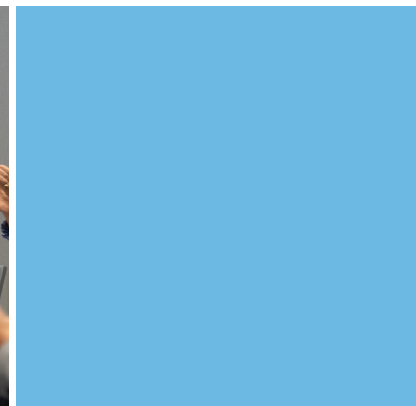


2024–2025 REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT

Biennial Report to the Supreme
Court of Texas and the Texas Court
of Criminal Appeals





The mission of the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health is to engage and empower court systems through collaboration, education, and leadership, thereby improving the lives of individuals with mental health needs, substance use disorders, or intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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FROM THE CHAIRS

Hon. Jane Bland & Hon. Jesse F. McClure, III

It is with great respect and appreciation that we submit this Biennial Report of the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health (JCMH) to the Supreme Court of Texas and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. Now in its seventh year, the Commission continues to strengthen the judiciary's leadership at the intersection of mental health and the law.

Across Texas, courts are facing an increasing number of cases involving individuals with complex mental health challenges. The Commission serves as a steady guide amid these challenges—convening diverse stakeholders, offering practical tools, and fostering thoughtful dialogue to support fair and impartial judicial decision-making.

Judges throughout Texas are at the forefront of our state's efforts to coordinate early identification of mental health challenges, appropriate intervention, and effective best practices across legal and clinical systems. The JCMH bridges disciplines and jurisdictions and advances collaborative solutions throughout Texas.

We are grateful for the continued commitment of our fellow Commissioners, Collaborative Council members, and staff. Their dedication, along with the support of our judicial colleagues across Texas, sustains the Commission's progress and promise.

Hon. Jane N. Bland, Chair
Justice
Supreme Court of Texas

Hon. Jesse F. McClure, III, Chair
Judge
Texas Court of Criminal Appeals



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kristi Taylor, J.D.

I am pleased to present the 2024–2025 Biennial Report of the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health to the Supreme Court of Texas and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. This year’s theme, “Real Texans, Real Impact,” reflects the day-to-day dedication of the judges, attorneys, law enforcement officers, behavioral health professionals, and community leaders working to improve justice for individuals with mental health needs, substance use disorders, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. It reminds us that the most meaningful change often comes not from headlines, but from steady, coordinated efforts at every level of the system.

Since our founding, the Commission has worked to honor the vision of our state’s highest courts by evolving to meet the complex and urgent challenges at the intersection of mental health and justice. The past two years have reinforced the unique role of the judiciary in leading collaborative solutions that improve outcomes for individuals and communities across Texas.

Texas was the first state in the nation to create a statewide judicial commission dedicated to mental health, and we continue to lead through nationally recognized initiatives that shape how courts and communities respond to behavioral health needs. This progress is made possible by the commitment of our Commissioners, Collaborative Council members, and statewide partners who work across disciplines, jurisdictions, and perspectives to support a more effective and compassionate system.

At the heart of our work is a simple goal: to equip and empower those on the front lines of justice. Whether through legislative guidance or local innovation, statewide trainings or targeted pilot programs, the Commission’s greatest successes are rooted in listening to those working in the field and translating that insight into practical tools and meaningful change. I am deeply grateful to our exceptional staff, whose quiet leadership and unwavering belief in this mission make every milestone possible. Together, we are building systems that are stronger, smarter, and more responsive to the real needs of Texans.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristi Taylor".

Kristi Taylor
Executive Director



THANK YOU, JUDGE HERVEY

Judge Barbara Hervey left a lasting legacy on the Texas Judicial System when she retired at the end of 2024. Judge Hervey served on the Court of Criminal Appeals for 24 years after being elected in 2000.

At her final Commission Meeting as Co-Chair of the Texas JCMH, Judge Hervey said working with the JCMH and the grantees of the Court of Criminal Appeals were highlights of her career.

Judge Hervey was an ardent supporter of the JCMH from the very start, before it was even a permanent Commission. She was one of the Court of Criminal Appeals Judges who sat on the bench during the historic joint session in 2018, when the judges heard testimony about the need for a Commission to address challenges present at the intersection of mental health and the justice system.

Judge Hervey became the Co-Chair of the Commission after its formation, along with Texas Supreme Court Justice Jeff Brown. After Justice Brown left the Court, Justice Jane Bland became Judge Hervey's Co-Chair and the two high court judges served together for nearly five years.

“AS WE REFLECT ON HOW MUCH WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, WE COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT JUDGE HERVEY AT THE HELM. . . SHE WAS SUCH AN INCREDIBLE PARTNER TO ME AND NEVER LOST SIGHT OF WHAT OUR MISSION IS.”

- Justice Jane Bland

Judge Hervey led the Judicial Education Section of the Court of Criminal Appeals, which awards grants to judges, court personnel, prosecuting attorneys and their personnel, and criminal defense attorneys who regularly represent indigent defendants in criminal matters. The grants can also be administered to law enforcement officers, law students, and other participants to attend innocence training programs related to defendants' claims of actual innocence following conviction. Judge Hervey enjoyed working with the statewide organizations who provide continuing education on mental health issues, including training on mental health resources available in Texas.

WELCOME, JUDGE PARKER



We are pleased to welcome Judge Gina Parker to the JCMH as the new Deputy Liaison to the Court of Criminal Appeals. Judge Parker was elected to the CCA in 2024. She previously worked as both a prosecutor and a criminal defense attorney. She received her bachelor's degree from Baylor University, then continued on to receive her J.D. from the Baylor School of Law.

In addition to her legal career, Judge Parker founded Dental Creations, a dental manufacturing company with a mission to create second chances. The company was established to provide employment opportunities for individuals with felony convictions, support charitable missions, and assist women in crisis.

As a lawyer, Judge Parker witnessed firsthand how difficult it is for people with criminal records to find work. Motivated by a desire to change that, she started Dental Creations to offer meaningful jobs and a supportive environment, helping people rebuild their lives and move forward.

Judge Parker has written two books: *The 828 Journey* and *Hush Little Baby, Don't Say a Word*. She ministers in the United States and abroad and leads the Hands of Hope International Ministry.

She was the National Eagle Forum Chairman for Judicial Reform and is a past recipient of the National Outstanding Eagle Award for Texas for her contribution in support of the United States Constitution.

“I’m looking forward to working with JCMH because the intersection of mental health and the justice system is important to me. As an attorney, I’ve seen firsthand the benefit of specialty courts, mental health services, and other support services. These programs benefit not only the participants and their families but also society by reducing recidivism.

The mental health crisis is one of the most pressing issues of our time, and I’m pleased to be a part of a stellar team of professionals who are seeking innovative solutions. ”

Treatment Courts Collaborative

In 2024, the JCMH started the Mental Health Courts Collaborative (now known as the Treatment Courts Collaborative) to provide technical assistance and support to judges who want to start a treatment court program or judges whose treatment court program is less than a year old. Each participating judge is paired with an experienced judge in another jurisdiction who has successfully started a treatment court program.

In the first year of the program, the Collaborative was focused on assisting judges interested in creating a mental health court, but in 2025, JCMH opened the program to judges who were interested in creating a treatment specialty court of any kind. Both years, the Collaborative began in January with a virtual meeting where mentee judges were able to meet their mentor judges. The 2024 Collaborative consisted of three online education sessions, while the 2025 Collaborative expanded to four sessions covering: the role of treatment courts, data and funding in treatment courts, treatment court ethics, and peer support in treatment courts.

Mentee judges were offered a registration scholarship to attend the annual conference of the Texas Association of Specialty Courts that was held in Fort Worth in 2024 and Corpus Christi in 2025.



Hon. Elaine Brown, *Hays County Court at Law #3*
 Hon. Raquel Brown, *Fort Worth Municipal Court*
 Hon. Jennifer Edgeworth, *219th District Court*
 Hon. Matt Hand, *Potter County Court at Law #2*
 Hon. Ron Rangel, *379th District Court*
 Hon. Selena Solis, *243rd District Court*
 Hon. Benjamin Webb, *Lubbock County Court at Law #3*

2024 Collaborative Graduates

2025 Collaborative Graduates

Hon. Jennifer Dillingham, *81st District Court*
 Hon. Susan Harris, *Kerr County Court at Law*
 Hon. Kirsten Legore, *Guadalupe County Court at Law #2*
 Hon. Cari Starritt-Burnett, *169th District Court*

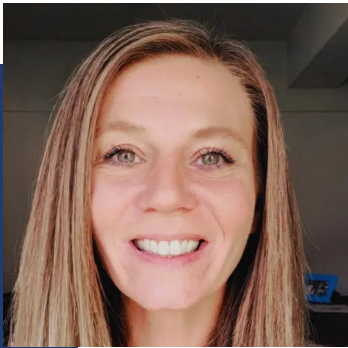
Court Liaison Pilot Program

In 2021, the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health created a four-year pilot program to fund a court liaison in three counties: Grayson, Denton, and Smith Counties. The liaisons in the selected counties have focused on increasing the connection between the courts and resource providers, ensuring compliance with Texas mental health laws, and, ultimately, increasing community safety, saving counties money, and improving the courts' response to individuals with mental illness or intellectual disability.

As the fourth year of the pilot program draws to a close, the Denton and Grayson County Court Liaisons will continue their work, now fully funded by the counties. Smith County's LMHA, the Andrews Center, hired a full time Chief SIM Officer to advance the county's goals set forth in the JCMH-led Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping, which was conducted as a result of Smith County's participation in the Court Liaison Program.



Elizabeth Groves, *Grayson County Court Liaison*



“Implementing processes to identify individuals being held in the jail who have significant and persistent mental illness has impacted our county and community in ways that cannot be measured. In our felony courts, Judge Larry Phillips now presides over cases in which Mental Health Pre-Trial Diversion plans are considered by both the state and the defense in consultation with others who are tasked with providing community resources and monitoring individuals in the process of competency restoration. In our misdemeanor courts, Judge James Henderson, working alongside the court liaison, other court staff, district attorney's office, defense bar, and probation office has established procedures to promptly identify individuals suffering from mental illness, intellectual disability, or other special needs. This team has developed expertise to identify a wide variety of diversion solutions, and has made a significant positive impact on the criminal justice system in our community.”

Alessia Dal Monte, *Denton County Court Liaison*

“By implementing the Court Liaison Program, Denton County has successfully formed partnerships between the courts, jail, attorneys, and community providers, leading to smoother operations and better outcomes for defendants with complex needs. During weekly jail visits, I help screen for mental health, IDD, and competency issues, thereby reducing costs, delays, and the burden on attorneys. Another part of my role is to streamline the 16.22 process by coordinating inpatient referrals, creating magistrate warrants and return orders, and managing hospital transports with the sheriff's office. This ensures defendants receive timely care while reducing strain on courts and law enforcement. I also facilitate inmate interviews for rehabilitation and group home placement, which has helped reduce recidivism and improve long-term stability. Overall, the implementation of my role has strengthened efficiency, reduced costs, and enhanced community safety in Denton County.”



As a result of the success of the initial Court Liaison Pilot Program, the 89th Legislature awarded the JCMH \$1,415,025 to bring the program to five other counties in 2026.



89th Legislative Session Updates

This past legislative session is the third session where the JCMH Legislative Research Committee developed proposals for the Texas Judicial Council. In advance of the 89th Legislative Session, thirteen proposals were submitted to the Texas Judicial Council, which unanimously adopted them all in September 2024. JCMH proposals were included in two bills: SB 1164/HB 5463 (Zaffirini/Moody) and HB 5465/SB 2213 (Moody/Zaffirini). Senate Bill 1164 was eventually passed and signed by the Governor and is effective as of September 1, 2025.

The JCMH also prepares tools, resources, and presentations to create awareness and understanding of new mental health and IDD legislation.



JCMH IN ACTION: REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT

Judge Wayne L. Mack, Montgomery County Justice of the Peace Precinct 1



While attending my first Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health conference, [former] Chief Justice Hecht stated: “people that break our laws should go to jail; people that are ill should go to treatment.” That statement for many years has had a profound impact on my life and service to our community.

Attending JCMH conferences has inspired me to become a TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention) Practitioner and to make my courtroom a Trauma Informed Justice Court. We now view every person that appears in our court so much differently.

My staff and I no longer look at the behavior, but at the need in a juvenile case, a truancy case, small claims lawsuit, eviction, magistration or any of the other cases we perfect or process in our Justice Court. We are so thankful for the Commission and the training opportunities it provides.

SB 1164 (Sen. Zaffirini)/HB 5463 (Rep. Moody)

Emergency Detention

Update the Law Enforcement Notification of Emergency Detention Form

- ◆ This law improves the form required by Health and Safety Code § 573.002(d) for peace officers carrying out emergency detentions without a warrant. The previous form lacked prompts to elicit some of the necessary information.
- ◆ The modifications add language to reflect the new capacity standard and areas for officers to explain the bases for affirmative declarations of evidence of mental illness, substantial risk of harm, and the need for temporary restraint.

Clarify a Peace Officer's Duties in an Emergency Detention at a Facility

- ◆ Currently, when a peace officer presents an individual at a facility for an emergency detention authorized by warrant, the peace officer may then return to their community duties.
- ◆ To make the two provisions consistent, this amendment adds subsection (f) to § 573.002 to state that a peace officer has no duty to remain at a facility or an emergency room once the officer presents a person for emergency mental health services under an Apprehension by a Peace Officer Without a Warrant and completes the required documentation. This language largely parallels the 2023 addition of § 573.012(d-1).

Court-Ordered Mental Health Services

Clarify Court-Ordered Mental Health Services Venue Law

- ◆ This amendment to Health and Safety Code § 574.001(b) clarifies the appropriate venue for filing an application for court-ordered mental health services and order of protective custody.
- ◆ This adjustment clarifies that venue is proper in the county where the proposed patient resides, is located at the time the application is filed, was apprehended under Chapter 573, or is receiving mental health services by court order.

Clarify Capacity Standard for Emergency Detentions

- ◆ This amends provisions of Health and Safety Code § 573 to improve access to mental health care through emergency detentions when a person has anosognosia, a neurological condition that causes people to be unaware of their psychiatric condition and can be diagnosed in connection with psychotic disorders, including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.



JCMH Executive Director Kristi Taylor and Jurist-in-Residence Hon. Brent Carr served as resource witnesses for the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice regarding SB 1164.

Collaborative Council

The Collaborative Council is comprised of judges, lawyers, law enforcement, advocates, agency leaders, and other stakeholders who advise on the projects and strategies undertaken by the Commission. The Council meets three times per year on Zoom and assists the Commission by sharing information about issues that affect judicial and court practices in cases involving persons with mental illness, substance use disorders, or intellectual and developmental disabilities. Council members serve on JCMH's committees, connect the Commission to their local and statewide events, and are invited to attend JCMH Commission Meetings.

At each Collaborative Council meeting, there is typically an educational component. The speakers and topics presented from January 2024 to August 2025 include:



FEBRUARY 6, 2024: AOT COLLABORATIVE

Kristi Taylor, Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health



MAY 14, 2024: SPOTLIGHT ON RURAL ISSUES

Trish Rivera, Texas State Office of Rural Health



SEPTEMBER 10, 2024: EMPLOYMENT FIRST INITIATIVES FOR PEOPLE WITH IDD

Dr. Carrie Bruns & Donnie Wilson, Texas HHSC: Community Services Division



FEBRUARY 11, 2025: BRAIN SCIENCE

Dr. Scott Lepor, Texas Juvenile Justice Department



MAY 6, 2025: REIMAGINING FORENSIC PATHWAYS: FORENSIC SUPPORT TEAM PILOT PROGRAM

Catie Bialick & Kaylee Reza, Texas HHSC: Office of Forensic Services and Coordination

JCMH IN ACTION: REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT

Sgt. Shawn Edwards, *President - Texas CIT Association*



My first experience with the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health was at the 2019 Summit, and I immediately fell in love with the program. It opened the door for meaningful connections and gave me the knowledge and tools to better support individuals with mental health challenges involved in the criminal justice system.

Through JCMH, I've been able to teach agencies across Texas and implement impactful initiatives such as the Eliminate the Wait toolkit, the Jail In-Reach Program, the Mental Health Law Plan, and Juvenile SIM Mapping. These efforts have played a significant role in improving outcomes in our community.

In 2022, Burleson County was honored by the Texas Association of Counties and received recognition for Best Practices in Jail Diversion. JCMH has truly been a catalyst for collaboration, innovation, and real change.

Summer Webinar Series

2024: Competency Restoration

Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health

SUMMER WEBINAR SERIES

In 2024, the JCMH created the Summer Webinar Series, a set of three webinars in June, July, and August focusing on a specific subject. This series goes in depth on a hot topic in the mental health and justice space, giving attendees an opportunity to delve into one aspect of mental health law.

Each live webinar was approved for one hour of continuing education. The recorded webinars are currently available to watch on the JCMH YouTube channel. The 2024 topic was Competency Restoration. Sessions included:

- June: *What You Need to Know about Competency Restoration*
- July: *Law and Process of Jail-Based Competency Restoration and Court-Ordered Medication*
- August: *Options for People who are Deemed Unrestorable*

Webinar
Attendance
by Month

June

211

July

218

August

194

2025: IDD Law

In 2025, the Summer Webinar Series focused on different aspects of IDD Law. JCMH staff is often asked about this topic. Community partners expressed interest in an in-depth look into IDD Commitments to SSLCs now that procedures are in place after legislative changes in 2023. Like in 2024, each live webinar was approved

for one hour of continuing education. The recorded webinars are currently available to watch on the JCMH YouTube channel. Sessions included:

- June: *IDD 101 and the Community Safety Net*
- July: *Civil Commitment of People with IDD to SSLCs*
- August: *Forensic Commitment of People with IDD to SSLCs*

Webinar
Attendance
by Month

June

156

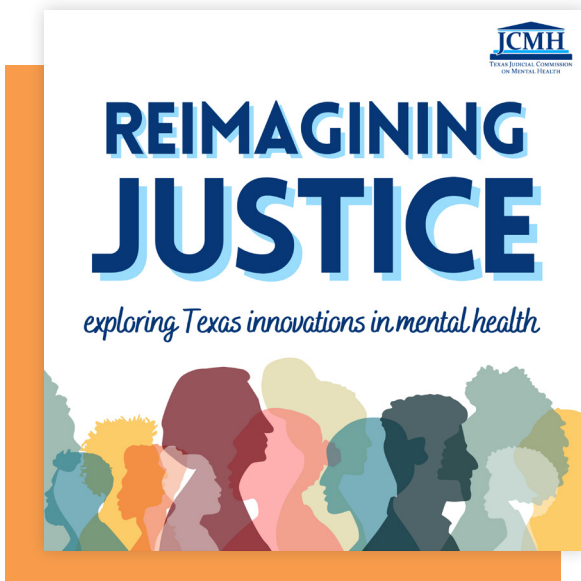
July

154

August

180

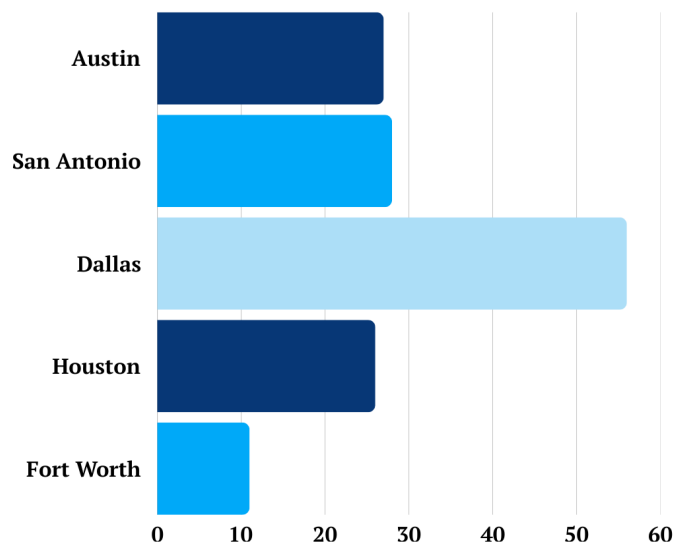
Reimagining Justice Podcast



The JCMH celebrated two years of the *Reimagining Justice* podcast in 2025. The podcast was created in March 2023 and has been published monthly ever since. *Reimagining Justice* introduces listeners to the individuals working to improve the lives of those at the intersection of mental health and justice in Texas. Each guest has played a part in creating an innovative program in the mental health and justice space; the goal of the podcast is to explain in detail how each program started and how individuals in other communities can start a program of their own. We are always looking for new topics for podcasts, so if you have an innovative program you would like to share, email us at jcmh@txcourts.gov with the subject line: *Reimagining Justice* podcast.

- 
28 **EPIISODES**
published from March 2023–August 2025
- 
20+ **COUNTIES**
featured on the podcast
- 
1,912 **STREAMS**
across both Spotify and Apple Podcasts
- 
276 **HOURS LISTENED**
across both Spotify and Apple Podcasts

TOP CITIES for Apple Podcasts listeners



JCMH IN ACTION: REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT



Judge Roxanne Nelson, *Burnet County Justice of the Peace Precinct 1*

The first meeting of the Judicial Commission on Mental Health was held on May 15, 2018, and I remember (former) Chief Justice Nathan Hecht giving the Commission a directive to “facilitate profound change” and to “make immediate progress.” And that’s what JCMH has done! Staff, Commissioners, and collaborators went to work immediately to achieve some very lofty goals. Adult and Youth Bench Books have been created and are continuously updated as we gain more knowledge and laws are created or changed. A Code Book has been compiled to go hand in hand with these books as well as to serve as a standalone quick reference guide. Trainings, workshops, and roundtable discussions have been numerous, offering valuable education opportunities. A forms database has been created to integrate consistency throughout the state’s court system.

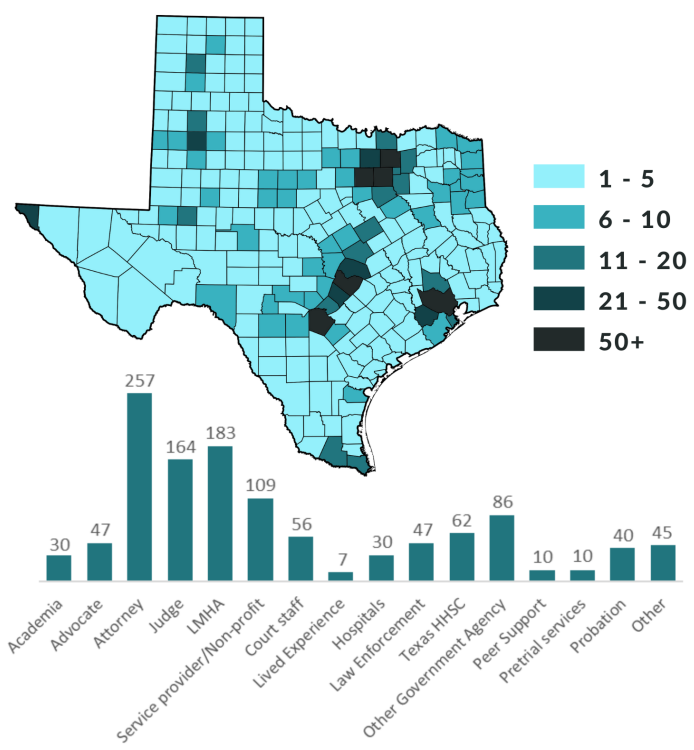
Personally, I am so proud of the increased enthusiasm for the annual Judicial Summit on Mental Health. Each year brings greater opportunity for engagement amongst all of the collaborators out there that want to MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



7th Annual Judicial Summit on Mental Health

November 21–22, 2024; Allen, Texas

Registrants by location and occupation



A SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT

◆ Nearly 1,200 people attended the 2024 Judicial Summit on Mental Health either online or in person at the Marriott Dallas Allen Hotel & Convention Center in Allen, Texas. The conference took place over one and a half days. For the first time since we started tracking where our attendees work, we had registrants from all 254 Texas counties. Additionally, we had registrants from all 39 local mental health authorities (LMHAs) and local behavioral health authorities (LBHAs).

NEW IN 2024

◆ So many incredible speakers applied to present at the 2024 Summit. To feature as many as possible, attendees broke into three breakout tracks on Thursday afternoon. Each track had seven sessions with assorted topics, giving attendees the opportunity to choose from 21 disparate presentations.

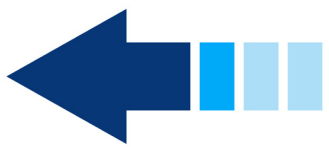
◆ The day before the Summit started, On Point Reentry Consortium hosted a reentry simulation for our Commissioners and Collaborative Council members. Participants were given a profile of an individual who was reentering society after being incarcerated. They “became” that person and visited different stations to do assigned tasks, like applying for a driver’s license or setting up a bank account. The purpose of the simulation was to allow participants to experience the common barriers faced by someone reentering society, with the goal of evoking empathy and helping us all think critically about how the reentry process can improve in the future.





2025 Summit by the Numbers

 **407**
In-person registrants

776 
Virtual registrants

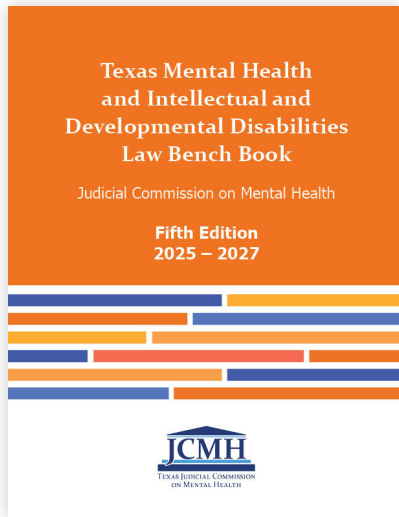
 **254**
All Texas counties represented—a record!

8 
U.S. States represented

 **34**
Unique Summit sessions

“ This collaborative effort between civil and criminal courts, providers, and other stakeholders is an important model. Bravo. ”

New Bench Books: 2025–2027

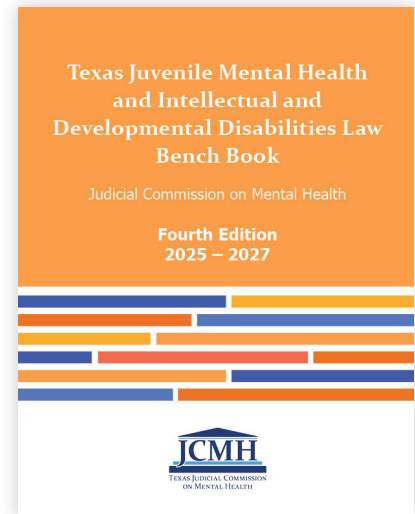


ADULT BENCH BOOK: 5TH EDITION

The Texas Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Bench Book is written for Texas judges hearing cases regarding persons with mental illness and/or IDD, but it is also a valuable tool for other interested parties at the intersection of mental health and the judicial system. Each section contains applicable statutory processes, relevant best practices and guidance, and cross-references to mandatory forms. The fifth edition of the Bench Book adds legislative updates and new material and forms. It will be released in October 2025 at the Judicial Summit on Mental Health. The committee to develop this resource is chaired by Judge Camile DuBose. A digital version of the 5th Edition is also available for download on the JCMH website.

JUVENILE BENCH BOOK: 4TH EDITION

The Texas Juvenile Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Law Bench Book is a practical reference tool for Texas judges handling cases involving youth with mental illness and/or intellectual and developmental disabilities. Now in its fourth edition, the Juvenile Bench Book features an updated structure to support quick reference, along with a full index to enhance accessibility. Each section blends statutory processes, procedural guidance, and real-world application tips to assist judicial decision-making. The Juvenile Bench Book Committee, chaired by William R. “Bill” Cox, continues to guide the development of this important resource. Like the adult version, the Juvenile Bench Book is available at no cost and can be accessed on the Judicial Commission on Mental Health website.



JCMH IN ACTION: REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT





Judge Larry Phillips, *Grayson County*

JCMH is a wonderful resource for judges and communities in our state. JCMH provides education, training, essential forms, Bench Books, resource guides, SIM Mapping projects, a podcast, and the Treatment Courts Collaborative. JCMH is impactful because of the hard work and competency of its leadership, staff, and jurists-in-residence. A hallmark of the JCMH is collaboration between the varied sectors, both public and private, working with Texans facing mental health challenges and intellectual and developmental disabilities. I am a better judge because of JCMH and my community is now closer to fulfilling its mission of improving the behavioral health and well-being of all people in our county. Lastly, our county is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the JCMH Court Liaison Pilot Program.

With the support and training from JCMH, our court liaison has helped us establish needed policies and procedures, and, equally as important, a better understanding of the unique challenges facing justice involved individuals with mental health challenges and IDD.

Content-Sharing Platforms

- 


Digital platforms offer the JCMH an opportunity to increase public awareness of our work, foster transparency, and promote our initiatives to a broad audience. By sharing educational content, updates on JCMH projects, and information about mental health resources, JCMH can better inform the public, legal professionals, and policymakers. Digital platforms also help humanize the JCMH’s work, making it easier for the public to engage with complex legal and mental health issues through accessible stories, videos, and graphics.
- 

The JCMH has accounts on X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. These platforms provide JCMH with a way to spotlight successful programs, amplify the voices of community partners and those with lived experience, and promote upcoming trainings or events. Engaging with our audience helps JCMH foster two-way communication, gather feedback, and stay cognizant of local and national conversations around mental health and the justice system. Follow us on our platforms at the username @TexasJCMH.

January 2024–August 2025 Social Media Growth



Resource Letters

- 

The “Resource Letter for Judges and Attorneys Handling Cases Involving Mental Health and IDD” is a curated, regularly distributed memo to provide statewide resources to the judiciary, legal professionals, mental health partners, law enforcement, and community leaders. Each letter highlights education and training opportunities, events, and relevant publications. Essentially, the Resource Letter ensures that practitioners stay informed of the latest programs, educational materials, and collaboration opportunities. Each letter includes a subscription link; you can also subscribe to the Resource Letter on the JCMH website.



Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance is targeted support to an agency, organization, or community regarding mental health law. The JCMH delivers technical support in many ways, including:

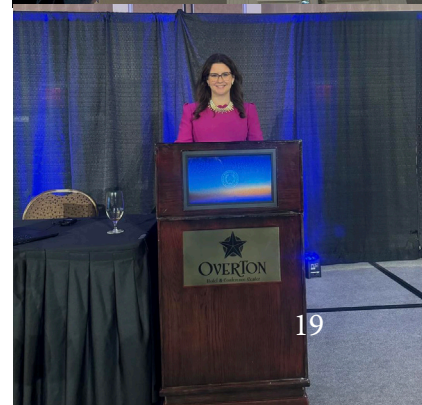
- ◆ Professional peer connection: JCMH can connect judges, attorneys, law enforcement, mental health providers, and other system partners to others in a similar role for mentorship and assistance with troubleshooting challenges;
- ◆ Support for mental health courts, including the Treatment Courts Collaborative;
- ◆ Sequential Intercept Model mapping workshops;
- ◆ Expert consultation: If someone has difficulties navigating Texas's complex mental health laws and systems, JCMH staff, Commissioners, and Collaborative Council members may be able to assist;
- ◆ Speaking Engagements: JCMH staff travels across Texas and to other states to share their expertise and information about the work of the Commission.

2024 by the Numbers



2025 by the Numbers

**January–August*



County Mental Health Law Plan

Eight counties participated in the County Mental Health Law Plan program throughout 2024. A liaison from each county, most often a judge, created a multidisciplinary team that engaged in the program. Participants attended four Zoom webinars on relevant mental health law topics: Civil Commitment, Early Intervention, Mental Health Courts, and Competency Restoration.

Each county also compared their progress against the JCMH Mental Health Law Plan Checklist and listed their resources and policies related to relevant mental health law issues using the Sequential Intercept Model.

After the webinars and checklists were completed, the JCMH team traveled to the eight counties for a workshop on mental health law tailored to the gaps and opportunities identified in each county.

After the workshop, the JCMH compiled a report for each county, which created a guideline for how the county moves through different processes when a person with a mental illness comes into contact with the justice system. By participating in this program, counties identified gaps and resources, clarified roles within the county, streamlined complex mental health processes, received access to free resources, identified mental health best practices, and created accountability.



Burnet County

CMHLP Champions: Chris Sanders & Hon. Tamara Tinney

Burnet County is seeing success due to a foundation of strong judicial leadership and a culture of collaboration across disciplines. Regular cross-agency meetings bring together rural partners to coordinate care and share resources effectively. The use of mental health bonds and access to a regional public defender ensure individuals receive timely support and representation. Statutory improvements have streamlined processes, and the community is intentional about recognizing and celebrating progress, reinforcing a shared commitment to long-term success.

Duval County

CMHLP Champion: Hon. Raquel de los Santos

Duval County's system is strengthened by proactive judicial leadership that prioritizes early identification of individuals with mental health needs. The county effectively engages the broader community, fostering trust and collaboration among partners. A dedicated Mental Health Officer plays a key role in intertwining law enforcement and behavioral health services, ensuring appropriate responses and referrals. Ongoing education efforts across the system promote awareness, reduce stigma, and support more informed decision-making at every level.



El Paso County

CMHLP Champion: Hon. Annabell Perez

El Paso County benefits from a committed judicial leader who champions reform and drives system-wide accountability. The county tracks key data to inform decisions and improve outcomes, particularly in areas like civil commitment and Assisted Outpatient Treatment. Collaborative efforts such as the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso Co-Training Model enhance cross-agency knowledge and consistency. A dedicated Specialty Courts Committee helps align goals, ensuring programs remain effective and responsive to local needs.

Hays County

CMHLP Champions: Hon. Elaine Brown, Kaimi Mattila

Hays County has the guidance of an effective judicial leader who actively seeks funding to expand and sustain vital programs. The county has developed a network of specialty courts—including veterans treatment court and mental health court—that provide tailored interventions and support. An innovative approach to AOT ensures individuals receive care while remaining in the community, reducing reliance on incarceration. Hays County also celebrates successes, fostering motivation and reinforcing positive outcomes for participants and partners alike.



Medina County

CMHLP Champion: Hon. Mark Cashion

Medina County is strengthened by dedicated judicial leaders who demonstrate a clear commitment to innovation and rehabilitation, fostering a culture of accountability and support. Collaboration with jail staff contributes meaningfully to prioritizing mental health care. The public defender's office plays a crucial role in advocating for appropriate treatment options. Medina County Pre-Trial Services stands out for its innovative and trauma-informed approach, offering individuals meaningful support and resources that reduce recidivism and promote long-term stability.



Travis County

CMHLP Champion: Hon. Tamara Needles

Travis County is making significant strides through a combination of robust judicial leadership and forward-thinking practices. Early identification of mental illness ensures timely intervention, improving outcomes across the system. The county has implemented effective competency restoration practices, including jail-based services and court-ordered medication when appropriate. Additionally, the Transformation Project provides a focused, developmentally appropriate response for juveniles involved in family violence, helping redirect them toward rehabilitation.



Burleson County

CMHLP Champion: Sgt. Shawn Edwards

Burleson County has built a successful foundation for addressing mental health needs within its justice system by fostering collaborative relationships. The Sheriff's Office has taken a proactive approach by embedding a clinician in the jail to ensure support for individuals in custody. Mental health deputies reach out to people who reappear in the system, maintaining consistent connections to prevent future law enforcement interactions. This early, preventative approach not only improves outcomes for individuals but also demonstrates measurable savings to county leaders.



Fort Bend County

CMHLP Champion: Ofc. Brittany Moreno

Fort Bend County is advancing its mental health and justice efforts through strategic coordination and data-driven practices. Early identification of mental illness through CCP art. 16.22 processes ensures individuals receive timely assessments and interventions. The county's commitment to robust data collection supports informed decision-making and continuous improvement across programs. Justice Forward, a dedicated nonprofit organization bolsters the work of Fort Bend County's specialty courts by providing essential resources and community support.



JCMH Committees

Judicial Commission on Mental Health committees are multidisciplinary working groups that bring together judges, attorneys, behavioral health professionals, law enforcement, and other partners to improve how the justice system interacts with people experiencing mental illness, substance use disorders, or intellectual and developmental disabilities. These committees focus on key areas such as data collection and analysis, standardized court forms, legislative research, and substance use disorders. Each committee addresses specific challenges at the intersection of mental health and the justice system by developing resources, offering guidance, and proposing reforms to promote more effective, compassionate, and coordinated responses.

Forms Committee

The Forms Committee was created to develop standardized, user-friendly forms that could be adopted by any Texas jurisdiction. The committee began in 2019 when the 86th Legislature enacted Senate Bill 362, which directed the Supreme Court to adopt rules to streamline and promote the efficiency of emergency detention court processes under Chapter 573 of the Health and Safety Code and to create consistency and increase access to the judicial branch for people with mental health issues. In response, the Supreme Court established the “Task Force for Procedures Related to Mental Health” to carry out the directives of Senate Bill 362. The Forms Committee started as a subcommittee of the Task Force but now serves as a stand-alone committee.

The Committee produced a comprehensive set of model forms for use in cases involving emergency detention, involuntary civil commitments, applications for court-ordered medications (civil and criminal), competency restoration under Article 46B of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and magistrate duties under Article 16.22. These forms were published on the JCMH website, ensuring that every judge across the state has free and ready access to these tools. In 2025, the Committee reconvened to review and amend the model forms to reflect recent legislative changes and procedural improvements, ensuring they remain accurate, practical, and responsive to the evolving needs of Texas courts and their partners.

Bench Book Committee

The JCMH Adult Bench Book Committee is chaired by Judge Camile DuBose. The Committee developed the first edition of the *Texas Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Law Bench Book* in 2018 and has been working on improving the bench book every two years following the legislative session. In October 2025, the Committee published its 5th Edition in print and online.

Juvenile Bench Book Committee

Established in 2020, the Juvenile Bench Book Committee comprises subject-matter experts committed to the ongoing development of the *Texas Juvenile Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Law Bench Book*. Chaired by William R. “Bill” Cox, the committee convenes every two years following the legislative session to incorporate statutory updates, highlight emerging programs, and address changes in funding and practice. This year, the committee welcomed new members while continuing to benefit from the longstanding engagement of returning contributors. The Juvenile Bench Book is a direct reflection of the committee’s thoughtful input and generous commitment of time and expertise. In October 2025, the Committee published its 4th Edition in print and online.

Summit Curriculum Committee

The Summit Curriculum Committee, chaired by Judge Brent Carr, advises on speakers and curriculum for the annual Judicial Summit on Mental Health. The Committee works to ensure that the presentations promote the JCMH mission and are at the forefront of this dynamic legal field. The Summit Committee met in May 2025 to prepare the agenda for the 8th Annual Judicial Summit on Mental Health, scheduled for October 2025 in Houston, Texas.

Data Committee

The JCMH Data Committee continues to foster discussion on data practices and issues in the context of specialty courts. One recent initiative has resulted in the “Best Practice Data Guide for Texas Mental Health Court Programs,” designed to assist mental health court programs as an introductory resource on best practices. Other topics have included a focus on juvenile-specific issues with data collection and use, outcome tracking for comparison of interventions and initiatives, and standardization of records to allow for better analysis. Dr. Connie Almeida and Rosie Medina lead the Committee as Chairs.

Substance Use Disorder Committee

The JCMH Substance Use Disorder Committee was formed to review and discuss the impact of substance use disorder (SUD) as a mental health condition and the ways it can be addressed by courts and other stakeholders to improve the administration of justice. Recent discussions have covered topics such as juvenile SUD issues, chemical dependency warrants, administration of cases where there are co-occurring SUD and other mental health diagnoses, and the efficient use of civil processes such as Assisted Outpatient Treatment in some SUD cases. Committee Chair Hon. Roxanne Nelson welcomes any new voices to discuss and advance addressing substance abuse issues in the legal context.

Legislative Research Committee

JCMH Vice Chair Hon. Bill Boyce chairs the Legislative Research Committee (LRC), which develops legislative proposals and submits them to the Texas Judicial Council. Professor Brian Shannon leads the Drafting Subcommittee. In November 2023, the LRC began preparing for the 89th Legislative Session and met several times through spring and summer of 2024. Thirteen proposals were submitted to the Texas Judicial Council, which adopted all of them unanimously in September 2024. Four of those proposals were passed by the Texas Legislature and took effect September 1, 2025.

JCMH IN ACTION: REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT

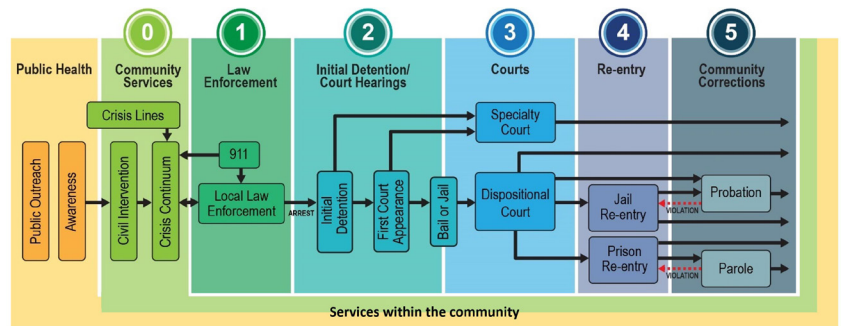
Judge Raquel de los Santos, Judge Geraldita Martinez, Judge Annabel Canales



The resources and guidance obtained through the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health have had a tremendous impact in Duval County. The learning collaboratives have provided invaluable connections with other stakeholders in the state who are willing to share best practices from their counties. Through the training offered by JCMH, we have become more adept at recognizing signs of mental health disorders. The JCMH has provided the judiciary of Duval County with the skills to take the initiative when a need is detected. The Duval County Mental Health Board was born because of the overwhelming referrals of citizens in crisis to the judiciary. The Board meets quarterly to discuss trends, trainings and triumphs.

Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping

A Sequential Intercept Model mapping is a workshop that develops a map illustrating how people with behavioral health needs move through the criminal justice system. The workshop brings a community together to assess available resources, determine gaps in services, and plan for change.



How does a SIM Mapping Workshop work?

Before the workshop, community partners from a county will meet virtually to identify resources that already exist, resources or services that could be beneficial to the county but do not exist yet, and opportunities for collaboration among partners.

At the day-long workshop, the same community partners come together to establish county priorities and make an action plan with feasible steps to improve identified areas for change at the intersection of mental health and justice.

The work doesn't end there—facilitators follow up with the county three and six months after the workshop to review the report written for the county by the JCMH and to check in on the progress of the action plan.

10

Counties mapped
in 2024-25

12

Rural counties to be
mapped in FYs 26-27

22

Counties mapped by
JCMH since 2021

Between January 2024 and August 2025, the JCMH successfully conducted or funded ten SIM Mapping workshops, including nine focused on youth mental health systems. Two additional counties are scheduled for youth system mappings by the end of 2025. Funded by a \$150,000 allocation from the 88th Texas Legislature, these workshops reflect the state's committed effort to tackle the youth mental health crisis statewide.

In 2025, the JCMH is turning its attention to rural counties; we plan to map twelve rural counties in FYs 26-27.



Assisted Outpatient Treatment Collaborative

The Texas Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Collaborative was formed in 2024 to bring together professionals from legal, clinical, and community settings to promote shared learning and support the implementation of AOT programs in Texas. The Collaborative meets three times a year, offering an educational component along with space for discussion and the exchange of ideas. Participants have explored a range of priorities to enhance AOT practice statewide, including the development of legislative proposals, new tools and resources, mentorship opportunities, and access to downloadable forms. In 2025, the Collaborative continued to serve as a platform for dialogue and training. Guest speakers from a variety of disciplines and lived experience backgrounds contributed to educational segments. Collaborative members also helped promote awareness of national and state-level AOT trainings, and JCMH staff delivered educational sessions to local communities. To support implementation efforts, the AOT section of the JCMH website hosts a growing library of practical resources. These include sample forms, reference tools, and guidance materials available at no cost.

National Council of State Court Behavioral Health Administrators



In 2024, the National Center for State Courts developed the National Council of State Court Behavioral Health Administrators, a professional network composed of state-level leaders responsible for enhancing the capacity of court systems to address behavioral health needs. In its inaugural year, representatives from 20 states, including Texas, joined this effort, each bringing their own innovative strategies for advancing access to justice through behavioral health-informed court practices. The national convening in Arlington, Virginia, marked the beginning of a formal mission grounded in systemic solutions, strategic collaboration, and empowerment of court professionals.

The group developed a mission and a motto. **Mission:** To develop and lead improved court responses to all individuals and families impacted by behavioral health. **Motto:** Navigating Complexity and Advancing Justice Together.

JCMH IN ACTION: REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT

Judge Echo Hutson, *Montgomery County Court at Law No. 4*



I am fortunate to serve in various key roles that form the intersection between my community and the Judicial Commission on Mental Health. As a judge presiding over my county's Mental Health Treatment Court, I see firsthand the needs of justice-involved individuals in the court system. My involvement in multiple community mental health task forces—comprising varied community representatives—helps me gain valuable insight and stay connected, enabling me to collaborate on solutions for ever-evolving challenges facing my community. These combined roles give me a focused and insightful perspective on the JCMH Collaborative Council and allow me to bring those insights to a broader policy conversation.

I am honored to work alongside dedicated colleagues on the JCMH, as we strive to strengthen and enhance mental health services and systems in our community, and serve as a driving force in advancing mental and behavioral health resources across Texas.

Jurists-in-Residence



The Jurists-in-Residence, Hon. Brent A. Carr and Hon. John J. Specia, Jr., offer valuable insight and guidance based on their combined more than 50 years on the bench. Judge Carr served as the Presiding Judge of Tarrant County Criminal Court No. 9 and was a JCMH Commissioner prior to his retirement. As Presiding Judge, he established the Tarrant County Mental Health Court and Veterans Treatment Court.

Judge Specia presided over the 225th District Court in Bexar County for decades and established the Bexar County Children's Court as well as the Family Drug Treatment Court. He was instrumental in creating the JCMH and the Supreme Court's Children's Commission.

The JCMH publishes periodic notices from our Jurists-in-Residence. The most recent JIR letter from Judge Carr addressed the new JCMH Rural Issues Committee and available training on Assisted Outpatient Treatment and civil commitment. Other JIR topics have included summaries of the top takeaways from the Judicial Summits on Mental Health, legislative updates, emergency detention, and other pressing topics relevant to the JCMH audience. We are grateful to have these two esteemed judges as advisors.

JCMH IN ACTION: REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT

Matt Smith, *Director of Statewide Youth Services Continuum—Texas Juvenile Justice Department*



Several years ago, JCMH facilitated a training opportunity through Policy Research Associates for JCMH Commissioners, Collaborative Council members, and staff to be trained as SIM mapping facilitators. I was fortunate to participate in this opportunity where I developed a broader systems view of the pathways that lead to juvenile justice involvement. While there have been many ways JCMH has positively impacted my career, the opportunity to be trained in SIM facilitation has been the most impactful, allowing me to lead Williamson County Juvenile Services in a three-year deep-dive SIM mapping in partnership with STEP UP Texas (funder) and Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (facilitator).

The JCMH focus on the SIM and the opportunity for collaboration with youth-serving system leadership is changing the landscape of juvenile justice in Texas, offering diversion and early intervention opportunities for youth with behavioral health needs while improving public safety by allowing the broader juvenile justice system to focus on the youth that need it most.



Texas Mental Health Law Courtroom Curriculum

The Texas Mental Health Law Courtroom Curriculum gives psychiatry residents and fellows hands-on experience applying Texas mental health law in courtroom settings. The program replaces traditional lectures with interactive exercises, mock hearings, and scenario-based practice, preparing participants to engage confidently in legal proceedings. Piloted over the past two years at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, it has proven effective in bridging clinical and legal understanding.

The curriculum comes with a detailed facilitator's guide that attorneys use to lead sessions for residents and fellows, providing a structured way to teach everything from courtroom basics to complex topics such as civil commitment, competency restoration, and expert testimony. It is based on JCMH's Adult and Juvenile Bench Books, which comprehensively cover mental health law across all stages of the justice system. Organized according to the Sequential Intercept Model—which divides the system into stages, or “intercepts,” so residents can see how decisions at each point affect outcomes downstream—the curriculum mirrors real-world courtroom practice and helps participants understand how clinical and legal decisions connect across the justice system.

Importantly, the curriculum sparks early interest in forensic psychiatry by giving residents and fellows direct courtroom experience and exposure to complex legal-clinical interactions. It encourages active engagement and collaboration among residents and fellows, who learn from one another while also educating attorneys and court professionals on clinical considerations. By connecting participants across residency levels, the program creates a dynamic space where teaching and learning happen across disciplines. Looking ahead, JCMH plans to expand the Texas Mental Health Law Courtroom Curriculum to other psychiatry residency and fellowship programs, broadening hands-on legal training and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Rural Issues Committee

The Judicial Commission on Mental Health is proud to announce the launch of the Rural Issues Committee, chaired by JCMH Jurist-in-Residence Judge Brent Carr. This committee is dedicated to supporting the administration of justice for individuals in Texas's rural communities who are affected by mental health conditions and involved in the justice system.

The committee's mission is to identify needs, develop strategies, foster collaboration, and create solutions that enhance the delivery of mental health services in rural areas. By convening stakeholders living and serving in rural communities three times a year, the committee will provide a forum to share resources, exchange ideas, and address the unique challenges these communities face.

Remembering Vickie Rice

December 19, 1973–July 5, 2025

*JCMH Commissioner, Dallas County
Public Defender, Friend*



Described by a dear friend as “a force of nature,” Vickie Rice’s gregarious personality, creativity, and steadfastness of purpose marked both her personal and professional life.

Vickie was appointed by the Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals as a JCMH Commissioner in 2024. She served until her death from cancer in July 2025.

Originally hailing from Bennettsville, South Carolina, Vickie enjoyed a warm and loving relationship with her family and her community. Vickie married her high school sweetheart, Chris Rice, and they shared three beautiful children, CJ, Gabby, and Vaughn. Vickie was a fierce mom. She loved her kids more than anything in the world. She was always telling stories about them, looking out for them, and planning for them.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from the University of South Carolina and furthered her academic journey by obtaining a Juris Doctorate Degree from Tulane Law School. In 2002, Vickie moved to Dallas, Texas, and worked in several key roles at the Dallas County Public Defender’s Office, including Special Programs Division Chief and interim Deputy Chief Public Defender.



A dedicated advocate for all her clients, Vickie often went beyond the requirements of the job to ensure fair and equal access to representation and extended herself to great lengths. Not only did Vickie work long hours and often on holidays and nights, but she would also watch the evening news to prepare for the next day’s potential clients. This dedication impacted thousands of people, often those who had been failed by the system, and had lost faith in justice. People would call her, sometimes years later, to tell her how well they were doing and how she changed the course of their lives.

Vickie always put the defendant’s needs first. A colleague recalled a time when Vickie collected money to get a defendant a haircut. She bought another a new pair of shoes. She called and checked on her clients long after their cases were dismissed.





One Dallas County judge recalled how Vickie would personally decorate for her mental health court's Thanksgiving feast and shop for gifts at Christmas for the participants, making sure each one had gloves, hats, scarves, socks, and blankets. The thing is, Vickie was not even the Public Defender or Supervising Attorney assigned to the program! She did it because of her passion for the people they were helping.

Vickie played a mother-like role to her clients, sometimes telling them the cold hard facts, even when they did not want to hear it. She provided a tough love approach, yet she was their biggest cheerleader and helped her clients create well-thought-out plans to achieve their goals.

While carrying out this important work, Vickie managed to do so with her characteristic humor, delicate irreverence, and panache. Though she understood the gravity of her clients' situations, her warmth and openness left space for others to feel comfortable, welcome, and invited into the conversation. This unique skill left an indelible mark on those around her, who were charmed by her rare ability to use humor and levity to engage her peers. Even those who represented different interests respected her and enjoyed her wit, compassion, friendship, and sincerity. Her company made those around her feel important and appreciated.

Vickie's approach to her work had a profound impact on both individuals and the greater legal system. Combining her expertise, skill, and dedication, Vickie carried out her work in a manner that reshaped the legal landscape to be more compassionate, comprehensive, and inclusive. In August 2025, Vickie was honored by a resolution in the Dallas County Commissioner's Court, and the Public Defender's Office Mental Health Division was renamed the Vickie Rice Mental Health Division. She touched countless lives, and she will be dearly missed.

Thank you to Vickie's many friends and colleagues who worked with us to remember Vickie and create this tribute.



HONORING

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht and Presiding Judge Sharon Keller



The Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health has become a model across the country as an organization that is committed to improving how the justice system interacts with individuals with mental health needs, intellectual or developmental disabilities, and substance abuse disorders. The Commission would not exist without the vision, dedication, and leadership of Chief Justice Nathan Hecht of the Supreme Court of Texas and Presiding Judge Sharon Keller of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals.

Chief Justice Hecht and Presiding Judge Keller recognized a long-standing need for systemic change. With wisdom and compassion, they joined forces in 2018 to establish the JCMH as a collaborative body aimed at improving judicial processes, policies, and outcomes for people at the intersection of mental health and justice. Their efforts have united courts, judges, attorneys, law enforcement, and behavioral health professionals under one shared goal: to make Texas a national leader in justice and mental health reform.

Under their guidance, the JCMH has developed crucial resources, hosted an annual statewide educational summit, supported the creation of specialty courts, and advanced legislative priorities that promote early intervention, diversion, and streamlined court processes. Their commitment has helped bring visibility to vulnerable populations and equipped courts across Texas with the tools and training needed to respond more effectively and compassionately.

The success of the JCMH reflects Chief Justice Hecht and Presiding Judge Keller's belief in the power of collaboration and their unwavering commitment to justice for all Texans. Their leadership has sparked a movement that is transforming lives, one courtroom at a time.

Chief Justice Hecht and Presiding Judge Keller retired at the end of 2024, but the legacy they leave through the JCMH will endure. The legal community, mental health advocates, and countless families across Texas extend heartfelt thanks for their extraordinary service and visionary leadership.

In 2025, the Supreme Court of Texas entered a new chapter of leadership with the appointment of Chief Justice Jimmy Blacklock as the 28th Chief Justice of the Court. His leadership comes at a pivotal time as the Court continues to address the evolving needs of Texans while safeguarding the constitutional principles that define its work.

Chief Justice Blacklock brings a distinguished record of public service and constitutional stewardship to this role. First appointed to the Supreme Court in 2018, he was appointed to Chief Justice by Governor Greg Abbott in January 2025. Before his judicial service, he served as General Counsel to the Governor, in the Office of the Attorney General, and as a law clerk to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. His tenure as Chief Justice promises to continue Texas's legacy of judicial leadership while addressing the pressing challenges faced by the legal system and the communities it serves.

The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals also welcomed new leadership in 2025 with the election of Presiding Judge David J. Schenck. His leadership is expected to provide continuity, stability, and a steady vision for a court that plays a vital role in maintaining public trust in the state's justice system.

Presiding Judge Schenck's judicial and legal experience spans decades of service to Texas. Prior to joining the Court of Criminal Appeals, he served on the Fifth Court of Appeals in Dallas, where he authored hundreds of opinions addressing complex questions of law. His public service also includes time as Chair of the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct and as Deputy Attorney General for Legal Counsel. These roles reflect his dedication to judicial integrity and his commitment to strengthening the institutions of justice. As Presiding Judge, Hon. Schenck brings not only a depth of appellate experience but also a forward-looking perspective on the responsibilities of the judiciary in addressing Texas's most pressing challenges.

The JCMH is looking forward to working with these new leaders.

WELCOMING

Chief Justice Jimmy Blacklock and Presiding Judge David Schenck



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Texas Court of Criminal Appeals:

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Hon. Sharon Keller, Presiding Judge (2024)
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Megan LaVoie, J.D.

Jurists in Residence:

Hon. Brent Carr
Hon. John J. Specia, Jr.

*Court leaders, Commissioners, Collaborative Council members, and staff listed served during all or some of the reporting period (January 2024–August 2025).

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JCMH IN ACTION: REAL TEXANS, REAL IMPACT

Eric Smith, Mental Health Advocate, Public Speaker, and Consultant



The Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health’s mission resonates deeply with me as someone living with serious mental illness, and also as someone tallying 19 years of sobriety and counting. Serving as a Commissioner with the JCMH, I see leaders throughout our great state continuously striving toward a more evolved and empathetic understanding of justice, shaped by a powerful truth that mental illness, addiction, intellectual disabilities, and developmental disabilities are best approached through interdisciplinary collaboration. Like many of my fellow Texans, my family and I have seen challenges born from needs that lead to involvement in our

state’s criminal and civil legal systems. The future of Texas is strong thanks to the JCMH and those with whom we collaborate as we forge new paths of hope and dignity for justice-involved individuals, something I shine a light on through major media, public speaking, advocacy, and discussions with the wonderful people of Texas.

