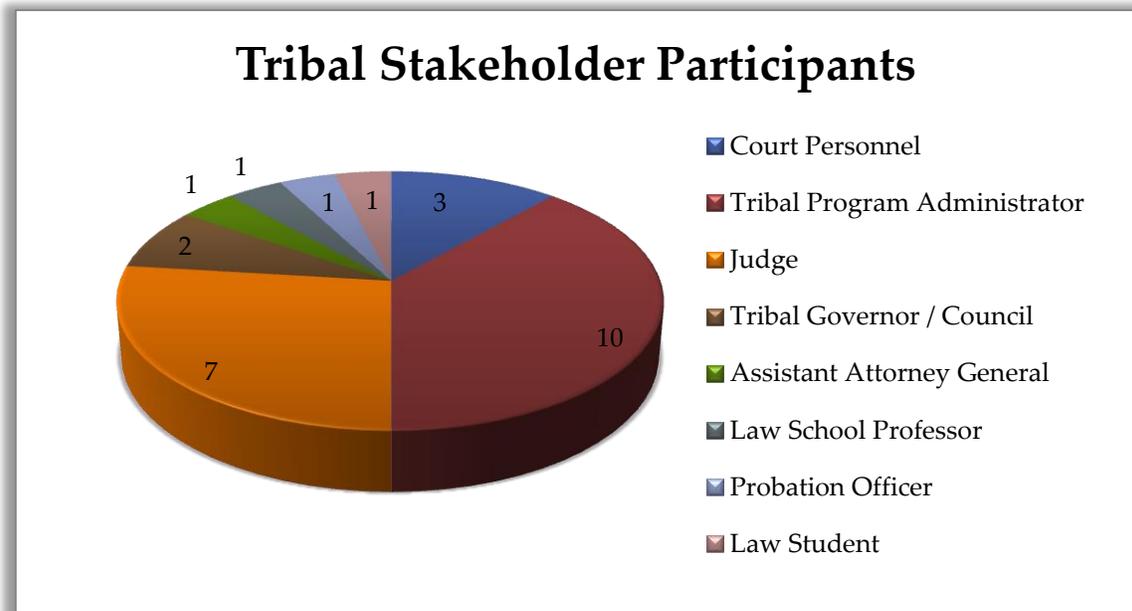
In addition to the stakeholder meetings, the SOL engaged many others in formal and informal conversations about the role of the SOL and of lawyers in improving outcomes for New Mexico's most vulnerable children and families. At a minimum, the SOL held meetings with or made presentations to the American Indian Law Center, Children's Court Improvement Commission of the NM Supreme Court, the Abuse/Neglect Subcommittee of the Children's Court Rules Committee, the Court Improvement Project Legal Representation Work Group, Disability Rights NM, the J. Paul Taylor Task Force and its subcommittees, Pegasus Legal Services for Children, the Special Education Advocacy Task Force coordinated through the Access to Justice Commission, and the UNM Medical-Legal Alliance for Children. Within the law school, we have held many, many meetings with the Deans of Admissions and Career & Student Services, SOL faculty, SOL Indian Law faculty, SOL Kellogg Planning Grant Ad Hoc Committee, SOL Pipeline Committee, and various SOL students groups.

The remainder of this report provides a detailed summary of data gathered via the stakeholder sessions, meetings with other groups, and the questionnaire.



II. Tribal Stakeholder Sessions

Two sessions were conducted specifically with tribal stakeholders. One was held in conjunction with the American Indian Law Center’s 7th Annual Tribal Leadership Conference and the other was hosted by the Pueblo of Isleta Court of Appeals. A total of 26 individuals participated in the two sessions.



A number of Native American stakeholders also participated in the McKinley County Stakeholder Meeting. The summaries below incorporate their comments.

Focus group participants identified the following as the most pressing legal issues facing Native American communities in New Mexico. We have summarized the participants’ input by topic.

Child Welfare and Custody

There is a profound shortage of skilled individuals available to interact with state and tribal legal systems on behalf of Native American children and families. Guardians ad Litem, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), and attorneys are desperately needed to provide representation on behalf of children and families, as well as tribal social workers, in both state and tribal courts.

Of particular concern is the ‘resettlement’ (placement) of children outside their community in cases of alleged abuse or neglect.



Attorneys and other law-affiliated professionals and volunteers (like CASAs) need greater cultural literacy/competency when dealing with children generally, and with Native American children and families specifically.

Education

Another arena of concern was related to the educational system. Many participants felt that Native students were disproportionately impacted by Special Education, disciplinary actions, and the “school to prison pipeline” (a system of policies and practices that push students, especially students of color and at-risk students, out of classrooms and into the juvenile justice system for school misconduct). Too frequently, students’ real educational needs were not being addressed while the school focused on discipline issues. Many participants agreed that attorneys’ help in meeting students’ education needs would help limit disciplinary problems, reducing the over-use of in-school and out-of-school detention, suspension, and expulsion, and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Other alternative are also needed. For example, the Navajo Nation undertook a six-year process of writing and adopting a Children’s Code that they feel better serves their communities by promoting wellness. It incorporates the extended family and a holistic mind-body-spirit healing approach that has resulted in decreasing the number of juveniles going through the criminal justice system.

Integrating/Aligning Services and Approaches

Participants felt that a more holistic approach is needed to address systemic problems facing Native American children and families. For example, untreated trauma in Native communities results in a myriad of problems. Healing that trauma is essential to reducing the severity and impact of issues confronting children and families. Lawyers who understand historical and other forms of trauma, including complex developmental trauma, will advocate for services and interventions that will better allow children and families to thrive.

Participants explained that tribes need to integrate social service, behavioral health, and legal systems to better serve children and families. More extra-legal services are needed for family interventions such as parenting classes, mediation, foster care, and community education supported by cross-training between the legal and social service sectors. Agencies that provide social services in tribal communities need access to attorneys with backgrounds in child and family law to provide legal and policy advice. Increased sharing of best practices and solutions within and across tribes would also help Native American children and families.

Training for Attorneys

Attorneys are often unprepared for tribal court practice: they lack knowledge of tribal legal codes and tribal court processes, are often unfamiliar with tribal communities, and do not adequately understand sovereignty issues.



In addition, additional training programs are needed to improve the skills of Guardians ad Litem and CASA volunteers and to expand the pool of qualified individuals to serve in tribal court systems.

Creating Career Pathways

The following are suggested approaches for increasing the number of Native Americans who will pursue public interest law careers on behalf of vulnerable children and families. The first set of recommendations focuses on pre-law school activities; the second group includes recommendations for law school students and programs.

- The SOL should be more aggressive in career outreach activities/advisement at the middle and high school levels, particularly outside of Albuquerque.
- The SOL should establish/strengthen relationships with tribal governments and leaders to enlist their support.
- The SOL should assist in exposing youth to lawyers (role models) by recruiting youth to serve on wellness court juries and having information sessions with attorneys to discuss why there is demand for lawyers and what it means to be a lawyer.
- The SOL should connect with paralegal and tribal advocate programs as a potential source of applicants.
- The SOL should partner with tribal colleges on distance education opportunities.
- The SOL should offer or partner with another UNM department to offer an undergraduate course, such as indigenous justice or tribal sovereignty, to attract applicants and identify future leaders.
- Provide scholarships and other financial aid for Native American law students.
- Law school curricula should address tribal sovereignty
- Expose 1st year law students to children's/family law and make it a requirement.
- Summer internships (for pay and for credit) should be made available with placements in tribal settings. Students could work in a variety of areas including the courts, agencies serving children and families, and government (working on policy and legal codes).
- The Indian Law Clinic is essential for lawyers who will represent tribes and Native children and families.
- The Indian Law Program should have several tracks including judicial and leadership training, policy analysis, and social work, and law that lead to certificates.
- The SOL should prepare students to draft tribal and state statutes and ordinances, court rules, and agency regulations and procedures.
- Offer courses via evening law school and satellite campuses.
- Provide mentoring for Native Bar Associations/law sections.



III. University of New Mexico Stakeholder Sessions

Two sessions were conducted with stakeholders affiliated with the University of New Mexico. One was held with representatives from departments and programs within the Health Sciences Center (including the School of Medicine, the UNM Hospital and Allied Health Sciences), the College of Education, the School of Architecture and Planning, and other UNM affiliated programs. A second session was held with current law school students. A total of 48 individuals participated in the two sessions.

The results from the focus group discussions are summarized by category. Additional questions were posed to the law students; their responses are also summarized below.

Child and Family Welfare

One of the most pressing issues is child abuse and neglect. The lack of comprehensive preventive services often leads to trauma and chronic lifetime issues. The level of existing services does not meet the demand and the message to those seeking help is to “wait in line” even though they have urgent needs. The issue is compounded for those with undocumented status who may not have access to existing services.

More coordination between service providers is required not only to better meet the needs of children and families through collective impact but also to share best practices and successful intervention strategies. Such an infrastructure is sorely needed for service providers and for families seeking information about available services. Families also need advocates and navigators to help access and secure existing benefits offered through Social Security and other governmental programs. The establishment of a legal ‘hotline’ to provide advice to families would also be helpful.

Additional resources are needed in behavioral health particularly for early interventions with children. Discipline policies in school tend to criminalize behavior rather than treat mental health problems. Segregation of children persists due to issues related to poverty, disability, and zero-tolerance policies, which create a school to prison pipeline.

Other issues of concern that were raised included the re-establishment of the parent-child bond after separation due to removal and the lack of resources available to rural communities throughout New Mexico.

Opportunities to Collaborate

A major portion of the discussions centered on how collaborations could be fostered university-wide. Suggestions included:

- Establishing/expanding Health Sciences Center-SOL interdisciplinary teams that would:
 - provide services to children and families in the community,



- build on knowledge about vulnerable children,
- teach needed competencies (professionalism, tools, interpersonal teams, intercultural communication),
- communicate between programs,
- share curriculum,
- research, teach and advocate concerning public health and health equality, and
- apply for system of care grants.
- Using epidemiology students to help with research.
- Allowing law students to attend existing legislative summits dealing with policy (currently hosted by UNM's Enlace NM and Unidos Project).

The School of Architecture and Planning offered that its Resource Center for Raza Planning conducts community-engaged planning and research that could teach tools and methodologies for community engagement and policy advocacy that could be used by law students and social justice lawyers.

The College of Education stated that children with disabilities who are eligible for special education services are frequently not receiving the services to which they are entitled in New Mexico. This is both a legal problem and special education training problem. Law students and the College of Education could partner to better inform current and future educators about student needs and special education eligibility and legal requirements. The College also requires its students to take a social justice course in their teacher preparation program that could address legal issues confronting children and families. This course could be expanded to include law students.

Law Student Preparation

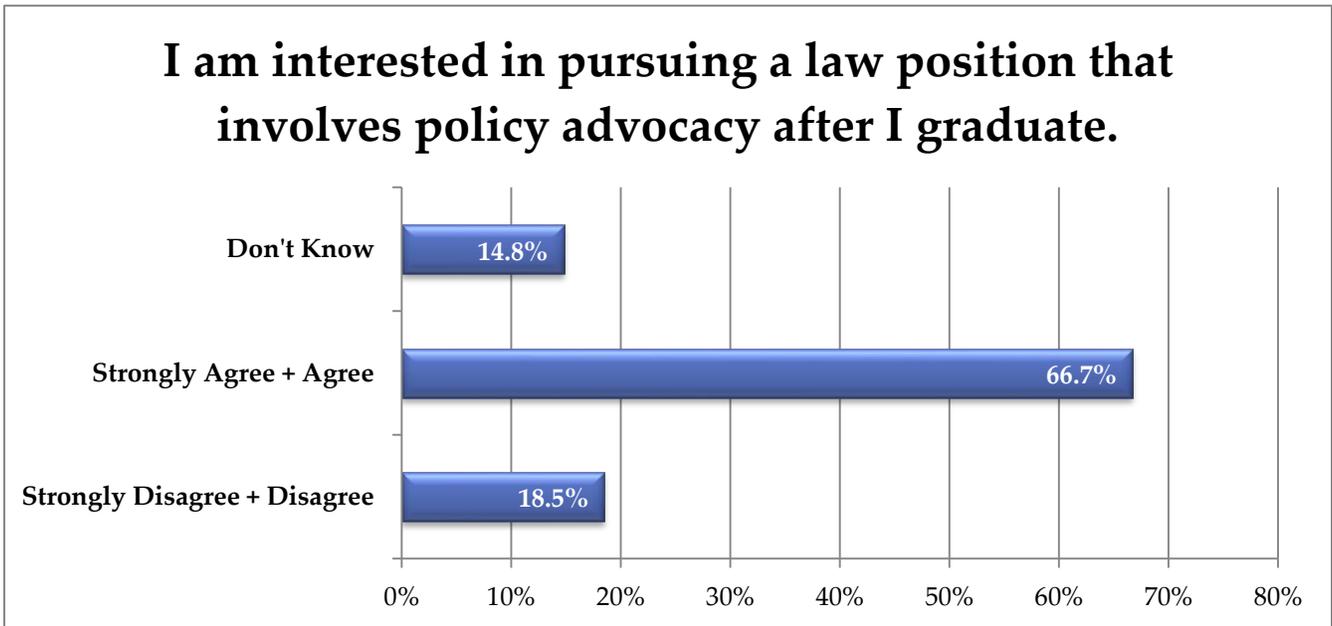
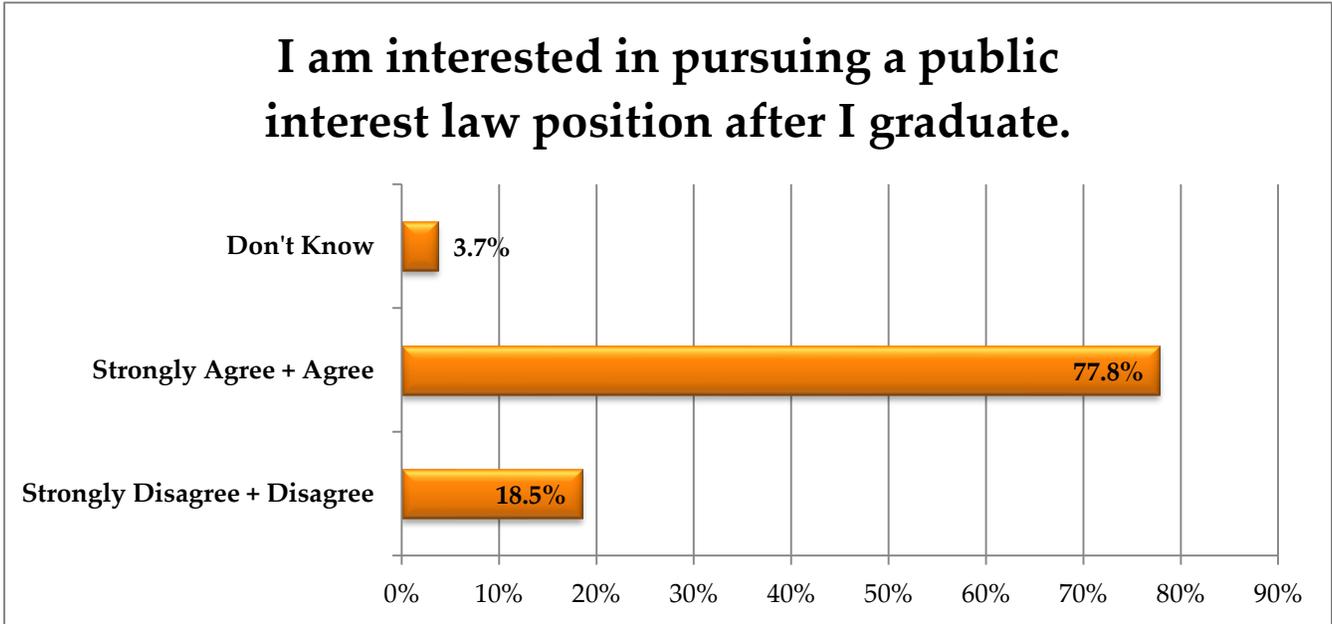
Participants had many suggestions for better preparing lawyers to serve poor children and families, including:

- Exposing law students earlier and more often to children's and family law in order to help increase students' awareness and interest in pursuing these practice areas.
- Providing students more than just a semester course presenting an overview of family and children's law. By breaking children's law down into multiple courses over a series of semesters, students will gain more detailed knowledge and skill (in, for example, juvenile justice, education, child development, family law, child welfare, disability rights, etc.).
- Establishing a certificate program in children's law. This would increase visibility and prestige both in school and after graduation.
- Having more experienced faculty and interdisciplinary coursework (how to work with families and children, child development, etc.)
- Creating more opportunities for students to work with practitioners through summer jobs, externships, mentorships, Children's Court experience in clinic, and participation in the Marshall Brennan class (investment in kids).



- Establishing post-graduation fellowships and school-to-work programs to encourage transition to practice.
- Creating more employment opportunities in the public sector.

We posed some questions to law students exclusively. The following are the results of these questions.





What barriers, if any, will you face in pursuing a public interest or policy career serving low-income children and families in New Mexico after graduation? [Note: responses are grouped and listed in order by most comments received; N = 20]

- ❖ **Low income career positions [13 comments]:** *"Income to debt ratio;" "Non-profit positions often pay significantly less than private sector;" "Due to ongoing student loans, public interest will have to remain a hobby rather than a career;" "...ability to sustain given the low income involved."*
- ❖ **Job Opportunities [6 comments]:** *"Placement - will there be a position available? I need a community to support me in my public interest goals;" "A lack of channels and/or marketing that originate while I am still in law school. I fear that starting a job search after graduation will prevent me from accessing all the resources necessary not just to find a job, but the right job."*
- ❖ **Training/Experience [5 comments]:** *"I don't know the law about children and families and I don't feel like it is supplemented enough in my classes;" "Figuring out avenues where training for policy advocacy happens;" "...will I be competitive with out-of-state applicants?"*
- ❖ **Career Guidance [3 comments]:** *"I'm encouraged to pursue more traditional work;" "It feels hard to find in-roads/mentorship;" "...frustration due to institutional barriers."*

What might the School of Law do to help reduce those barriers?

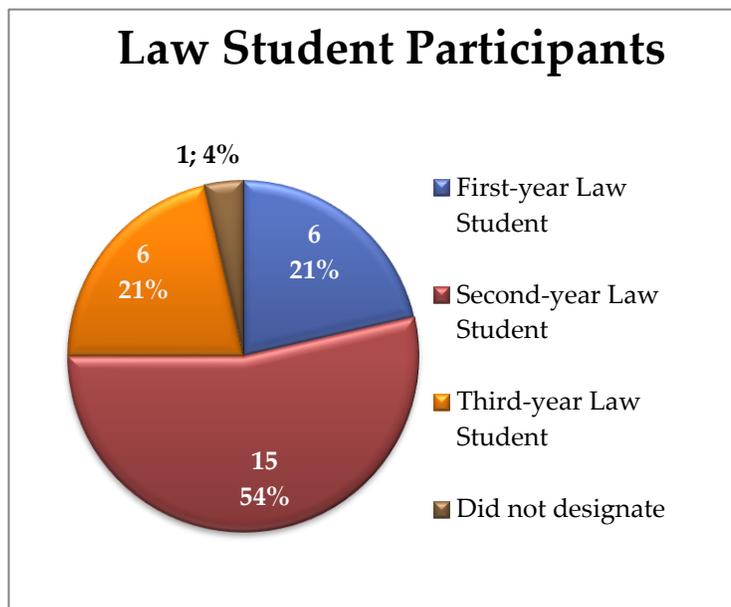
- ❖ **Financial Support [10 comments]:** *"Offer a fellowship for grads interested in pursuing public interest or policy work;" "Tuition forgiveness for public interest career;" "Externships funding."*
- ❖ **Career Guidance [6 comments]:** *"Encouragement of public interest in career services;" "Facilitate mentorship and networking relationships/opportunities, host 'recruiting' events so that students can know exactly what opportunities are out there;" "Nurture progressively minded students in maintaining their career objectives."*
- ❖ **Curriculum/Training [5 comments]:** *"Integrate public interest concerns in the regular curriculum;" "Meaningful opportunities to gain connections/expertise;" "Children's Law Clinic;" "Advocacy training."*



What courses related to children and families do you wish the School of Law offered?

[Note: responses are listed in order by most comments received; N = 20]

- Children’s Law – 7
- Juvenile Justice – 4
- Family/Parent Representation – 3
- Indian Child Welfare Act – 3
- Advocacy Training – 2
- Domestic Violence Law – 2
- Guardianship/Adoption – 2
- Law & Education related – 2
- Law & Health related – 2
- Policy – 2
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status – 2
- Social Justice (race & culture) – 2
- Children’s Law Clinic – 1
- Custody Issues – 1
- Feminist Legal Theory – 1
- Guardian Ad Litem – 1
- Independent Adoption – 1
- Immigration – 1
- Legislation (training/drafting) – 1



What other learning opportunities or programming related to children and families do you wish the School of Law offered? [Note: similar comments grouped together.]

“1L elective on Children's Law externship support - supplemental non-profits limited budget classes that emphasize policy issues and solutions;” “Speakers on child welfare - Trainings?;” “Clinic cases focused on child advocacy;” “Volunteer to pro-bono family or Children's Clinic; writing seminars for Children's Law (more often);” “Advocacy for foster parents.”

“Lots of contact between people working in this field and law students etc.”

“More integration and collaboration between the law school and local public schools.” “More chances to teach constitutional law to public schools - especially ones with majority of low income, minority; majority schools.”



"I'd love to see a poverty law and/or domestic violence clinic. I feel there should also be more student groups focused on providing legal services to underserved populations;" "Perhaps more situations where we actually help children in the community."

"Policy, lobbying, immigration;" "Advocacy classes - Children's Law specialty - Collaboration w/psychology department, education department."

"Paid summer internships with organizations that work in related areas of law;" "Fellowships: School-to-work positions: tuition reimbursements."

IV. Court, Legal and Community Service Stakeholder Sessions

Four sessions were held in different venues to gather information from the legal, judicial and community service provider communities. A total of 37 individuals participated. The results from these focus group discussions are summarized by category.

Disability Issues/Rights

There are significant issues regarding equal access to justice for those with disabilities and their caregivers. Children and youth are not receiving the services they need (special education, residential treatment, community-based services, etc.) resulting in increased disciplinary repercussions (detention, police interventions, etc.) and creating a school-to-prison pipeline. The situation is exacerbated in rural communities where support and treatment options are minimal if nonexistent.

The extent of research into the legal needs of those with disabilities is minimal. A broad survey of vulnerable families and individuals is needed to identify issues, as well as assess the level and type of services needed. That knowledge is critical for those working with disability advocacy groups in formulating policies, recommending programs, and informing the public. In addition to data, it is also important to present and personalize the stories of those with disabilities to add persuasiveness.

The Law School could provide opportunities for students to interact with disability organizations. Students could, for example, conduct research on why public schools have refused to follow corrective action, and could draft and file documents (like applications for benefits) for people with disabilities. In terms of coursework, law students should be exposed to applicable laws (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Rehabilitation Act, etc.), and participate in legal clinics. In addition, more career guidance on disability law should be provided to students.



Competency Skills / Training

To better serve communities across New Mexico, law students interested in pursuing public interest legal careers should be exposed to a variety of topics, experiences, and attitudes, including the following:

- Clinics focusing on children's law
- An appreciation/understanding of New Mexico's diversity
- Geo-mapping information and data to understand the state, especially regarding access to services, income inequality, etc.
- An appreciation/understanding of social justice issues
- Cross-disciplinary exposure to medical, behavioral health, educational, and psychological topics and issues affecting children and families
- Opportunities to work with community-based organizations serving children and families
- Opportunities for mentorship with attorneys in practice and relationship-building with service providers
- Policy work, legislative drafting, advocacy work in partnership with local organizations
- Negotiating and mediating skills
- Leadership development

Public Sector and Public Interest Positions

There was common agreement that public sector and public interest positions are underfunded and insufficient in number to meet the actual needs in the community. In fact, in some New Mexico communities, there is not even one lawyer providing civil legal services to the poor. These structural issues need to be addressed at the policy level to ensure that adequate funding is made available. In the interim, participants suggested that the SOL:

- establish scholarships, fellowships, tuition credits, and loan forgiveness for those individuals pursuing public interest positions so that they have incentives to pursue this type of career and little debt to pay off upon graduation. This is especially important for underserved communities.
- create externships in the public and public interest sectors to provide practical experience for law students as well as networking opportunities.
- enhance its relationships with the public and public interest sectors to create partnerships addressing career advisement, student placement for externships and post-graduate positions, cross-disciplinary training, public awareness of policy issues, which would help create a more robust public interest legal sector.
- address issues of undocumented law students (i.e., exclusion from funding opportunities). And,
- build capacity in non-profit organizations to provide supervision to new attorneys.



Raising Awareness and the Prestige of Children’s Law

There is a misconception that children’s law is more like social work and is not as challenging as other kinds of lawyering. To attract the best lawyers to this field, the legal community and the School of Law need to raise the profile of children’s law. Suggestions include:

- Adding questions on children’s law to the New Mexico Bar Exam.
- Targeting pro bono work around children’s law issues with support and training.
- Building public awareness of what the legal profession does for vulnerable children and families.
- Presenting on children’s law at Bench and Bar Conferences.
- Providing information to students that dispels myths about the impact of the work, describes how practitioners stay engaged and hopeful, and raises the importance of self-care for public interest attorneys.

V. Attitudinal Survey Responses

Stakeholder participants were asked to provide information via a written questionnaire. Following are the combined responses from all of the stakeholder sessions.

Participants were asked to rank the top three legal issues facing vulnerable children and families in their community. They were able to select from a menu of the following ten items or could add a separate issue if not listed.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Child Welfare (abuse and neglect)
 Education (i.e. special education, truancy, and school discipline including suspensions, expulsions, restraint and seclusion)
 Public benefits (i.e. TANF, SSI, WIC, etc.)
 Access to health and mental health care services
 Other:</p> | <p>Juvenile delinquency
 Housing and homelessness
 Domestic violence
 Child custody
 Third party custody (kinship/guardianship)
 Immigration</p> |
|---|--|

Using a weighted scoring matrix assigning 1 point for items ranked #1, ½ point for items ranked #2, and ⅓ point for items ranked #3, participants ranked the issues facing vulnerable children and families in New Mexico as follows. N = 98; scores are rounded off to whole numbers.

<u>ISSUE</u>	<u>RANKED SCORE</u>	
Child welfare	32	} Top 3 responses
Education	29	
Access to health and mental health services	23	

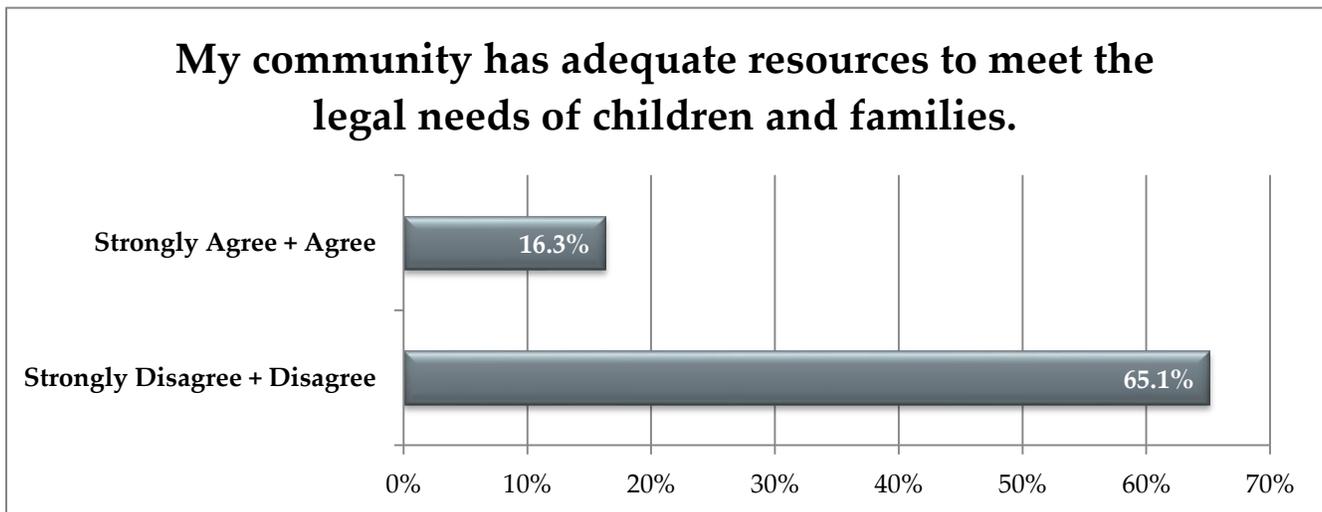


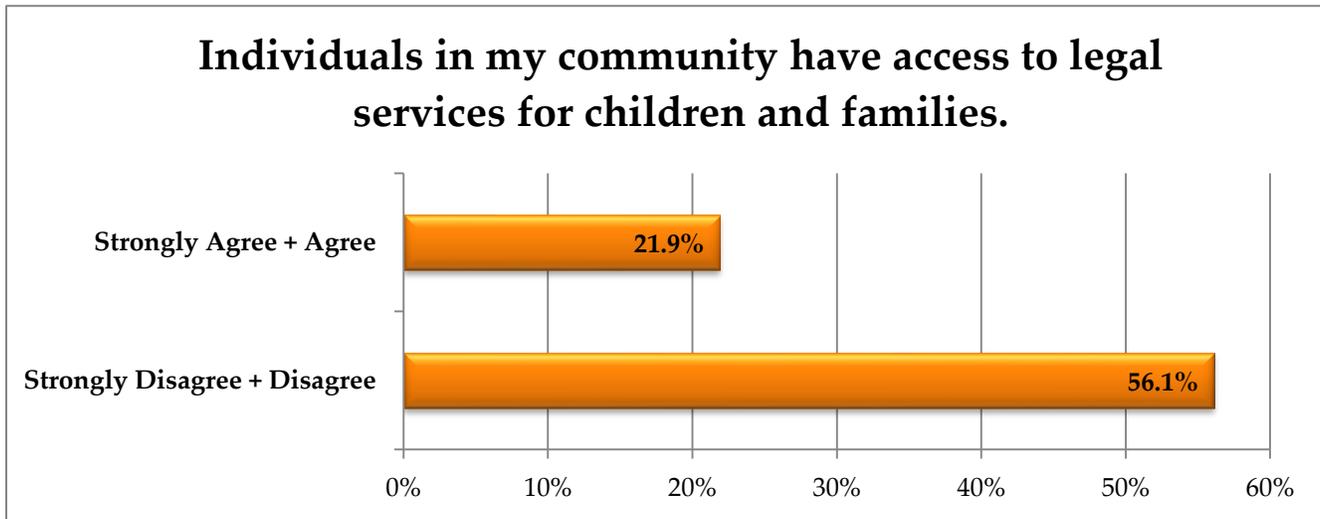
Domestic violence	17
Immigration	11
Juvenile delinquency	10
Housing and homelessness	9
Custody	4
Public Benefits	3
Third Party Custody	2

Other issues: four items were listed each with a ranking of 1:

- Family integrity/stability
- Poverty/persistent structural inequity
- Livable wages
- Language access

Another set of questions used a Likert scoring scheme to measure agreement/disagreement with a specific statement. Respondents could check one of the following responses: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, *strongly agree*, or *don’t know*. Only statements that received greater than 25 responses are displayed. For ease of illustration *strongly disagree/disagree* and *strongly agree/agree* are combined in the charts. Statements are not presented in any particular order and charts are located throughout this report. Note: totals may not equal 100% as “*don’t know*” or ‘did not answer’ responses are not shown unless “*don’t know*” is ≥ 20%.





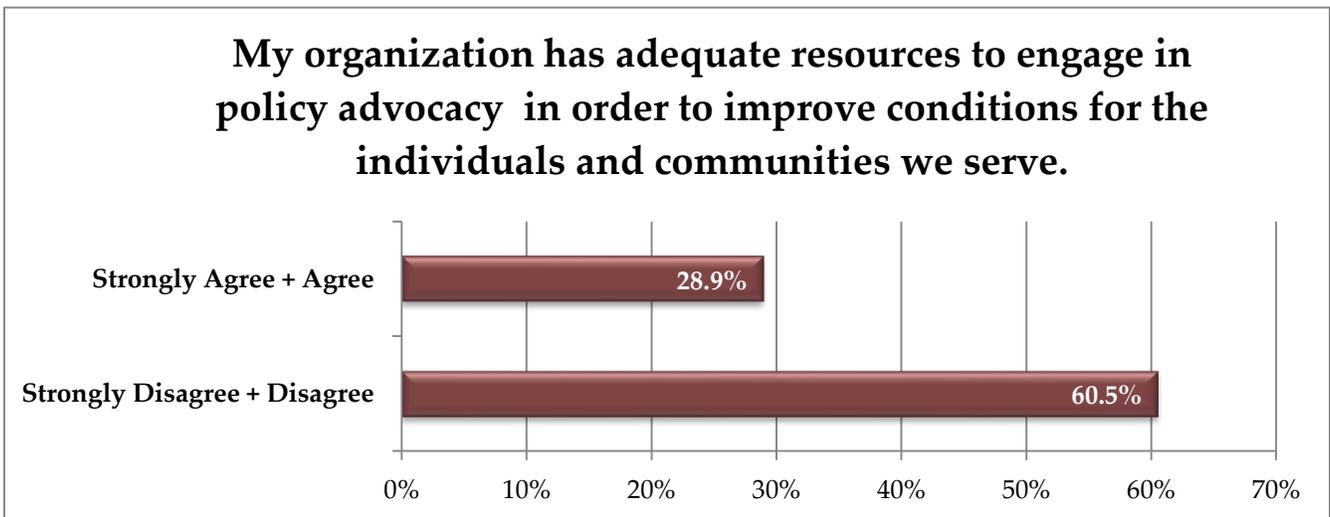
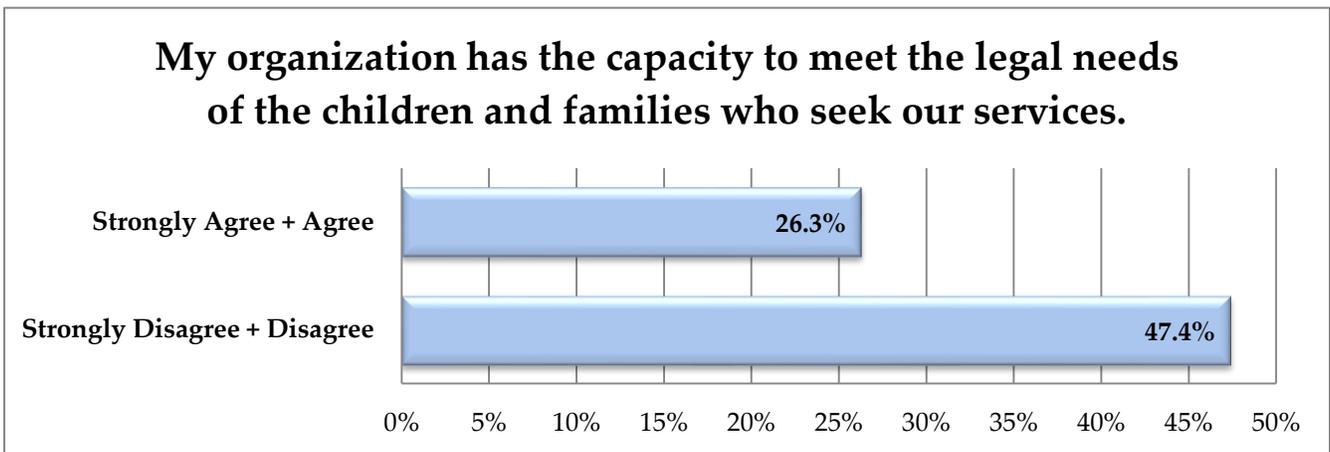
Other attitudinal survey questions were open ended. Following are the responses when participants were asked to list the most pressing policy issues confronting children and families.

What are the most significant policy issues facing vulnerable children and families in New Mexico today? [Note: responses are grouped and listed in order by most comments received; N = 55]

- ❖ **Access to medical and behavioral health services [14 comments]:** *“healthcare;” “Mental health is a huge issue for children, families, etc.,” “unavailable services to treat Mental Health;” “Additionally, substance abuse treatment is greatly lacking as well.”*
- ❖ **Education issues/access to services [14 comments]:** *“Access to equal education;” “Lack of a quality universal early childhood education;” “Special Education issues...”*
- ❖ **Poverty/hunger [13 comments]:** *“Income inequality; poverty;” “poverty resulting from lack of livable wage;” “Economic security of children’s families;” “hunger;” “access to healthy food”*
- ❖ **Lack of upstream resources (prevention, early intervention, etc.) /lack of will of policy makers to commit adequate resources [11 comments]:** *“Systems that essentially blame families for being poor, having mental illness, being undocumented, etc. Not only are the insufficient resources available but the resources themselves are unfriendly, insufficient and slow and very difficult to navigate;” “Lack of resources, both human and otherwise...”*
- ❖ **Immigration issues / rights [8 comments]:** *“Broken immigration system;” “Protecting vulnerable children of immigrant families who work in low wage jobs and face instability in regards to immigration system.”*



- ❖ **Child abuse / neglect [6 comments]:** “child abuse-neglect;” “*instability at home*”
- ❖ **Juvenile justice / delinquency [5 comments]:** “*Students going from school directly to juvenile jail*”
- ❖ **Domestic violence [3 comments]:** “*addressing family violence*”
- ❖ **State/tribal court coordination [2 comments]:** “*State-tribal court coordination - especially in the enforcement or orders on various jurisdictions.*”
- ❖ **Sentencing disparities [1 comment]**



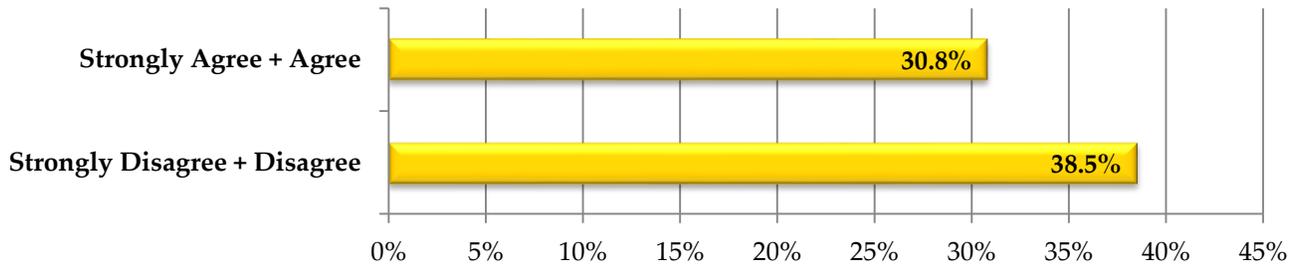


What legal issues related to children and families is your organization unable to address due to a lack of resources that you would like to address? [Note: responses are grouped and listed in order by most comments received; N = 29]

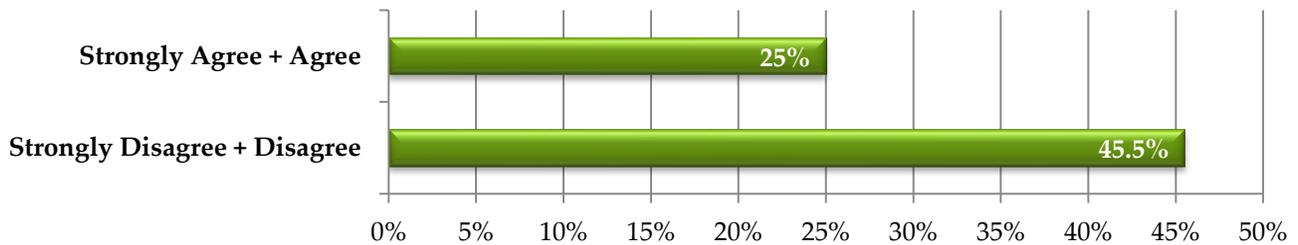
- ❖ **Need more lawyers with more training to meet needs [9 comments]:** *“Representation of agency and timely filing, unable to recruit attorneys;” “Not enough attorneys and legal staff, mostly as a result of low pay;” “Public Defender would like to be able to represent the children in other areas, such as school hearings. There are not enough Public Defenders and not enough money for more PD’s in order to do this.”*
- ❖ **Education issues [8 comments]:** *“We are most particularly unable to deal with special education problems across the state - e.g. districts not completing time Spec Ed assessments; PED not enforcing corrections in districts;” “Education issues - especially relating to BIA funded schools;” “school to jail pipeline issues”*
- ❖ **Guardianship/custody/foster care issues [4 comments]:** *“Not many cases that have adoption plans fast enough i.e., not able to fully adequately move children out of system & to permanency;” “...cannot help families get guardianship or custody to help stabilize kinship situations within a family that may or often helps prevent children from coming onto the custody of the state.”*
- ❖ **No time for advocacy/policy/planning/investigative work [5 comments]:** *“We need researchers who can help draft legislation or help us play defense to ward off bad public policy or support us and get engaged in glass tops advocacy work;” “Systemic advocacy;” “in depth investigative work.”*
- ❖ **Lack of child welfare services to refer children to [3 comments]:** *“...adequate community services and education;” “Lack of resources to refer them to.”*
- ❖ **Immigration policy issues/lack of services [3 comments]:** *“Our capacity to provide legal immigration services to all those in need. It is limited;” Policy issues for detained children in Artesia, NM; Policy issues for abused, neglected, or abandoned immigrant children; Policy issues for immigrant youth involved in the delinquency system; Policy issues for institutionalized immigrant youth; Policy issues for immigrant youth and their families with regard to special education services.”*
- ❖ **Public benefits / housing [2 comments]**
- ❖ **Youth legal issues [1 comment]:** *“Substantive legal issues for youth; especially sibling contact issues.”*



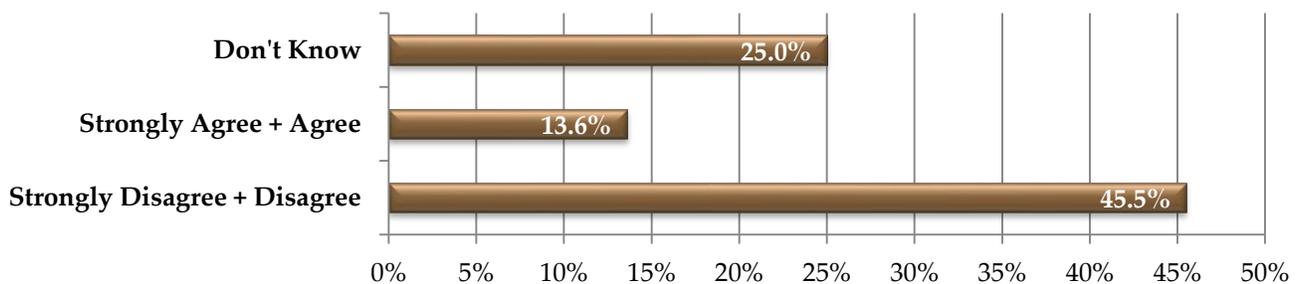
If I need information or guidance, I have access to attorneys with specialized training in legal issues affecting children and families.



Attorneys in my community have access and the opportunity to receive training necessary to fully meet the legal needs of children and families.



Individuals in my community who graduate from law school have access to public service attorney jobs serving children and families in my community.





What geographical regions and/or populations is your organization unable to serve that it would otherwise like to serve? [Note: responses are grouped and listed in order by most comments received; N = 26]

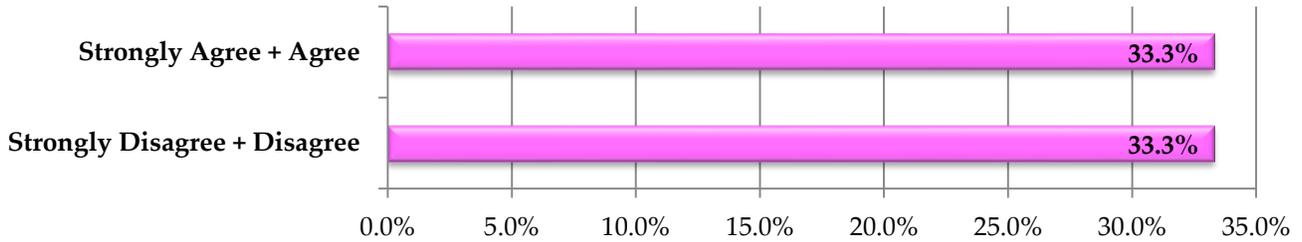
- ❖ **Families in rural areas:** 8 responses
- ❖ **Southern NM; SE NM; SW NM; Corners of state:** 2 responses each
- ❖ **Immigrants:** 2 responses
- ❖ **ABQ; Alamo; Carlsbad; Gallup; Hobbs; Los Lunas; outside Bernalillo County; Ramah; Rio Rancho; To'hajiilee; 10th Judicial District; 12th Judicial District:** 1 response each
- ❖ **Children; juveniles; marginally impoverished (don't qualify for free legal services, but can't afford to pay):** 1 response each.

What barriers do you see facing law students of color who wish to serve low income children and families in their postgraduate work? How can the School of Law encourage students of color to pursue law careers serving vulnerable children and families? [Note: responses are grouped and listed in order by most comments received; N = 30]

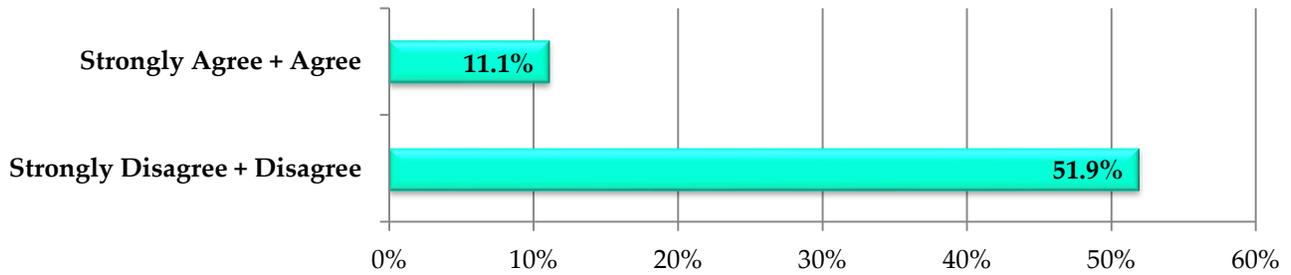
- ❖ **Student loan debt/loan forgiveness/scholarships [14 comments]:** *"It is difficult to attract students to these jobs when the students have massive debts from student loans, etc...;" "programs for student loan forgiveness;" "Scholarships/financial aid."*
- ❖ **Low paying field [13 comments]:** *"Difficult to make a living in this work;" "...need good paying jobs, with good benefits. Salary & benefits will attract and keep quality lawyers;" "Lack of career track employment opportunities;" "The issue I see as a barrier for all students is the ability to devote their time to this area while still being able to earn a living sufficient to support their own family."*
- ❖ **Training/paid internships, externships [8 comments]:** *"Very limited training to prepare lawyers for work specifically with vulnerable children & families;" "Offer classes in children's law taught by experienced practitioners;" "The opportunity for internship may be a barrier - provide opportunities for law students to work with non-profits."*
- ❖ **More emphasis on public service/mentoring [4 comments]:** *"Having mentors who are minorities encouraging students of color to apply/consider law school as an option;" "... my vision is classes that emphasize public service."*
- ❖ **Create a pipeline for high schools and undergraduate students [1 comment]**
- ❖ **Insufficient language skills (Spanish) [1 comment]**
- ❖ **Financial planning [1 comment]**



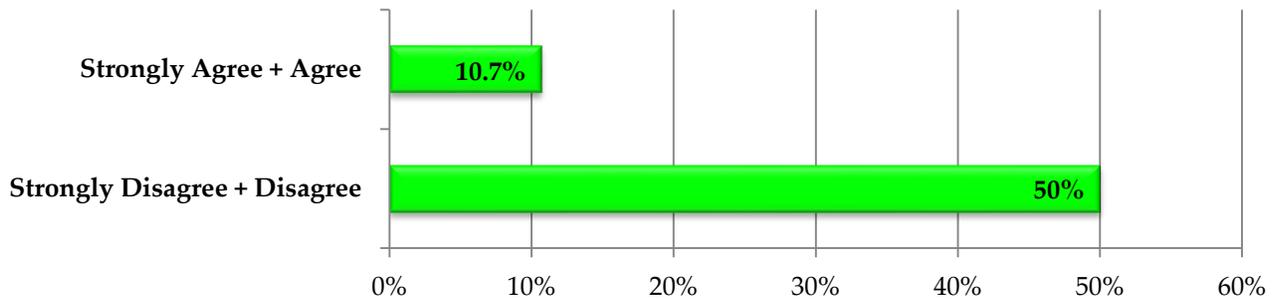
Individuals in my community have access to adequate financial support to attend institutions of higher education, including tribal or community colleges and universities.



Individuals in my community have access to information about careers in the legal profession, including attending law school.



Individuals in my community have access to adequate financial support to attend law school.





VI. Summary

A number of themes have emerged from our surveys and our numerous meetings with stakeholders, our advisory group, and many others. To begin, it seems clear that the most pressing policy areas for vulnerable children and families in New Mexico include:

- elimination of the school-to-prison pipeline,
- expansion of substance abuse and mental health services (especially in rural areas) and increased access to these services, and
- education/special education.

Participants believe that there are many opportunities for the SOL to collaborate with other University departments/entities and advocacy organizations on policy issues affecting vulnerable children and families.

Direct legal services and representation provide an important avenue for ongoing identification of pressing policy issues, as well as an important means of creating policy change by holding systems accountable and enforcing important rights.

Individuals and organizations from diverse communities are excited about this project and are enthusiastic about partnering with the SOL to improve conditions for vulnerable children in New Mexico.

SOL students have a very strong interest in public interest/social justice work (direct representation and policy advocacy) on behalf of vulnerable children and families, but need:

- a comprehensive child/family-focused curriculum that involves experiential learning opportunities and advocacy training that includes policy advocacy and direct representation,
- coordination of career services and academic advising,
- financial support (especially funding for summer positions, loan forgiveness, and fellowships or other opportunities when starting their careers).

New attorneys need enhanced skills for working across cultures and for working with groups/individuals with trauma (cross-cultural competency and trauma-informed practice needs to be part of the comprehensive curriculum). Likewise, new attorneys need greater skills to support tribal self-governance and sovereignty.

The SOL can engage in more activities that will create a pipeline of diverse students interested in working with vulnerable children and families by, for example:

Report on Children's Law and Racial Equity Stakeholder Meetings



- having a greater presence in tribal communities,
- introducing the idea of law school/legal careers on behalf of children and families much earlier in students' education (e.g. in high school), and
- drawing lessons from approaches used by the medical school.

Public interest organizations require bridge funding to incorporate new law graduates in their legal services and policy advocacy work (which is especially difficult to fund).