



**JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MENTAL HEALTH  
COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL  
MEETING SUMMARY  
FEBRUARY 7, 2023  
VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Justice Rebeca Huddle, Supreme Court of Texas**

**JCMH Staff:**

- Kristi Taylor, Executive Director
- Kama Harris, Staff Attorney
- Molly Davis, Staff Attorney
- Cynthia Martinez, Paralegal

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Judge Laura Barker, Dr. Virginia Brown, Sonja Burns, Judge Nelda Cacciotti, Stephanie Carnero, Armondo Colombo, Leticia Dominguez, Lesli Fitzpatrick, Gilbert Gonzales, Greg Hansch, Judge James C. Henderson, Kathy Johnston, Justice Evelyn Keyes, Dr. Charles Mathias, Rosie Medina, Prof. Joanna Mendez, Trooper Bianca Morales, Maggie Morales-Aina, Jennifer Mudge, Judge Kirk Noaker, Dr. Susan Palacios, Judge Daphne Previti-Austin, Chris Ritter, Simone Salloum, Scott Schalchlin, Melissa Shearer, Dr. Jennie Simpson, Judge Mike Smith, Judge Grace Uzomba, Julie Wayman, Judge Deborah Wigington, Thomas Wilson.

**NEW MEMBER WELCOME**

New members were welcomed to the Collaborative Council:

- Judge Mike Smith
- Judge Laura Barker
- Rose Medina
- Maggie Morales-Aina

**WELCOME AND DISCUSSION**

**Justice Rebeca Huddle** opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

**Molly Davis** announced the Collaborative Council is putting together a networking directory for internal use, intended to build connections and relationships. Those who do not want to be part of the directory can email the staff at [JCMH@txcourts.gov](mailto:JCMH@txcourts.gov). The January Commission Meeting included a legislative update from Louis Tomasetti from the Office of Court Administration. A recording of the meeting can be viewed on [YouTube](#). As of the meeting date, none of the



Commission's civil law proposals had been filed, although the juvenile law proposal was filed as H.B. 1359. [H.B. 1359](#) is a comprehensive rewrite of Texas Family Code Chapter 55 that streamlines the processes for the juvenile equivalents of competency and insanity, strengthens the requirements for psychological assessments, and allows for outpatient treatment where appropriate and available.

**Kama Harris** stated that JCMH criminal law proposals were filed in [H.B. 1401](#) and [S.B. 725](#). H.B. 1401 permits the dismissal of a Class C case if the person is unfit to proceed and allows for good time credits to be awarded to people who participate in outpatient competency restoration programs. S.B. 725 includes Class C misdemeanors in the 16.22 process.

There was discussion regarding the potential of H.B. 1359 to increase the number of youth involved in inpatient competency restoration. Dr. Jennie Simpson advised that children are not included on the same inpatient competency restoration waitlist as adults, and Dr. Susan Palacios clarified that the goal of H.B. 1359 was to create more opportunities for outpatient competency restoration and to reduce the amount of time youth are detained pending restoration.

**Molly Davis** announced that the Commission maintains a calendar of [mental health conferences](#) and encouraged members to notify the Commission of their organizations' conferences.

**Lesli Fitzpatrick** stated she is following the LVN bill to allow registered nurses to attend the forensic beds in hospitals, and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick has announced legislation to pay for registered nurses to go to school.

**Judge Kirk Noaker** advised that Arc of Texas is interested in the following bills: [H.B. 729](#), which creates a statewide IDD Coordinating Council; [H.B. 1798](#), which directs HHSC to create a strategic plan detailing community-based services; and [H.B. 133](#), which restricts the use of restraints in schools.

**John Petriola** stated the budget has increased funding across the board from inpatient to outpatient treatment, and there has been renewed interest in mental health. The President's State of the Union address will emphasize mental health, and the investments in the Omnibus Bill on the crisis response system have had a deep impact on the work.

**Judge Daphne Previti** stated she is working as a criminal defense attorney, exploring options for clients who have been found incompetent.

**Gilbert Gonzales** stated that Bexar County is focusing on access to care, expansion of inpatient capacity, forensic competency restoration beds, school mental health allocation, and fostering additional dollars.



**Justice Evelyn Keyes** anticipates a comprehensive mental health code rewrite following the publication of the National Center for State Courts model code.

**Greg Hansch** stated that NAMI Texas is involved in a variety of issues, including reforming patient commitment criteria for civil commitments, requiring counties of a certain size to have assisted outpatient treatment programs, testifying at the Senate Finance hearing in support of the TCOOMMI exceptional item in the TDCJ legislative appropriations, trying to reform the 46B medication program, and increasing funding for HHSC's grant program for justice-involved individuals. On February 1, NAMI Texas held a virtual [mental health policy briefing](#), which has been viewed hundreds of times.

**Chris Ritter** stated that the State Bar of Texas put together a [suicide prevention and education program](#) to help lawyers normalize their struggles and their challenges, and to help the justice system with more information about mental health.

**Judge Deborah Wigington** is working in collaboration with a SAFE program, which will provide mental health first aid for parents of children in the program.

**Sonja Burns** addressed the growing long-term population in the state hospital system, requesting funding for more step-down pilots, staffing, and programming. Dr. Jeffrey Matthews has begun data collection to create a continuum that includes people with the most complex needs, and she is pushing legislators to acknowledge this population.

**Judge Ryan Kellus Turner** announced that Texas Municipal Courts Education Center will hold the second mental health motivational interviewing workshop of the year in Conroe on April 21.

**Trooper Bianca Morales** is working to increase networking abilities, minimize stigma, and make the Department of Public Safety more of a resource for anyone in need. Trooper Morales is already a mental health officer and has plans to create a specialized unit, like the police department has done in Travis County.

**Rosie Medina** is meeting with the Collaborative Council to discuss El Paso County's successful mental health court and front-end diversionary mental health program, the Empower Program, and the Log Preparation Institute. Additionally, the Washington-Ireland program plans to visit and learn from their partnership.

**Tim Bray** stated the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute was honored to participate in a multi-state collaboration with HHSC on crisis care, which was a positive start that will bear fruit over time.



**Jennifer Mudge** stated the Texas Council on Family Violence has four legislative priorities, including [H.B. 1796](#), [H.B. 698](#), and two other bills related to firearms transfers.

**Julie Wayman** is tracking bills related to school safety and mental health, such as funding and workforce development, increasing school counselors, school discipline, mental health services, parents rights, mental health first aid, trauma-informed practices, and safe and supportive school programs. She also supports being part of the system and ensuring schools are there to support kids and families and have the access that they need. She is also interested in substance abuse and use prevention, fentanyl issues, and working with families. She appreciates the collaboration with all of the stakeholders.

**Judge Grace M. Uzomba** discussed the need for a continuum of care and the use of nurse practitioners for competency evaluation. She also suggested that if nurses are properly trained, they can be exported to other countries. She stated she is passionate about expanding and expediting competency evaluations, better identification of the intellectual development, and helping people identified by 16.22 go through probation and pre-trial services, and involve guardians in the process. She believes that this will help reduce the weight on the system.

**Dr. Virginia A Brown** will be soliciting feedback from constituents about designing a new psychiatric advance directive form, which should be easy to read and consumer friendly.

**Thomas Wilson** joined the call to discuss the diversion program provided by a grant through JCMH. He is the Civil Division Chief and handles all of the mental health matters in the office. He looks forward to collaborating with other counties to help move the needle on the issues facing Smith County.

**Judge James C. Henderson** stated he is working with mental health diversion coordinator to streamline Grayson County's diversion program.

**Molly Davis** thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

NAMI Texas [Mental Health Capitol Day](#) – May 2, 2023

JCMH [Commission Meeting](#) – April 12, 2023 in Austin, Texas

JCMH Collaborative Council Call – May 16, 2023 on Zoom