



**JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON MENTAL HEALTH  
COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL  
MEETING SUMMARY  
MARCH 1, 2022  
VIRTUAL MEETING**

*Co-Chair, Justice Jane Bland, Supreme Court of Texas*  
*Co-Chair, Judge Barbara Hervey, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals*  
*Deputy Liaison, Justice Rebeca Huddle, Supreme Court of Texas*  
*Deputy Liaison, Judge Jesse F. McClure, III, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals*

**JCMH Staff in attendance:**

- **Kristi Taylor, Executive Director**
- **Kama Harris, Staff Attorney**
- **Molly Davis, Staff Attorney**
- **Liz Wiggins, Program Manager**
- **Rose McBride, Communications Manager**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

**Kristi Taylor** announced that the [Judicial Summit on Mental Health](#) is scheduled to take place on November 2-4 at the Great Wolf Lodge in Grapevine. The Summit will begin with a half-day on Wednesday, the 2nd, continue with a full day on Thursday, the 3rd, and end with a half-day on Friday, the 4th. An application for speaker proposals is available on the [JCMH website](#). The deadline to submit a proposal is April 1, 2022.

**TEXAS INNOVATIONS MAP**

The new JCMH website features an interactive map of Texas's counties that highlights the efforts each county is making to address its local mental health challenges. The map includes court programs, behavioral health information, county collaborative projects, and important county contacts in mental health. The [Innovations Map](#) also has a template that can be used to organize the information according to the sequential intercept model. The user can input detailed information about the county's resources or simply include a live link to an organization's website. The JCMH is planning to hire a contractor to help with data entry so that information can be input in a timely manner. The JCMH would also like to engage the community in the creation and continuous updates of this map. This map was created with professionals in mind:



the attorneys, the judges, and the mental health providers. It was designed for the judicial system and any other stakeholders that might benefit from the information.

## **CURRENT INNOVATIONS AND UPDATES**

The membership shared the innovations and best practices in their communities or that their organization is currently utilizing that can be placed into the JCMH Innovations Map.

**John Petril** (*Senior Executive VP of Policy, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute*) MMHPI has opened a [mini-institute in El Paso](#) and will be doing intercept mapping there at the end of March.

**Hon. Ryan Turner** (*Judge, Austin Municipal Court /Executive Director of Texas Municipal Courts Education Center*) TMCEC is currently planning its [mental health conference](#). It will be held in Corpus Christi on August 18-19. TMCEC is also exploring the possibility of having an event on the 17th on the topic of motivational interviewing.

**Melissa Shearer** (*Director, Travis County Mental Health Public Defender*) Will be presenting a training for court appointed attorneys about the Texas competency process. She plans to use the [Eliminate the Wait worksheets](#) to help with that. The training should take place next month. She hopes to have also started using peer support specialists through [Via Hope](#), which has been very successful in increasing engagement.

**Hon. Devon Anderson** (*President & CEO, Justice Forward*) Justice Forward is expanding into Galveston County where it will be supporting the [felony mental health court and drug court](#). Also, this past weekend Justice Forward hosted a sober chili cookoff to coincide with the Houston Rodeo kickoff, there were over 300 people in attendance. The [Chili Cookoff](#) is the first of many sober events that Justice Forward will be hosting.

**Jonas Schwartz** (*Program Manager, Texas Workforce Commission*) TWC has developed a very simple and online inquiry process called [Start My VR](#). Individuals who are interested in vocational rehabilitation services simply provide 4 to 5 pieces of information and they are connected to a vocational rehabilitation counselor. If the individual is interested in moving forward, they are offered an opportunity to apply for services.

**Lesli Fitzpatrick** (*Attorney, Law Office of Lesli Fitzpatrick*) Along with Via Hope's peer support the Williamson County LMHA offers an extended peer support certification.

**Amy Befeld** (*Legislative Consultant, Texas Assoc. of Counties*) The April and May issues of TAC's [County Magazine](#) will feature cover stories on mental health. The April story will highlight input from county judges, county administrators, and executive directors of MHMRs.



The May issue will feature county sheriffs and their perspective on mental health issues. Also, the [Sheriffs' Association of Texas](#) recently hosted a [regional breakfast in Amarillo](#). One of the main points of discussion was the diversion of individuals with mental health concerns away from county jails. In the future, TAC will take a survey on unfunded mandates, which includes questions about total expenditures by counties for mental health evaluations, county jail inmates, prescription medication, and overall mental health expenditures in county jails. The survey results will be taken to the Legislature during the next legislative session to demonstrate to them the high costs that are placed upon the counties.

**Steve Wohleb** (*Senior VP & General Counsel, Texas Hospital Association*) [THA](#) is focused on solutions to enhance the availability of healthcare workers, specifically in our mental healthcare facilities, and we are developing strategies to enhance the healthcare workforce on a long-term basis.

**Dr. Jennie Simpson** (*Forensic Director, HHSC*) The Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council will publish the statewide behavioral health strategic plan that does include a strategic plan for diversion and community integration and forensic services. The Jail In-Reach has been very successful, and HHSC is planning on starting the second cohort for the program.

**Rachel Samsel** (*Deputy Assoc. Commissioner Strategic Initiatives & Policy, HHSC*) HHSC's [Policy and Strategic Initiatives](#) division is deploying significant recruitment and retention efforts, including requests for salary increases, to help address staffing issues at the state hospitals. The team is focused on ensuring that staffing is available for expansion projects. The maximum-security unit in Kerrville is almost complete and patients will begin moving into the unit in early summer. The ribbon cutting for the new hospital in Houston is complete. The new facility will serve a 29-county region in southeast Texas. The first two units that will open will be forensic and will have 48 beds coming online in the next couple of months. The new hospital in Dallas is currently in the design process and recently reached a milestone with the new patient complex at Russ.

**Julie Wayman** (*Mental and Behavioral Health Manger, Interagency Liaison, Texas Education Agency*) TEA is currently working on a SB 11 resource mapping for school mental health resources. There are [20 regional education service centers](#) and they have been identifying mental health resources for schools. There may be an opportunity to link some of those resources in the JCMH Innovations Map. TEA's resource maps will be completed in August and then included into two legislative reports. The maps will be updated periodically to ensure updated and relevant information.

**Greg Hansch** (*Executive Director, NAMI Texas*) The [National AOT Symposium](#) will be held on October 13-14 in San Antonio. The symposium is a great opportunity to learn more about AOT. Registration opens on March 15th. [NAMI Texas](#) continues to be interested in a few



legislative reforms, specifically improvements to Chapter 574 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to court-ordered mental health services. NAMI Texas is also looking at the collection of information after a Chapter 573 emergency detention is in place. There is a significant concern about the mental health of people who work in the court system. NAMI has a focus called Frontline Wellness that looks after the mental healthcare of law enforcement officers and healthcare workers. NAMI Texas would similarly like to feature mental issues faced by court personnel.

**Michelle Romero** (*Associate Director, Texas Medical Association*) TMA has recently submitted their interim studies to the legislature. In the summaries the TMA has stressed the need to continue to focus on mental health and substance use disorder. TMA’s physicians remain very concerned about the impact these issues have on the healthcare system and the need to provide adequate treatment resources. Coming out of the pandemic TMA is seeing a very high rate of suicides and opioid overdose deaths. TMA is currently working on developing an opioid overdose toolkit. Also, an opioid abatement council is currently being formed and members have been appointed. The council will decide on the use and disbursement of the opioid settlement funds that the state received. The Comptroller is working on creating a broadband plan for the state in order to get broadband connectivity to the state’s rural areas. This will help TMA improve access to telehealth and telemedicine.

**Hon. Grace Uzomba** (*Judge, Bexar County Court No. 2*) My court has been focusing on IDD and ensuring that the attorneys are aware of IDD issues. I require that any IDD or mental health issues are addressed prior to a case’s disposition. During the plea process, I also have the attorney address any 16.22 issues before a plea is accepted. I have also noticed a lack of awareness by some pretrial and probation officers of an individual’s mental health issues, so I am trying to address this through education.

**CLOSING**

**Justice Huddle** thanked the members for their input and welcomed all the new members to the Council. She asked that members let the JCMH know of at least one contact in their county that could assist in the build-out of the Innovations Map.

JCMH Upcoming Meeting Dates

MEETING	DATE	TIME
Commission	5/20/2022	9:00am-12:00pm
Collaborative Council	6/6/2022	12:00pm-1:00pm
Collaborative Council	10/3/2022	12:00pm-1:00pm

*Meeting dates are tentative and subject to change if the High Courts’ schedule conflicts. Updates will be sent if there is a change.*