

Organizational History

Pegasus Legal Services for Children was founded in 2002 to address the unmet need for civil legal services for children and youth. Tara Ford and Liz McGrath were the co-founders and co-directors. In 2005, Pegasus received its first major grant from the New Mexico Civil Legal Services Fund which allowed it to expand its services to homeless and runaway youth as well as young parents. In 2006, Pegasus entered into a contract with the New Mexico Department of Aging & Long Term Services to create a statewide network of legal services for grandparents raising grandchildren and other kinship caregivers. That same year, the Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) asked Pegasus to submit a proposal to provide legal representation for children and youth in foster care in the 7th Judicial District. In 2017, Pegasus entered into another contract with the AOC to represent 40% of the children in foster care in Bernalillo County.

Over the years, Pegasus' co-directors and staff have been involved in numerous policy developments including:

- Several revisions to the Children's Code;
- A change in the model for representation of foster children that requires that children age 14 and older have a lawyer to represent their expressed wishes instead of a guardian ad litem to represent their best interests;
- An amendment to the Uniform Healthcare Decisions Act in 2009 which gave youth age fourteen and older who are homeless or are parents make their own healthcare decisions;
- Also in 2009, Pegasus got the law changed so that grandparents raising grandchildren could receive TANF;
- In 2011, Pegasus led the successful effort to ban corporal punishment in New Mexico's schools.

Currently, Pegasus provides direct representation to grandparents seeking guardianship of their grandchildren, young parents seeking to establish safe and stable homes for their children, families with children who require special education services, children and youth in foster care, and homeless and runaway youth. In addition to direct representation, Pegasus trains social workers, lawyers, juvenile probation officers and many others on the rights and legal needs of children and youth, as well as engaging in policy advocacy to improve the lives of all of New Mexico's children and youth.