Justice Leadership Council

Of THE EL PASO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

The Justice Leadership Council is composed of El Paso County justice system leaders and community stakeholders who support appropriate systems of care for justice-involved individuals. The Council seeks to transform policies and procedures that address mental health-related issues in the criminal justice system.

Justice Leadership Council Chair: Anna Perez, Judge, 41st District Court
Justice Leadership Council Vice Chair: Chrystal Davis, COO, Emergence Health Network

Intercept 0 & 1 Opportunity for Change:

Increase availability of full-service diversion, observation, and step down options that include medical clearance.

Strategy I: Collaborate with Emergence Health Network to expand and enhance current service options available in the 1600 Montana extended observation unit, and as they build a new crisis stabilization center in East El Paso.

Strategy II: Explore collaborative partner options to scale full service outreach, diversion, observation and step down options within the El Paso County area.

Strategy IV: Expand and enhance hybrid diversion models (e.g., person charged with a criminal offense is transported under an Emergency Detention Order to a behavioral health hospital, the criminal charge is filed, and the person is transferred from the hospital to the jail for booking once they have been stabilized).

Intercept 2&3 Opportunity for Change:

Refine policies and practices for improved continuity and consistency in processing justice involved individuals with mental health and co-occurring conditions.

Strategy I: Maintain a list of attorneys with specialized mental health knowledge.

Strategy II: Implement a written procedure manual for the 16.22 process to improve continuity and consistency (e.g., refine the magistration and bond process to streamline cases with 16.22 reports, including earlier involvement of defense counsel.

Strategy III: Include jail data sets in the Paso del Norte Health Information Exchange (PHIX) to improve continuity of care for individuals with complex mental health and co-occurring disorders.

Strategy IV: Inventory and locally validate all the county's pretrial assessments for El Paso's cultural context.

Strategy V: Identify and implement a single point of assessment that feeds into all specialty court programs, streamlining the referral process.

Strategy VI: Ensure competency restoration is reserved for cases where there is a compelling interest in prosecution, and that stakeholders understand the purpose of competency restoration, as opposed to holistic mental health treatment.
Strategy VII: Exert judicial pressure for timely closure of cases where individuals are inpatients at the El Paso Psychiatric Center (EPPC) including implementing efficient transportation policies (e.g, Court staff prioritize cases where individuals are receiving EPPC inpatient care to prevent decompensation).

Intercept 4&5 Opportunity for Change:

Expand and enhance diversion, reentry and justice supported recovery options to encourage effective reintegration, reduce recidivism, improve individual opportunities for lasting recovery and promote community safety.

Strategy I: Improve communication about bond hearings between all offices, including Emergence, the county jail, and the Public Defender's Office, so that when an individual on a mental health bond is released from jail, all entities are aware of the individual's release plan and treatment plans.

Strategy II: Develop a model approach (e.g., Court Appointed Special Advocates) to assist individuals leaving the jail in navigating support for complex IDD, mental health and co-occurring conditions. For some individuals, jail has been the only place they have received any physical healthcare, mental healthcare, or substance use disorder treatment. In many cases navigating access to community-based health, mental health, and substance use services requires an advocate to help ensure success in the continuity of care.

Strategy II: Ensure both steps of the statutory process for court-ordered medications are appropriately implemented. Consider implementing a policy to file medication applications within 30 days of an individual's return from the El Paso Psychiatric Center.

Strategy IV: Use mental health bonds and other strategies to expand judges' discretion in setting bonds and bond conditions.

Strategy V: Improve residential support options to prevent individuals with IDD, or complex mental health and co-occurring conditions. (e.g., prevent recidivism due to lack of supported housing options by improving coordination and continuity of care and support with shelters that offer limited services for justice-involved individuals such as the Opportunity Center and Salvation Army).

Strategy VI: Increase workforce availability, especially credentialed providers; providers authorized for Medication Assisted Therapy, methadone, buprenorphine, suboxone; improve compensation and training availability for peer support specialists with lived experience; and expand reimbursement options for nontraditional programs and Medicaid covered services to support addiction recovery as part of a well-supported plan of care.

Progress Indicators

The Council will track relevant measures regarding data sharing among providers (at the individual case and system levels) and continuity of care between providers over time.

Consortium 2030

Consortium leaders formed a sound foundation in 2015. As a result, El Paso partners have successfully increased mental health and substance use resources for the region, made significant improvements in the behavioral health system of care, and set the stage for the next phase of improvements.
The Consortium helps to foster, strengthen, and properly recognize the integral partnerships that create change in the El Paso region. With the 2021 El Paso Behavioral Health System Assessment, the 2026 data update, and other related data and ongoing community feedback, El Paso County is prepared to take new steps toward achieving an ideal behavioral health system of care.

Get Involved:

The Consortium is committed to ongoing collaboration where all partners are welcome, empowered, and unified to achieve the vision. To learn more about the El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium, the 2026 Quantitative Data Summary, the 2021 El Paso County Behavioral Health System Assessment, or the Consortium Leadership Councils, contact Enrique Mata, Executive Director, Paso del Norte Center at Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, at emata@mmhpi.org, 915-253-0287 or Sandra Day, Associate Program Officer, Paso del Norte Health Foundation, at sday@pdnfoundation.org , 915-218-2617.

Please Note: The El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium does not provide health services of any type, such as mental health, substance abuse, or other services. The following are resources to help those seeking behavioral health services:
2-1-1 El Paso Resource Referral System - Dial 211
24-Hour Mental Health Crisis and Suicide Prevention Line – Call or Text 9-8-8 or chat at https://988lifeline.org/