

Justice & Mental Health Coalition

Legislative Priorities for the 85th Legislature

Italic: Needs voted on

County Jails

1. *Expand TCOOMI Representatives*
Improve continuity of care for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders who are in county jails by expanding TCOOMI representatives across the state.
2. Continuity of Medication
Allow county jails access to the state hospitals and LMHA formularies to promote continuity of medication if someone is restored to competency or was being treated in the community prior to arrest.
3. Increase TCJS Inspectors
Increase the Texas Commission on Jail Standards' ability to monitor and inspect county jails by adding inspectors.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

1. *Training for Correctional Officers*
Promote avenues for correctional officers and other staff to receive training to reduce instances of use of force, attempted and completed suicides, assaults on staff, and use of solitary confinement such as crisis intervention, mental health training, and substance use training.
2. Limit Solitary Confinement
Limit the use of solitary confinement, particularly for individuals with mental health disorders.

Diversion and Decarceration

1. *The Sandra Bland Act*
In response to the death of Sandra Bland, Representative Coleman has proposed legislation that will expand reforms statewide, banning pretextual traffic stops, mandating access to health professionals in all jails, incentivizing the use of de-escalation tactics, and expanding access to personal recognizance bonds.
 - a. *Ending pretextual stops*
 - b. *Data collection on verbal warnings, including changing the coding of race/ethnicity for more accurate reporting*
 - c. *Curbing racial profiling through training and repercussions*
 - d. *Prevent consent searches: limiting to probable cause searches*
 - e. *Increase and improve training for de-escalation*
 - f. *No jail for minor traffic violations*
 - g. *Personal Recognizance Bond as a presumption when setting bail for non-violent misdemeanor arrests*
 - h. *Pre-booking diversion through connection with treatment centers*

- i. *Grant program to county jails to be used for: telemedicine, onsite medical professionals, electronic cell check sensors*
 - j. *Increase funding to TCJS to improve oversight*
2. **Basic Reporting for HHSC and LMHAs**
LMHAs should report to HHSC on the number of people in the criminal justice system diverted through LMHA intervention. HHSC shall track and report as part of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Public Reporting system LMHA performance measures relating to statutorily-required jail diversion.
3. **Bail Reform**
Release during pretrial is often delayed or denied due to lack of mental health or substance use resources. Pretrial release should be reformed to simplify bail for those with a mental health or substance use disorder and provide pretrial intervention options.

Reentry

1. **Medicaid Reinstatement**
Improve access to care for some of our communities' most vulnerable individuals from jail by automatically reinstating Medicaid benefits upon release.
2. **Peer Support Specialist Funding**
Evaluate and continue the use of the approach of peer support for individuals inside of and upon release from correctional facilities, and consider potential for expansion of funding.
3. **Remove Peer Support Specialist Barriers**
Remove barriers to employment for peer support specialists with a criminal history, particularly when personal experience with the criminal justice system would enhance the peer's effectiveness.