

# **Mental Health Response Advisory Committee (MHRAC) 2018 Annual Report and Cover Letter From Co-Chairs**

2018 was a whirlwind year, with the election of a new Mayor and his selection of an interim Chief of Police and new command staff within the police department, a new City Attorney and with the majority of the leadership positions within the city and the police department changing during this transition, it took the MHRAC a while to catch up and get things going in the right direction. Even with the transition, the MHRAC continues to be a group that still has two goals:

To give our police officers the tools they need to do their job safely and in doing their job provide the greatest benefit possible for our citizens and secondly to restore faith and trust for the citizens of Albuquerque in their city government and in their police department and its officers.

Reviewing the submitted reports from our sub-committees you will see some of the work that has been accomplished by the dedicated women and men who serve on the MHRAC and who serve on these sub-committees.

While at one time the city and its police department saw the Court Appointed Settlement Agreement (CASA) as just an administrative exercise, checking the blocks, so to speak, what the MHRAC experienced in 2018 was a concentrated effort by the groups within the department that were trying to change the environment and the mind set of officers as they responded to calls dealing with mental health issues and homelessness. This has been reflected in their policy writing, their training and their conversation and action with their peers and with the community. The MHRAC believes that there has been and we believe that there will continue to be, positive change in our police department.

One of those positive events that occurred in 2018 was the quarterly meetings with police department command staff and the Department of Justice to receive updates from the police department and to voice concerns about issues and that the MHRAC may have experienced. This allows us to address these issues with everyone in one meeting and hopefully resolve these issues with everyone in the room.

The MHRAC dealt with several issues in 2018 and most of these are outlined in our sub-committee annual reports, however there is one issue that is not reflected in the other reports. The current administration has identified and is addressing several issues within our city. They have worked closely with the county and with the state to deal with mental health crisis issues as it relates to how we as a city respond to those and how our police department deals with these. One of the areas that the MHRAC identified in their last report to the court was that the current administration is not communicating with the MHRAC and at the time of the report to the court, was not communicating with the police department as it related to changing policies and creating new policies to deal with homelessness in our city. It appeared that administration was developing policy in a vacuum, not asking for assistance and advice from the police department, from current service providers and also from the MHRAC. Policies were being discussed and written that as of the writing of this report, to my knowledge have not been shared with the MHRAC. There has been some discussion with the service providers concerning policy and procedure dealing with the issue of homelessness and I have been assured that the police department has been involved in some of these discussions, but as of yet, the MHRAC has not seen any of the proposed policies or been involved with the discussion to create these policies and procedures. There was even a job announcement for a lead resource officer that mentioned the "*homeless encampment protocol*," that the MHRAC was told after the release of the job announcement that the protocol was a work in progress and that this wording should not have been included in the announcement. While this issue causes the MHRAC concern, we feel that the city will realize the benefit of the process established in the CASA and that these new policies and procedures and the discussion of these will be done within the guidelines that we have seen success in over the past years.

In 2019 the MHRAC will continue to work within the framework of the CASA and will continue to work with the city and the police department in reviewing and recommending policy and training; in suggesting and providing leadership and guidance as it relates to the sharing of information and also making sure that the resources provided by the city and our police department will provide the information needed by not only our officers but also our community. We do see an increase in homeless initiatives with the city asking for twenty eight million to build an emergency shelter from the state and with the increase in housing vouchers, the homeless issue has become a priority with our Mayor and the city. We applaud these initiatives, and with that, not only offer our support but encourage the Mayor and his administration to take advantage of the expertise provided by the MHRAC and allow the framework and responsibilities of the MHRAC as outlined in the CASA, to assist in this process.

Rick Miera, Co-Chair

Danny Whatley, Co-Chair