

Mental Health Diversion at Every Budget

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



Summary



In this presentation, Kama gave the audience diversion ideas for every budget for individuals with mental illness, substance use disorders, or intellectual and developmental disabilities. She showed short video clips of experts who used their real world experience to explain topics to the audience.

Kama identified these best practices:

- 1) Connecting with Community Resources
- 2) Effectively Communicating with Stakeholders
- 3) Identifying the of Pre-Trial Population
- 4) Addressing the Needs of Clients
- 5) Effectively Communicating with Clients