

**Melissa M. Lopez**, Executive Director/Attorney at Law at Estrella del Paso (formerly Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc. “DMRS”), was born and raised in El Paso. She graduated from Coronado High School, and later earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science with a Minor in Professional Writing and Rhetoric from the University of Texas at El Paso in May 2004. After graduating from UTEP, Ms. Lopez attended law school at the University of Texas School of Law graduating with a Doctor of Jurisprudence in May 2007. Upon graduating, Ms. Lopez returned to her native El Paso to work as a Staff Attorney at Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc. She has been a practicing immigration attorney ever since. In her early days at DMRS, she represented individuals in removal (deportation) proceedings, especially survivors of Domestic Violence. Ms. Lopez received the El Paso Bar Association’s Professionalism Award in 2011. In September 2012, she assumed the role of Interim Executive Director and, in February 2013, the Executive Director. During her tenure, the size of the Estrella del Paso staff has more than doubled. She is in high demand to present topics on immigration both locally and nationally, including presentations at the 2013 Spring Conference for the Dallas Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care, the 2016 Texas Poverty Law Conference, and the 2019 American Immigration Lawyers Association National Conference. She regularly presents at the Mexican Consulate, other community presentations, and many similar addresses. She hosted a weekly radio show, *Amor al Migrante*, which aired on the Bridge, El Paso’s Catholic Radio Station, for over two years. [www.estrelladelpaso.org](http://www.estrelladelpaso.org)

**Estrella del Paso (formerly Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc. “DMRS”)** is the largest provider of free immigration-related legal services in West Texas and New Mexico. Established in 1986, Estrella del Paso provides a comprehensive range of legal representation and advocacy services to the immigrant community. These services include providing representation in family-based immigration cases, to survivors of domestic violence, trafficking and other crimes, to individuals seeking United States Citizenship, to individuals before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) who are in removal (deportation) proceedings, and to unaccompanied minor children. In addition, Estrella del Paso provides Know-Your-Rights presentations to individuals, including unaccompanied minor children, detained in the local immigration detention centers and shelters. In addition to providing direct legal representation to its clients, Estrella del Paso’ staff attorneys and accredited representatives conduct outreach presentations to the immigrant community to educate the community as to the protections and benefits available to them under the law. By 1997, Estrella del Paso had served over 150,000 immigrants and their families in various stages of the immigration process. Currently, Estrella del Paso serves more than 30,000 individuals every year.