

5.10 NEW MEXICO MOCK TRIAL

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

New Mexico Mock Trial is a part of a nationwide educational effort to help students develop the knowledge, skills and qualities of character they must have to become active and involved members of their communities. In New Mexico, the program has been administered since 1978 by the Center for Civic Values (formerly the New Mexico Bar Foundation), a nonprofit charitable organization providing education and resources for public participation in the law.

Mock Trial provides an intensive, hands-on experience in law and public policy, set in the context of the American judicial system. Each state develops a hypothetical "case" about issues of significant current interest, which teams of high school "attorneys" and "witnesses" spend several months preparing and then presenting to judges and "juries" of lawyers and community members at regional and state competitions. The state winners meet in the annual National Championships, held each year in a different state.

Mock Trial helps build civic knowledge, skills and character because as students prepare a case for trial, they not only become intimately familiar with competing public policy considerations surrounding a "hot" issue like domestic violence, racism and hate crimes, gang violence or AIDS; they also receive invaluable training in critical-thinking and expressive skills, while developing the confidence, self-esteem and teamwork abilities essential to effective citizenship.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Mock Trial is to teach:

- a. respect for the law and the legal system;
- b. the importance of civic involvement;
- c. critical-thinking, speaking, reading, writing, discussion and debate skills
- d. teamwork and cooperation; and,
- e. excellence, effort and individual achievement.

ORGANIZATION

1. **Registration** - Each September, all New Mexico high schools are mailed a program announcement and registration form for the current year's program. Each public and private high school in the state may register one team for the competition. Each registered school must have a teacher sponsor and may have one or more volunteer attorney coaches.
2. **Case Materials** - Each November all registered schools will receive case materials for the current year's program, consisting of a statement of facts; court pleadings; six witness statements; exhibits; legal authorities; rules of the competition, procedure and evidence; and, background educational and resource materials.
3. **Training** - Each November, an optional-one day training workshop is conducted for interested teacher sponsors, attorney coaches and student team members. The training includes instruction in teaching the trial process, use of the current year's case materials and the rules of the competition.

4. **Competition** - Each registered school participates in two rounds of regional competition, the third Saturday in February in Albuquerque, Las Cruces or Santa Fe, presenting each side of the case once before panels of volunteer judges and juries. The top 16 teams advance to state finals the third weekend of March in Albuquerque, where they will participate in four rounds of competition, presenting each side of the case at least once. The state champion represents New Mexico in the National Championships the second weekend of May.

5. **Team Composition** - Teams consist of a minimum of six and a maximum of twelve members assigned to roles representing attorneys and witnesses for the Prosecution/Plaintiff and Defense/Defendant sides of the problem.

6. **Team Presentation** - Teams must present both the Prosecution/Plaintiff and Defense/Defendant sides of the problem, using six team members (three attorneys and three witnesses) in each round.

7. **Team Duties** - Each team must call three witnesses, who will be examined by both sides. Each of the three attorneys shall conduct one direct examination and one cross-examination; in addition, one shall present the opening statement and another shall present the closing argument.