



# News Release

Date: June 29, 2023

Contact: Ida Ortegon – 915-218-2613

E-mail: [iortegon@pdnfoundation.org](mailto:iortegon@pdnfoundation.org)

## **El Paso County Sheriff Wiles Honored by El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium**

*Awarded the Consortium Mental Health Champion Award*

EL PASO – El Paso County Sheriff Richard Wiles was honored today with the Consortium Mental Health Champion Award for his significant contributions to regional mental healthcare by the El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium (Consortium). The award was presented during the Consortium’s General Meeting, a gathering of dozens of key area leaders, stakeholders, and community advocates hosted by the Paso del Norte (PdN) Center at Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute and Paso del Norte Health Foundation (Health Foundation).

Sheriff Wiles was recognized by Tracy J. Yellen, CEO of the Health Foundation, Consortium Chair, and a Leadership cabinet member of the PdN Center, as well as U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar, who has worked closely with Sheriff Wiles during her previous role as El Paso County Judge.

“Sheriff Wiles has long been a champion for mental health who, from the inception of the El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium almost 10 years ago, assembled the Justice Leadership Council to implement policy and practice improvements,” said Congresswoman Escobar. “I am very grateful to thoughtful leaders like Sheriff Wiles, who work tirelessly to solve some of the most complex behavioral health challenges in our community.”

The June meeting emphasized the efforts of the Justice Leadership Council partners to improve crisis response, diversion, and reentry support.

“Our community continues to make progress for individuals who need timely care and support to prevent them from experiencing a crisis that involves the justice system,” said Tracy J. Yellen, CEO of the Paso del Norte Health Foundation and Chair of the El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium. “We are working to address mental health and addiction issues earlier, with an emphasis on prevention.”

The meeting also recognized the efforts of the Consortium’s Legislative Task Force, which during the 88th Legislature, helped secure \$50 million dollars for a redesign of the El Paso Psychiatric Center State Hospital System to better serve children, adolescents, adults, and forensic patients in the region. Expanding the State Hospital, which is projected to require double its capacity within the next decade, has been a goal of the Consortium since it was formed 10 years ago.

“We still have work to do, but the community-wide improvements that are being implemented will, over time, create a lasting community culture of support and acceptance,” said Sharon Butterworth, Mental Health Advocate and Chair of the Paso del Norte Center Leadership Cabinet. “We are working to eliminate stigma and negative bias surrounding mental illness and addiction, and that requires education and collaboration at all levels.”

The Consortium works with existing groups, such as the El Paso Jail Diversion Committee, and new groups, such as the County’s Justice Leadership Coordinating Committee and the Reentry Task Force, to ensure a unified approach to divert individuals from justice system involvement with the ultimate goal of a lasting recovery and improved quality of life for those with a mental health or addiction condition.

###

#### **About the Paso del Norte Health Foundation**

The Paso del Norte Health Foundation (Health Foundation) leads, leverages, and invests in initiatives, programs, and policies to promote health and prevent disease in the Paso del Norte region. The Health Foundation was established in 1995 from the sale of Providence Memorial Hospital to Tenet Healthcare Corporation. The Health Foundation seeks to ensure that the people living in far west Texas, southern New Mexico, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico have the knowledge, resources, and skills to lead healthy lives. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation is a supporting organization of the Paso del Norte Community Foundation. For more information, visit [www.pdnhf.org](http://www.pdnhf.org).

#### **About The El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium**

The El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium (Consortium) was established to examine the El Paso community behavioral health system in preparation for future service needs and funding trends. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation played a key role in transitioning the Consortium into an effective system of care collaborative. The working vision of the Consortium is for El Paso to achieve the finest behavioral health system in the country. The Consortium defines the behavioral health system as inclusive of treatment and health promotion services for mental health, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and other related disorders, including substance abuse.

#### **About the Paso del Norte Center at Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute**

Established with a \$1.5 million three-year grant from Paso del Norte Health Foundation, The Paso del Norte Center works as part of the Meadows Institute, providing trusted policy and program support to cultivate collaboration and create lasting improvements so that mental health and emotional well-being\* services and support are available where and when they are needed.

#### **About Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute**

Launched in 2014, the Meadows Institute helps legislators, state officials, members of the judiciary, and local, state, and national leaders identify equitable systemic solutions to mental health needs and has become Texas's most trusted source for data-driven mental health policy. The Meadows Institute is making a significant impact in multiple areas, helping Texas and national leaders shift the focus of new investments toward early intervention, addressing the mental health crisis in our jails and emergency rooms, and helping all people with mental health needs recover and be well. Learn more at <https://mmhpi.org>.