



**Board of County Commissioners**

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May 25, 2018

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs  
Bureau of Justice Assistance

*RE: Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program FY 2018 Competitive Grant ID BJA-2018-13907, Category 3*

Dear Selection Committee:

We are writing this letter in support of the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program grant application being submitted by the Eagle County Sheriff's Office, in conjunction with the Aspen Hope Center. Recently, Eagle County voters approved a small marijuana tax to help our rural community of 54,000 residents (and almost as many visitors during the winter ski season), build a mental health system. Our needs are extensive and resources sparse. Last year, the number of suicides in our county doubled, and thus far in 2018 we are on track to continue that trend. Both law enforcement and the ambulance district report a major increase in the need for a crisis response and a continued lack of mental health providers to deal with this issue. This grant will help the Hope Center expand and better support our local law enforcement agencies and hence, our community.

Mental health and substance abuse issues should be handled by trained professionals; however, as we all know far too well, law enforcement officers are left to handle situations for which they are not equipped nor skilled. The current trend in the valley is not good and many individuals are inappropriately transported to the emergency room (when they are not in need of medical attention) or held in a small room at the Vail Police Department in order to sober up, even though they have not committed a crime. This takes our officers off the streets and away from regular duties, and is not a satisfactory way to handle individuals with serious mental illness or substance use disease.

This grant, coupled with our new tax dollars, will allow us to support the mental health needs of the most vulnerable who come into contact with law enforcement, either on the streets or in our jails.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kathy Chandler-Henry

Chair

Jeanne McQueeney

Commissioner

Jill H. Ryan

Commissioner