



Sixth Annual

JUDICIAL SUMMIT ON MENTAL HEALTH

OCTOBER 18-20, 2023

Judicial Summit on Mental Health Executive Summary

From October 18-20, 2023, the 6th annual Texas Judicial Summit on Mental Health brought together 1,236 key stakeholders including representatives from the criminal justice system, mental health community, and legal experts to address critical issues at the intersection of mental illness and the justice system. Convened by the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health (JCMH), the event featured Dr. Xavier Amador as a thought-provoking [keynote](#) speaker, challenging the audience to rethink how we speak to, and the assumptions we make about, people with serious mental illness. The Summit offered expert panel discussions and breakout sessions sharing practical suggestions and tools. The Summit also explored cutting-edge strategies for early identification of mental health issues, innovative approaches to reduce reliance on the competency restoration system, and novel ways for county leaders to ensure that every effort is made to accomplish their goals by delving into the best practices in the adult and youth-serving systems. The diverse array of speakers contributed a wealth of new resources, all of which will be accessible on the JCMH website, TexasJCMH.gov, along with [recordings of each session](#). Below are ten of the key learning points from the Summit:

- 1) **Anosognosia**—unawareness of one’s mental health disorder—affects about 50 percent of people with serious mental illness. The [LEAP](#) method by [Dr. Xavier Amador](#) gives you the tools to persuade someone “in denial” about their mental illness to accept treatment and services.
- 2) **Relationships matter.** “We will never win on the strength of our argument; we win on the strength of our relationship,” stated [Dr. Amador](#).
- 3) **We must consider individuals *individually*.** “Cookie-cutter justice, is no justice at all.” [Judge Stephanie Sawyer](#) developed a [Resource-Based Sentencing & Supervision Program](#) for courts where she uses technology to divert appropriate individuals while ensuring public safety.
- 4) **Now is the time for a special focus on youth.** [Judge Cyndi Porter Gore](#) highlighted her specialized [juvenile municipal court docket](#) and an earlier session with [Judges David Newell and Ryan Turner](#) laid out new youth grant and diversion opportunities that are available with [recent legislation](#).
- 5) **Mental Health [Jail Diversion Centers](#) divert appropriate individuals away from the criminal justice system.** These [centers](#) are being built around the state, including urban and rural counties. Find a model that inspires your county.

- 6) Save **[competency restoration \(CR\) services](#)** for cases where the State has a **compelling interest to prosecute**. HHSC's new [Texas Competency Restoration Guide](#) recommends that communities collaborate to understand its definition of compelling interest to prosecute. Variables to consider may include the nature of the offense and aggravation factors, circumstances of the offense, concerns and safety of the alleged victims and community, availability of inpatient CR; and wait time to receive CR in the context of the maximum sentencing term provided by law for the alleged offense.
- 7) Counties can create a **[Mental Health Law Plan](#)** to coordinate their use the most **appropriate, efficient, and cost-savings responses to people with serious mental illness and intellectual and developmental disabilities**. [JCMH](#) has a [checklist](#) and technical assistance to help.
- 8) **[Grant-writing skills](#)** help to successfully secure funding. There are resources to improve your grant-writing skills and a [Toolkit for Applying for a Grant to Start or Expand a Specialty Court](#).
- 9) **Do your part to prevent people with IDD from being overrepresented in the criminal justice system**. Make sure you seek [resources](#) to know [how to best interact with people with IDD](#).
- 10) Use **[evidence-based practices for self-care](#)**. Professionals in this field are particularly susceptible to depression, anxiety, and substance use disorder. [Ask for help](#) when you need it.