

LWVCNM Observer Report Update for City of Albuquerque Mental Health Response Advisory Committee (MHRAC)

The MHRAC was established in 2015 under the terms of the Court Approved Settlement Agreement (CASA) between the U.S. Department of Justice and the City of Albuquerque. It is an independent body which was created to provide guidance to the City of Albuquerque Police Department (APD) to improve outcomes for “individuals with chronic homelessness and those perceived to be or actually suffering from mental illness”. The committee works collaboratively, seeking input from the city departments, service providers, and the community to identify and address issues that affect these populations. They also routinely review and provide feedback on APD staff training, policies, and procedures. They currently report regularly to the Independent Monitor for the CASA. Committee members include service providers, behavioral health professionals, attorneys, representatives from APD, ACS, CABQ Family and Community Services, members of community advocacy groups, and peer representatives. Open public meetings are held monthly (currently on Zoom). Meeting links, with the agenda and minutes are posted on the [MHRAC website](#).

Maxwell Kaufmann, an attorney with Disability Rights NM, and Rachel Biggs, Chief Strategy Officer for Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, have served as co-chairs since November 2021. They have been exploring options with city leadership for the MHRAC advisory committee to gain institutional status by means of a statute of ordinance, which will allow it to continue beyond the tenure of the CASA.

Regular updates from the Albuquerque Community Safety Department (ACS), the Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST), Albuquerque Family and Community Services, Gibson Health Hub and Gateway Center, and Albuquerque Fire and Rescue (AFR) are provided at MHRAC meetings. Matt Dietzel, Acting Commander of the APD Crisis Intervention Team, provides reports on APD responses to behavioral health incidents. Updates from the January and February meetings included:

- ACS Report: ACS is opening a new office at San Mateo and Kathryn. In January, they responded to 2000 calls. They are hiring additional staff to facilitate more extended coverage, and are now working to collaborate with the Bern Co Sheriff's department. (detailed info available on their website <https://www.cabq.gov/acs/transparency>)
- UNM has started construction for new Crisis Triage Center and Psychiatric Emergency Center, which is being developed in collaboration with Bern Co. They plan to begin community meetings to develop plans for services.
- Gibson Health Hub is providing emergency winter beds. In April, they plan to open 50 overnight beds, and a First Responder Receiving Area. The Sobering Center and Medical Respite are scheduled to open in the fall.
- APD presented information about performance metrics being used to report compliance to CASA. The independent monitor continues to track 172/276 elements.
- APD Commander Dietzel shared that the Crisis Intervention Unit staff have recently been working to file Firearm Protection Orders in accordance with the “red flag” law.