

A NEWSLETTER OF THE POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM



## PERF's Town Hall Meeting in Miami Beach

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### **Robert White Receives the PERF Leadership Award**

See PERF's video of Chief White receiving the Leadership Award at https://www.policeforum.org/announcements.

RETIRED DENVER POLICE CHIEF Robert "R.C." White was chosen to receive the 2019 Leadership Award at PERF's Annual Meeting in Miami Beach. Prior to his almost seven years in Denver, Chief White led the Louisville Metro Police Department and the Greensboro, NC Police Department. He began his career with the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, where he attained the rank of Assistant Chief, and he also served as the Director of Public Safety for the District of Columbia Housing Authority. From 2015-2018, Chief White served on



Former Denver Police Chief Robert C. White receives PERF's 2019 Leadership Award from PERF President Scott Thomson.

PERF's Board of Directors.

In honoring Chief White, PERF's Board of Directors recognized his career choice of seeking out challenging positions and serving as a "transformative change agent" in multiple agencies that needed reforms, rather than staying in one city for his entire career. In Denver, where he was the first chief hired from outside the department in decades, Chief White rewrote the department's use-of-force policy and changed scheduling rules and district boundaries to put more officers

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### Tucson Deputy Chief Chad Kasmar Honored with the Gary Hayes Memorial Award

See PERF's video of Chief Kasmar receiving the Hayes Award at https://www.policeforum.org/announcements.

THE GARY P. HAYES AWARD WAS presented to Tucson Deputy Chief of Police Chad Kasmar at the Annual Meeting in Miami Beach. The award, named for PERF's first executive director, is given annually to an emerging police leader in the middle of his or her career who has created innovative ways of achieving goals.

Deputy Chief Kasmar rose through the ranks with the Tucson Police Department, serving in a wide range of roles including Chief of Staff and commanding the agency's Office of Professional



Tucson Deputy Police Chief Chad Kasmar recives the Hayes Award from PERF President Scott Thomson.

Standards. He led the implementation of the Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB), which analyzes incidents not for the purpose of assigning blame, but rather to identify ways in which policies, training, equipment, or programs can be changed to achieve better outcomes in the future.

"The CIRB process centers on the department's ability to be nimbler and more responsive in addressing problem areas that needed to be changed to improve officer safety, address procedural

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# **Chiefs and Sheriffs Discuss Alternative Responses to Individuals in Crisis**

By James McGinty

A PERF PANEL DISCUSSION AT THE ANNUAL Meeting in Miami Beach explored innovative ways of responding to individuals experiencing a crisis. The panel was moderated by Lynn Overmann, Vice President of Criminal Justice at Arnold Ventures, and included Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, Harris County, Texas Sheriff Ed Gonzalez, and Tucson Police Chief Chris Magnus.

Ms. Overmann described the different types of alternative responses she has encountered through her work

Ms. Overmann echoed that sentiment. "These issues are public health issues," she said, "and yet they've fallen to law enforcement because law enforcement is the one agency that has to respond when people ask for help."

Pima County, Arizona, which includes the city of Tucson, and Harris County, which includes the city of Houston, have been at the forefront of rethinking the response to people experiencing mental health and/or addiction crises.





Tucson Police Chief Chris Magnus

with Arnold Ventures. "First, municipalities are looking at ways to divert 911 calls that don't require a law enforcement response. Next, agencies are using a range of responses, including Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) and co-response models, to keep responders and the public safe when answering these calls. Finally, communities are establishing alternative facilities, like crisis response centers, where they can take people to get help."

Sheriff Gonzalez said there are reasons why police chiefs and sheriffs are looking for alternative responses. "Law enforcement today is at the forefront of three key issues: mental illness, addiction, and poverty," Sheriff Gonzalez said. "We should have a role in those issues, but we should not be at the forefront. I operate the third-largest jail system in the country, and somebody who has dementia and was trespassing somewhere doesn't need to be in a county jail. Somebody with a history of mental illness who commits a misdemeanor offense should be getting mental health assistance somewhere other than a jail."

### Pima County, Arizona: "Possibly the Best System in the Country"

Chief Magnus offered details about the crisis response system in Pima County, which Ms. Overmann called "possibly the best system in the country."

#### **Tucson Police Chief Chris Magnus:**

Crisis Response Center<sup>1</sup>: Several years before I arrived in Tucson, the county took a terrible crisis and turned it into a better system of resources. In 2008, Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and 18 other people were shot at an event in Tucson. The shooter was a troubled young man who had had previous contacts with the police, and the response from the community was, "Why didn't somebody do something about that?"

<sup>1.</sup> For additional information, see the Banner Health webpage, "Banner-University Medicine Crisis Response Center." https://www.bannerhealth.com/locations/tucson/banner-university-medicine-crisis-response-center-district



In response, our county, with the overwhelming support of voters, funded a crisis response center, known as the CRC. The concept behind the CRC is that there's no wrong door. Too often police officers bring a person in crisis to a facility and are told, "This is the wrong door, we can't help you, and you have to take them someplace else." At the CRC, there is no wrong door. They'll assist an individual whether they have a substance abuse issue, are drunk, or have a mental health issue. The police officer isn't responsible for identifying the underlying problem in order to get that person help.

Police can bring someone in who needs to be evaluated, and the officers are back on the street within 10 minutes. The CRC just needs the basic information from the police officers, and they take it from there.

Mental Health Support Team<sup>2</sup>: We also wanted to build a team within the police department to identify the potentially problematic people who may fly under the radar – until they come to our attention in the worst possible way. To do that, we established our Mental Health Support Team (MHST).

The MHST has about a dozen officers. They don't go out on every call that involves someone with a mental health crisis. They are specialists who handle all the court orders for involuntary evaluations or hospitalizations. For us, that could be around 700 to 900 petitions per year. They take pride in the fact that they can convince anyone to come with them voluntarily to get care. And they have convinced everybody: they have zero uses of force over the past five years when taking people in to be evaluated. These are very challenging situations, and in previous places I've worked, I've seen how easy it is for these situations to go south.

The MHST also serves as the specialists in dealing with problem individuals. Beat officers refer people they

interact with repeatedly to the MHST. A MHST team member then makes contact with that person and almost always convinces him or her to be evaluated and get help. The team may also get referrals from families who want to help a loved one but don't know how to do it.

Measuring Success: For a long time in policing, it's been considered a success if you can find somebody with a small amount of drugs and arrest them, because it's a felony. Our challenge now is to change that culture and rethink what success looks like.

I think it has to start all the way back at the academy. We need to start thinking about incorporating a discussion about what success looks like into the academy. In Tucson we try to do this by asking our recruits to think of people in their own families who have mental health or addiction problems. Eventually you get them to understand that when you're dealing with these types of problems, the solution is not jail. The solution is connecting people with services.

We've also implemented pre-arrest diversion for small amounts of any kind of drug. We are promoting the idea that diverting people is a measure of success. We can't mandate that our officers use diversion, so we want to make it as easy as possible for the officer to take advantage of that option. But the culture can be a bigger obstacle than the actual mechanisms of the program.

We thought initially that our biggest resistance to pre-arrest diversion would be the most senior officers. But we found that they said, "We've been arresting the same people over and over and taking them to jail, and they haven't changed their behavior. Maybe it's time to do something different." And those people become the most effective advocates for this program.

### Lynn Overmann, Vice President of Criminal Justice at Arnold Ventures:

I find two things really compelling about this Tucson model. One is that law enforcement is the primary client for this system. It was constructed with an understanding of what was being asked of law enforcement, and it's trying to take some of that burden off of them. The goal is to use law enforcement agencies the way they should be used.

The other aspect I like is that Tucson is treating people's underlying issues in the least restrictive setting possible, which is going to make it more likely that they're actually going to get effective treatment. So Tucson is both shifting the burden off law enforcement, and moving the

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<sup>2.</sup> City of Tucson, "Mental Health Support Team." <a href="https://www.tucsonaz.gov/">https://www.tucsonaz.gov/</a> police/mental-health-support-team-mhst

# Police Chiefs Discuss Body-Worn Camera Use By Officers on Federal Task Forces

AT PERF'S TOWN HALL MEETING IN MIAMI BEACH, several participants raised objections to federal agencies' restrictions on the use of body-worn cameras by local law enforcement officers who are participating in federal task forces. Some local agencies, like the Austin Police Department, are allowing their officers to take part in the task forces without cameras, while other agencies, including the St. Paul Police Department and Atlanta Police Department, are removing their officers from federal task forces until this issue is resolved. Police chiefs and the acting director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) discussed

Tom Jackman, a Washington Post reporter who attended the Town Hall Meeting, wrote a story about the issue of federal task forces and body-worn cameras on June 14.3

this issue.

St. Paul Police Chief
Todd Axtell: We all appreciate the long-term relationships we have with our federal partners. But when something controversial happens in the field, we know that we're not going to be able to stand in front of our community and say, "Federal regulations don't

allow our officers to wear body-worn cameras." Our community expects nothing less than for our officers to be transparent and wear their body-worn cameras when our policy demands that they do. And if we do have a controversial shooting incident without body-worn camera footage, I'm going to be the one taking questions from the community and the news media about it, not our federal partners.

In St. Paul, we've sent a letter to the heads of the federal agencies saying that our body-worn camera policies, which are based on community standards and expectations,

will be followed. We're having conversations with the U.S. Department of Justice about this issue, but for now, some of our officers on federal task forces have been sidelined a bit as a result of this hard line that we've taken. I ask that all of us take this hard line together to pressure the federal agencies to join us in practicing 21st century policing.

Atlanta Police Chief Erika Shields: After the riots in Ferguson, the President's report on 21st century policing<sup>4</sup> emphasized body-worn cameras, and they were right to do so. And the feds are the ones giving us tens of millions of





**LEFT:** St. Paul, MN Police Chief Todd Axtell **ABOVE:** Atlanta Police Chief Erika Shields

dollars in grants for body-worn cameras because it's that important.

I'm not asking to film the conversations in the car or undercover work, and I'm not asking the federal people on task forces to wear cameras. I'm just asking for our people to be allowed to wear them when they're kicking down the door of someone's house and there could be an officer-involved shooting.

I want to partner with the feds. But given this choice, we are going to leave the task forces. We've been pulling our folks out last week and this week. Because nothing the >> continued on page 9

<sup>3. &</sup>quot;Federal task forces ban body cameras, so Atlanta police pull out. Others may follow." *The Washington Post*, June 14, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/crime-law/2019/06/14/federal-task-forces-ban-body-cameras-so-atlanta-police-pull-out-others-may-follow/?utm\_term=.78c3dcf35712

<sup>4.</sup> https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce\_finalreport.pdf

# Chiefs Debate How to Handle Officers With Credibility Issues

By James McGinty

A POLICE OFFICER MUST maintain his or her credibility to properly do the job. When officers are known to have lied, they cannot be effective witnesses in court, because defense attorneys will challenge their truthfulness. So police chiefs are faced with the question of what to do with officers who lie.

Participants at PERF's Town Hall Meeting in Miami Beach discussed their policies on truthfulness and whether employees can recover from certain types of credibility issues.



**ABOVE:** Arlington, TX Police Chief Will Johnson **RIGHT:** Winston-Salem, NC Police Chief Catrina Thompson



Winston-Salem, NC Po-

**lice Chief Catrina Thompson:** For Winston-Salem, violating truthfulness is the unforgivable sin. All our employees, both sworn and non-sworn, know that. We will not maintain an employee who has a sustained violation for being untruthful. Those violations have to be shared with the district attorney's office, who has to share that with the defense attorney. And if I can't use you in court, I can't use you.

Arlington, TX Police Chief Will Johnson: We use two distinct charges in Arlington. If the officer lies about something that's not material – something like calling in sick when they really weren't – that's a recoverable offense. They'll be disciplined, but it doesn't carry the same weight as a perjury offense or something that would impede an investigation. Those types of violations aren't recoverable.

Nashville Police Chief Steve Anderson: We adopted a hard line on truthfulness about 15 years ago, and fortunately we've only had a few instances where this was an issue. In those cases, our civil service commission has generally sided with the department. We did have one notable exception a couple years ago when an officer lied on the witness stand. After the civil service commission sided with the officer, we had him taking reports over the phone because we couldn't have him on the street. He eventually resigned.

Buffalo Deputy Police Commissioner Joe Gramaglia: Over the years, we had heard that the district attorney's office would refuse to call on certain officers for credibility issues. After a previous police commissioner >> continued on page 11





FAR LEFT: Nashville Police Chief Steve Anderson LEFT: Buffalo, NY Deputy Police Chief Joseph Gramaglia

### **Police Executives Work to Prevent Officer Suicides**

THE TOWN HALL MEETING FEATURED A FOLLOW-up conversation from a full-day symposium on preventing suicides among police officers, which was held by PERF and the New York City Police Department in April. More than 300 law enforcement officials and other subject matter experts attended the conference at NYPD Headquarters, and it was covered in the Washington Post<sup>5</sup> and ABC News<sup>6</sup>. PERF will soon publish a full report on this topic,





with 10 recommendations for actions that police and sheriffs' departments can take.

The NYPD meeting and Town Hall Meeting included discussion of issues such as whether officers who are experiencing mental health issues should be reassigned to desk jobs and asked to surrender their firearms temporarily. Traditionally, any question of an officer giving up his or her firearm is very difficult, because a firearm is considered an essential part of the job, and taking an officer's gun is seen as a disciplinary action. But research clearly shows that the presence of a firearm is a top risk factor for suicide deaths. Approximately 90 percent of suicides attempted with a gun end in death (compared to only 10 percent of suicides attempted by all other means combined). More than half of all suicides are committed with a firearm.<sup>7</sup>

A major issue is how to reduce the stigma in policing, as well as in society generally, of seeking mental health

care. It is essential that officers' confidentiality be respected regarding their use of mental health resources.

Clearwater, FL Police Chief Dan Slaughter: One of my biggest takeaways from the PERF/NYPD conference was the need to provide your employees with resources outside your department. Employees may not take advantage of internal resources because there can be a stigma that utilizing those services will impact their careers. So

I left that meeting determined to provide more resources outside the department and make sure the employees know about them.

I also think there's an opportunity to teach our employees' families to look out for potential signs of trouble. They see people outside of work, so they might see signs that we miss.

Los Angeles Police Chief Michel Moore: We have a full-time police psychologist, and I think it's very beneficial to have a psychologist who has worked with police and their families and

knows the challenges they face.

Over the last 30 years, I've seen people become much more willing to talk with psychologists and seek help. LAPD has lost 36 of our people to suicide over the past 20 years, compared to 16 in the line of duty. We're now at 20 months without a suicide. Last year we had a suicide awareness effort, including a "Walk for Life" with family members of people who have died by suicide.

Austin, TX Police Chief Brian Manley: When I took over as chief, I created a health and wellness bureau, which is run by our senior chaplain and sits at the highest level of the organizational chart. We're building a culture where people are willing to raise their hands and say, "I need help."

We had a recent sign of success. One of our officers who has been battling PTSD for over a year just put out a Facebook post describing what his life has been like for the past year. He was very complimentary about the program we've put in place to help officers. But he also raised an issue about the worker's compensation provider denying his claims.

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<sup>5. &</sup>quot;Talking openly about police suicide is an important and long-overdue first step." *The Washington Post*, April 4, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/talking-openly-about-police-suicide-is-an-important-and-long-overdue-first-step/2019/04/04/a2c7605a·5635·11e9·814f-e2f46684196e\_story.html

<sup>6. &</sup>quot;'Never seen it as bad as it is now': Law enforcement brass shine spotlight on police suicides." ABC News, April 6, 2019. https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/bad-now-law-enforcement-brass-shine-spotlight-police/story?id=62136841

<sup>7.</sup> See Reducing Gun Violence: What Works, and What Can Be Done Now. PERF, 2019. pp 16–18. https://www.policeforum.org/assets/reducinggunviolence.pdf

# PERF Releases "Chapter 2" Report on Planning for Life After Retirement

IN A SPECIAL PRESENTATION AT THE ANNUAL Meeting, PERF released the latest report from the Critical Issues in Policing series, *Chapter 2: How Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Are Finding Meaning and Purpose in the Next Stage of Their Careers.* This book, which was mailed to all PERF members, provides guidance on how police executives can plan for a happy, productive, and fulfilling life after retiring from their initial career in policing.

Many books have been written about retirement, but PERF is not aware of any books that focus on the unique aspects of careers in policing, such as the traditional 30-year pension program that can result in chiefs "retiring" while they are still in their 50s. Life expectancy has increased substantially in recent decades. Today, on average a 65-year-old person can expect to live another 19 years. While some police chiefs retire to a traditional life of leisure, many find that they do not wish to fully retire while they're still in their 50s or 60s. They want to stay "in the game" and relevant. So they create a "Chapter 2" in their careers.

PERF's new book includes comments from nearly 100 PERF members about lessons they've learned and the wide range of activities they are pursuing. Some retired chiefs have become consultants, advising police agencies or testifying in court cases. Others teach in colleges or police academies. Some have found positions in national organizations that have connections to policing, or in entirely different fields in which they have an interest. Some



have gone to the private sector, working for companies that sell police-related products. Some have created their own businesses. Some have found it fulfilling to serve as interim police chief for a year or less in multiple departments.

Many of these police executives said they enjoy searching for the perfect mix of part-time work and leisure activities.

The "Chapter 2" report is available at https://www.policeforum.org/chapter2.

In addition, PERF has released four brief videos, featuring police chiefs and sheriffs discussing their own "Chapter 2" experiences. To see these videos, click on each title below, or go to the Chapter 2 link shown above.

- · Plan Early for Your Chapter 2
- · New Work, New Challenges
- Life After the Badge
- · Finding What's Right for You

PERF is grateful to the Motorola Solutions Foundation for supporting the "Chapter 2" project, book, and videos.

#### >> from Working to Prevent Officer Suicides on page 6

And I think that's the next step here. We're all acknowledging that this career creates a lot of stress and can lead to PTSD, but it's not necessarily acknowledged by our worker's compensation providers and the insurance industry. I think advocating for our officers' care beyond their employment with the organization is the next battlefield on this issue.

ATF Acting Director Regina Lombardo: We recently put a video clip on our internal site to let people know that if they're struggling, their security clearance will not be jeopardized if they come forward. We've been trying to hammer that message home, because it can be an obstacle to people seeking help. We've been working to get these issues out in the open and taking a more holistic



ATF Acting Director Regina Lombardo

approach to taking care of our employees for many years. We know officers may struggle after being involved in shootings or difficult undercover situations, and we're planning to introduce a new wellness program in the next couple months.

## Thanks to Scott Thomson and Chris Magnus For Their Service on the PERF Board

CAMDEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CHIEF SCOTT Thomson and Tucson, Arizona Chief Chris Magnus are both ending their second two-year terms in their current positions on the PERF Board of Directors this month. Chief Thomson has now served on the Board for seven years, the first three as Secretary and the last four as President.

"It's been a tremendous honor for me," Chief Thomson said at the Annual Meeting. "Thank you very much for giving me the privilege of being in this position. It's going to be an emotional time not to be in this role anymore, but I look forward to continuing to learn and trying to contribute to the profession." Chief Thomson has

announced he will be retiring from the Camden County Police Department at the end of August.

Chief Magnus has been a national leader on issues in policing such as immigration policies, building community trust, and the role of police in responding to the opioid addiction crisis. He also has served on PERF's Research Advisory Board, a panel of academic researchers and police practitioners who identify important research topics to pursue and guide PERF's research programs.

PERF is grateful to Chief Thomson and Chief Magnus for the wisdom and guidance they provided while serving as board members, and looks forward to their continued contributions to the organization as members.



PERF Board of Directors members at the Town Hall Meeting included Clearwater, FL Chief Dan Slaughter; Volusia County, FL Sheriff Michael Chitwood; Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross; NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill, and Camden County, NJ Chief Scott Thomson. (Board member Chris Magnus, Chief of Police in Tucson, was ill on the first day of PERF's Annual Meeting and could not attend the Town Hall.)

#### >> from Robert White Receives the PERF Leadership Award on page 1

on the street proactively preventing crime. In Louisville, he took over the agency as the city and county governments were merging and oversaw the process of combining two police departments into one, and he worked to rebuild community trust in the wake of controversial uses of force that had occurred before he arrived there.

"There are very few who are on the Mount Rushmore of American policing, but R.C. is certainly one of them,"

PERF President Scott Thomson said in presenting the award to Chief White.

"This is the result of a lot of mentors I had along the way and the thousands of men and women I've been able to work with over my career," Chief White said in accepting the award. "They helped me engage with the communities we served, and as a result those communities are safer places today."

#### >> from Body-Worn Camera Use on page 4

task forces can provide to us is more important than what we owe to our communities.

Austin, TX Police Chief Brian Manley: When you're driving around doing surveillance and having conversations that may be at the Secret or even the Top Secret level, you don't need to have body cameras running. But when you're going to do a pre-planned, tactical operation, why wouldn't you want the officers to use body-worn cameras? If we serve a search warrant and something happens, we have that independent view. The federal agencies have told us that one of their concerns is that they don't control the video, so the local agency's video release policy would determine whether that video is released. And they worry that people may be able to identify their agents on that video. But I think we can work through those issues.

Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo: We've told the FBI, DOJ, and our other federal partners that we're going to pull our people out of federal task forces if we don't find a solution. We need body-worn cameras. We know that most search warrants go well, but without body-worn cameras it's going to be a "he-said, she-said" situation when they don't go well.

The objections we hear from the feds are about national security and undercover issues. But we have ways of protecting those interests when releasing these videos while still being transparent. I think the lawyers at the Department of Justice are holding this up, and they don't have to respond to a community.

All we want is to have the cameras rolling from when we go through the door until we secure the scene. That can't be too much to ask after the federal government has



Austin, TX Police Chief Brian Manley

given tens of millions to promote transparency and accountability through body-worn cameras.

ATF Acting Director Regina Lombardo: The Department of Justice currently doesn't have a universal mandatory policy on this. DOJ generally allows federal agencies latitude to create policies that work best for their organization. Every federal agency has a unique job to do, so the issues may be a little different in each agency.

ATF currently does not have a formal policy, and we are in the process of creating one. We're working with individual local agencies to try to find a solution that works for everyone and will coordinate with our DOJ counterparts as we move forward. We do need to be covert at times – undercover operations, for example.

90% of our work involves partnerships with state and local law enforcement, so we need to find a policy that will work for them and work for us.

#### >> from Deputy Chief Chad Kasmar honored on page 1

shortcomings, gain community confidence, and reduce the likelihood of adverse outcomes," Tucson Chief Chris Magnus wrote in his letter nominating Deputy Chief Kasmar for the award. "Ushering in a new era of departmental self-review could not have been accomplished without Chad's organizational skills, his continual focus on inclusivity, his ability to be provocative without being rude or unkind, and his willingness to accept critical feedback."

Deputy Chief Kasmar thanked PERF and the mentors he's had over the course of his career, including Chief

Magnus, retired Tucson Chief Roberto Villaseñor, and retired Tucson Assistant Chief Ramon Batista, who is currently the police chief in Mesa, Arizona.

He also reflected on what motivates him to keep working in the profession. "I love going to work every Monday morning," Deputy Chief Kasmar said. "I love leading the men and women that we have in our organization. I love interacting with our community, and I wouldn't be doing anything else."

response to the places where people are most likely to actually get help.

#### **Harris County, Texas**

Chief Acevedo and Sheriff Gonzalez described the initiatives they've implemented in Harris County to improve their response to people in crisis.

#### **Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo:**

We think it's key to use a multi-pronged approach to address these issues. One program we have is a Chronic Consumer Stabilization Initiative<sup>8</sup>, which assigns one officer and one mental health partner to manage our really high-maintenance consumers. In 2018 we started with 61 people who needed assistance. Over the course of the year we added 49 new people and discharged 46 people. Those 46 people are no longer chronic problems for EMS, the fire department, and our police department.

We also have a Homeless Outreach Team<sup>9</sup>. They know where the homeless populations are and get to know people by name. In 2018 they transitioned 326 people into permanent housing. That's all due to the close relationships the team develops with homeless persons.

Our Crisis Call Diversion<sup>10</sup> program is also

important. We have CIT-trained counselors right in the dispatch center, so when a call-taker identifies a call they think might necessitate CIT, they can transfer it to a counselor. Those counselors handled 4,300 calls last year. The average time a Houston patrol officer spends on a CIT call is 122 minutes, while the average time for a counselor in the dispatch center to handle a call is 12 minutes.

In September 2018, we opened the Mental Health Diversion Center<sup>11</sup>. It's a place where law enforcement can divert people who commit low-level offenses, and our goal is to change their behavior before it spirals into violent crime. From September through mid-April, Houston Police took about 1,100 people to the Mental Health Diversion Center, and only about 15% of people have been back multiple times. And it only takes about 15 minutes for our cops to drop people off there.

#### **Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez:**

We're doing a few different things, including creating a telepsychiatry program<sup>12</sup>. We're providing some of our patrol deputies with iPads. When they respond to someone having a mental health crisis during the day or evening shifts, they can use the iPad to connect with a mental health clinician who can help triage the situation. The officer then has more information when they decide how to respond to that individual and whether to put them into a diversion program.

The Houston Recovery Center<sup>13</sup>, or the "sobering center," has been used to divert a lot of the people who would have been arrested for public intoxication in the past. I think our jail only had about 800 bookings last year for public intoxication, which is a huge decrease from





LEFT: Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo **RIGHT:** Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez

the years when that number was around 20,000. Sending people to the sobering center costs less money, gets the police officers back on the street faster, and keeps people out of jail.

We also put a re-entry section in our new Joint Processing Center. Everyone leaving the facility has to walk through this area, which is staffed by local service providers. As people walk out, they have opportunities to access the help that they need.

<sup>8.</sup> https://www.houstoncit.org/chronic-consumer-stabilization-initiative-ccsi/

<sup>9.</sup> https://www.houstoncit.org/test/

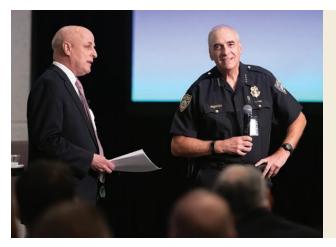
<sup>10.</sup> https://www.houstoncit.org/crisis-call-diversion-program/

<sup>11.</sup> https://www.theharriscenter.org/Services/Our-Services/

Harris-County-Mental-Health-Jail-Diversion-Program

<sup>12.</sup> https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2019/02/26/323187/ how-harris-county-deputies-use-ipads-to-improve-mental-health-care/

<sup>13.</sup> https://houstonrecoverycenter.org/



PERF is grateful to Miami Beach Police Chief Dan Oates, Miami Police Chief Jorge Colina, and Miami-Dade Police Director Juan Perez for their generous assistance in planning and organizing PERF's 2019 Annual Meeting.

Chief Oates, pictured at left with PERF Executive Director Chuck Wexler, announced in April that he would retire from Miami Beach when his contract expired in June. He has accepted a public safety consulting position with the U.S. Department of Justice, and has begun working with Baltimore Police Commissioner Michael Harrison to coordinate federal resources to help reduce crime in that city.

#### >> from Handling Officers with Credibility Issues on page 5

sidelined one of those officers, that officer won a substantial back-pay award from the arbitrator. Now the district attorney's office has put their refusal to call on an officer in writing for the first time. We immediately pulled this officer off the street, but we don't know what to do with him. I can't put him in the camera room because camera room operators have been called in to testify. I can't put him in the property room because they can be called to testify about the chain of custody. And we have very strict seniority rules, which further limits where I can put people.

Gil Kerlikowske, retired Customs and Border Protection Commissioner, Seattle Police Chief, and Buffalo Police Commissioner: I liked what Will (Johnson) said about making the distinction between lies that impact the organization, its reputation, and the administration of justice vs. a lie such as calling in sick. I think you have to figure out how to resurrect people. Sometimes the easiest thing to do is implement zero tolerance and draw a line in the sand. But we're all human beings, and empathy and compassion are what we expect out of our officers.





Mesa, AZ Police Chief Ramon Batista

But sometimes if you show the same level of empathy and compassion within the department, people will say that you're soft on discipline.

Mesa, AZ Police Chief Ramon Batista: Right now we have a hard-and-fast line against untruthfulness in any interaction. But there's an inherent difficulty in holding a hard line on untruthfulness for every interaction. I'm thinking of a young officer who panics and misspeaks in an administrative matter about the reason for his sick leave request, for example. That's where my difficulty is with a black-and-white rule. I want to take our organization to this level of thinking and examination about administrative matters, but we're not there yet. It's easy to frame these issues as a yes/no outcome, but the nuances of human behavior are more challenging to unwind.

Former CBP Commissioner and Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske



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