



Need To Know

Mental Health Justice Diversion Services

Diversion programs and services provide an alternative to traditional legal proceedings by working to redirect people away from incarceration toward rehabilitative services.

These programs aim to address risk factors linked to involvement in the justice system, such as mental health challenges, substance use disorders and nonmedical drivers of health. Structured interventions, education and community support are implemented to achieve these goals.

It's important to recognize that there are variations in diversion services and programs throughout the state. Below are common questions and answers about some of the diversion services in Texas.



Question: What is a diversion center?

Answer: Diversion centers in Texas provide law enforcement and emergency services personnel with an appropriate drop-off location for people with immediate mental health needs as an alternative to arrest.

These centers aim to reduce the time law enforcement spends taking people to private psychiatric hospitals or emergency rooms and helps connect people with appropriate treatment and resources.

Question: What are mental health deputy (MHD) programs?

Answer: MHD programs are comprised of peace officers with specialized training in crisis intervention provided by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement. The primary goal of MHD programs is to reduce the number of arrests by addressing mental health challenges within the community.

MHDs help people experiencing a mental health crisis get connected to appropriate treatment. They also partner with the community and local mental health authorities (LMHAs) and local behavioral health authorities (LBHAs) to help prevent arrests through effective crisis response collaboration. The presence of an MHD program depends on the availability of the service in your area.

For more information on MHD programs, contact your local law enforcement agency.

Question: What are co-responder programs?

Answer: Co-responder programs are teams of law enforcement officers and mental health professionals who respond collaboratively to calls involving people experiencing a mental health crisis. The primary goal of co-responder programs is to reduce the number of arrests by addressing mental health challenges within the community. The presence of a co-responder program depends on the availability of the service in your area.

For more information on co-responder programs:

- [Contact your LMHA or LBHA for more information on program services.](#)
- Call 2-1-1 and ask for the LMHA or LBHA in your area.

Question: What are mental health dockets?

Answer: Mental health dockets provide a judicial process for people with serious mental illness, prioritizing their connection to appropriate treatment and resources during the resolution of their charges.

Mental health dockets typically consist of specific judicial and prosecutorial appointments who meet regularly with other partners (for example, LMHA or LBHA staff or pre-trial services staff) to gain a clearer picture of what drove the alleged offense, recommended treatment needs for the person charged, and outcomes that

may prevent future justice involvement while keeping the community safe.

Question: What are mental health courts?

Answer: Mental health courts use assessments, individualized treatment plans and judicial monitoring to concurrently address the participant's mental health needs and concerns for public safety. Mental health courts often include funding and the provision of direct services to participants such as intensive case management or substance use treatment.

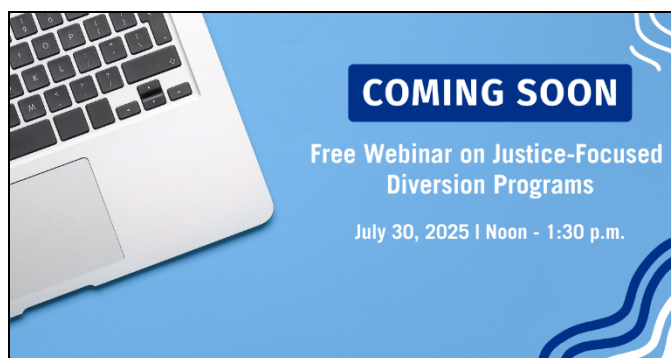
Specific charge outcomes are a component of mental health courts based on the participant's efforts and compliance during a specified time frame. Below are additional resources on mental health courts in Texas:

- [Texas Government Code Chapter 125](#) sets out the statutorily required characteristics for mental health court programs.
- [Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health Courts](#)

Missed a newsletter?

[Visit the Texas Behavioral Health and Justice Technical Assistance Center.](#)

Upcoming Events



Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Forensic and Jail Diversion Services is offering a webinar on justice-focused diversion programs.

Date and Time: Wednesday, July 30, from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Presenter: Ashleigh Walton, director, Forensic and Jail Diversion Services, HHSC

Topics:

- Applications of the term “diversion.”
- Mental health-focused diversion programs and tools in Texas.
- Additional considerations to support successful short- and long-term outcomes for people who are justice-involved.

[Register for the upcoming webinar.](#)

The 2025 Summit



The Summit: Reaching New Heights in Mental Health and Justice Collaboration

If you work with people involved in the justice system, join HHSC Forensic and Jail Diversion Services at The Summit conference:

Dates: Aug. 14-15

Location: Embassy Suites Conference Center, San Marcos

The Summit is a two-day conference that will provide introductory knowledge about the primary professional fields working at the intersection of mental health and the justice system. Attendees will learn foundational knowledge about community and government systems to improve relationships, enhance collaboration and achieve better outcomes.

What to expect:

- Learn how justice and mental health systems interact.
- Build stronger partnerships across agencies.
- Gain insights to enhance collaboration and improve outcomes.

[Register for The Summit.](#)

Technical Assistance



Need help? The Forensic and Jail Diversion Service team stands ready to support you.

The Texas Behavioral Health and Justice Technical Assistance Center (TA Center) provides timely guidance and connections to stakeholders across Texas on a variety of behavioral health and justice topics. Reach out to the TA Center today to receive tailored support and troubleshooting for issues big and small.

[Request support today.](#)

Announcements



Exciting opportunities await! The TA Center website lists upcoming conferences and events across Texas.

**[Visit the Texas Behavioral Health and Justice
Technical Assistance Center for upcoming events.](#)**