

Mental Health Bonds

Speaker

Before joining the Judicial Commission for Mental Health as a staff attorney in 2020, Kama Harris worked as a criminal defense lawyer, defending hundreds of adult and juvenile clients at all levels of the Texas criminal justice system. She began her legal career at a public defender's office, working as a mitigation specialist for death penalty cases. In that role, she gained instrumental insight on the way trauma, poverty, racism, mental health, and intellectual and developmental disabilities had an impact on her clients, their families, the community, and the legal system. Ms. Harris utilized that knowledge during her time as the First Assistant Public Defender in Burnet County, as an attorney in private practice, and now as a staff attorney with the JCMH.

Kama Harris



In this presentation about mental health bonds, Kama answered the following questions:

- *What are they?*
- *How can they be used?*
- *When are they required?*
- *Why are they important?*
- *Who can start this process?*

Kama cleared up the misconception that mental health bonds are “get out of jail free” cards, but instead bonds with personalized conditions that mandate treatment for mental illness or services for IDD. The court deems the treatment or services necessary.

Mental health bonds are meant to stop the revolving door of offenders coming into jail, with the goal of: preventing future arrest, saving a county money, providing treatment and services for a person, and keeping the community and victim safe by preventing the crime from repeating.