

Hays County Mental Health Court

JUDGE ELAINE BROWN

COUNTY COURT AT LAW #3

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MENTAL HEALTH COURT ADMINISTRATOR



Topics



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Mental Illness
and CJ System

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Prevalence of Mental Illness

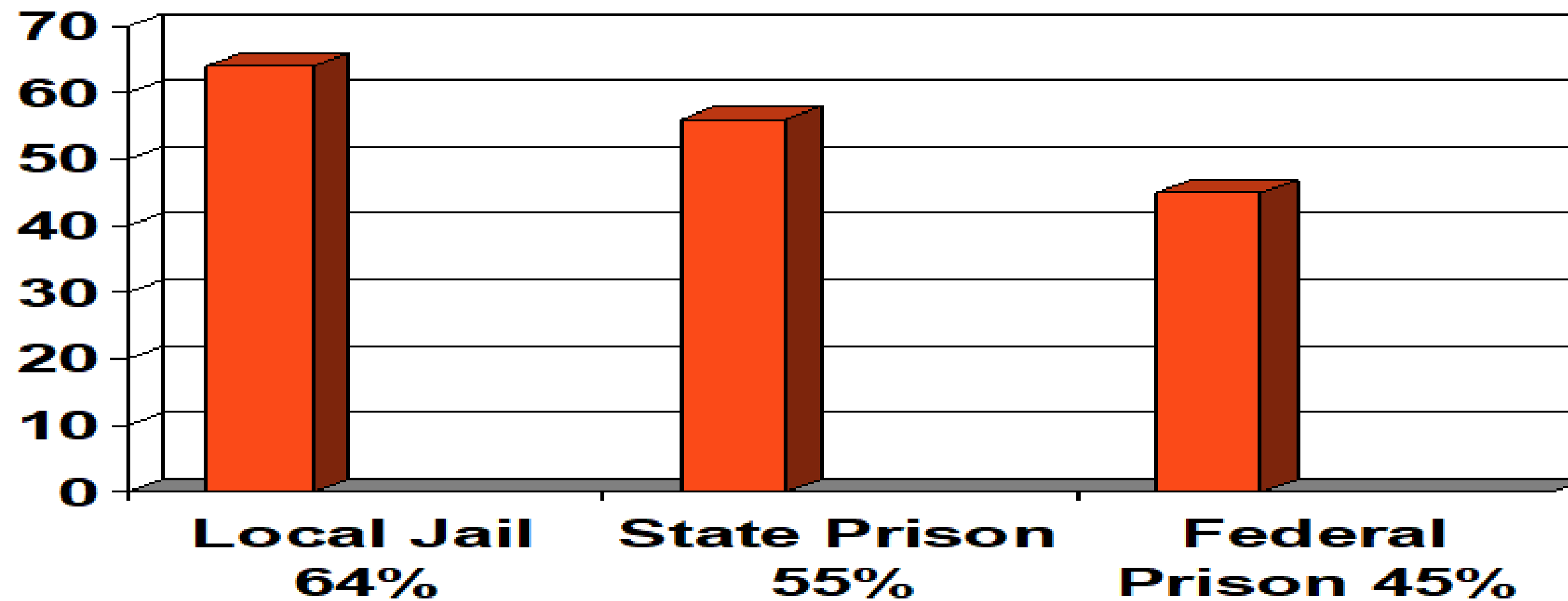
- 19.86% of adults are experiencing a mental illness. Equivalent to nearly **50 million Americans**.
- 4.91% are experiencing a severe mental illness.

17.17% of Texans have a diagnosable mental health disorder, which accounts to 3,602,000 people.

Resource: [Mental Health America International.org](https://www.mentalhealthamerica.org/)



Prevalence of Severe Mental Illness in the Justice System



[INC.HTTPS://WWW.NCSC.ORG/___DATA/ASSETS/PDF_FILE/0017/38024/MH_AND_CRIMINAL_JUSTICE_FACT_SHEET.PDF](https://www.ncsc.org/__DATA/ASSETS/PDF_FILE/0017/38024/MH_AND_CRIMINAL_JUSTICE_FACT_SHEET.PDF)

What is a Mental Health Court?



- A specialty treatment court with the goal of linking justice involved individuals to long term community-based treatment and rehabilitation.
- Mental health courts share the following goals:
 - improve public safety by reducing criminal recidivism
 - improve the quality of life of people with mental illnesses and their participation in effective treatment
 - providing an alternative to incarceration
- MHC Team Members include: the Judge, Court Administrator, Court Caseworker, Prosecution, Attorneys, Community Supervision, and Treatment Providers who regularly meet to staff incoming court participants, current court participants, as well as attending court hearings, commencements, and trainings



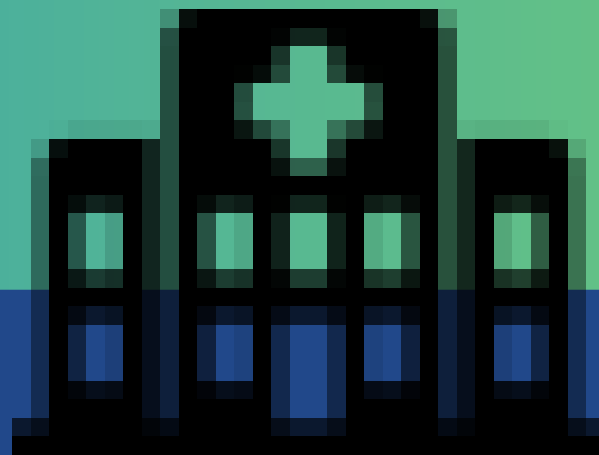
9 Key Components of a Successful Mental Health Court

1. The integration of mental illness/IDD treatment services in the processing of cases in the judicial system
2. The use of a non-adversarial approach to promote public safety/protect due process rights
3. Early identification
4. Access to evidence based services and treatment
5. Ongoing judicial interaction and accountability
6. Diversion to treatment
7. Monitoring and evaluation of program goals/effectiveness
8. Continuing interdisciplinary education to ensure best practices
9. Development of partnerships with public agencies/community orgs

Resource: <https://texasjcmh.gov/media/czaoapye/mhc-the-10-step-guide.pdf>



Cost Savings and Statistics



incarceration at Hays County Jail

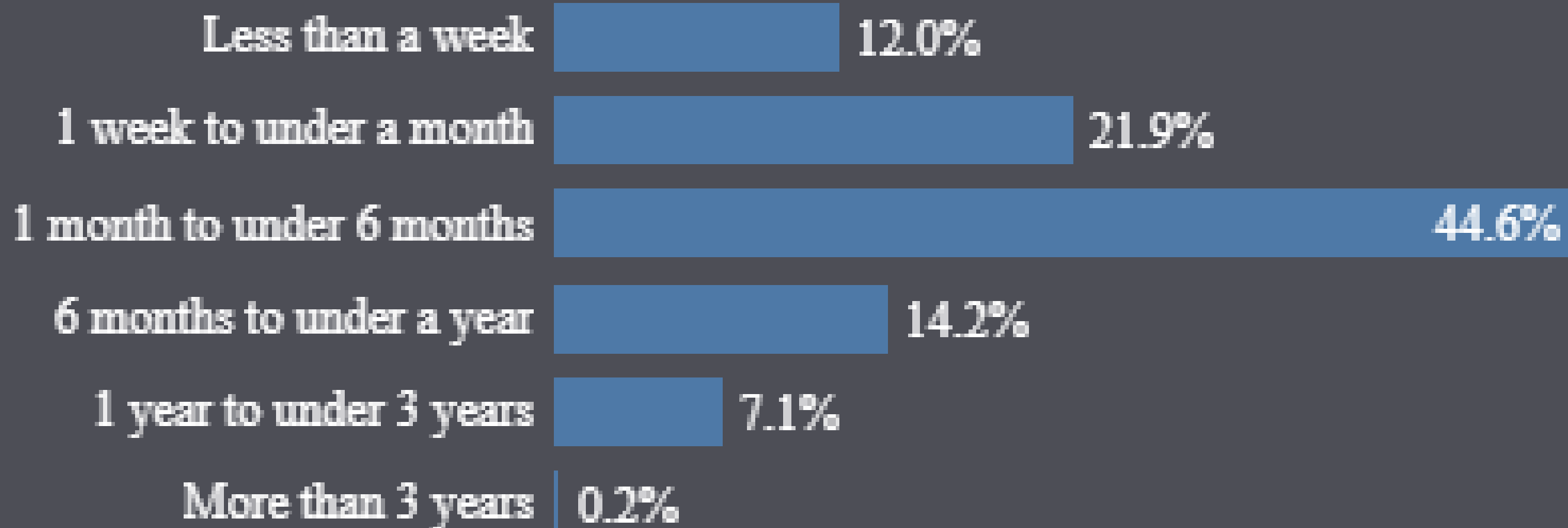
\$130.55 per night

inpatient hospitalization for uninsured individual

\$3,060.00 per night

Pretrial Length of Stay

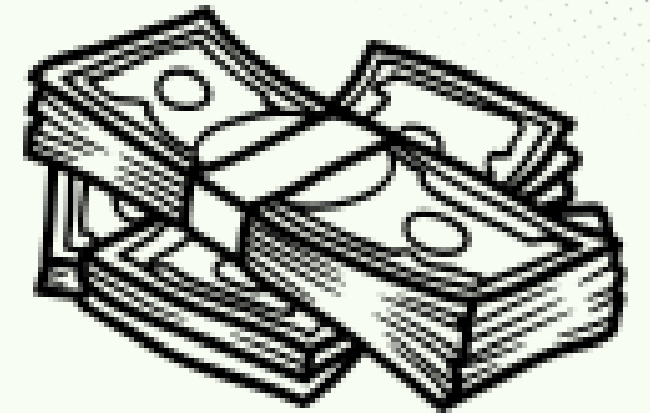
On May 1, 2024, the median length of stay for people held pretrial was 54 days.



Let's compare...



- 1 month for one person in the county jail for 30 days costs \$3,916.50
- 2 months in the county jail costs \$7,833.00
- 3 months in the county jail costs \$11,749.50
- 4 months in the county jail costs \$15,666
- 5 months in the county jail costs \$19,582.50
- 6 months in the county jail costs \$23,499.00



1 whole year in jail = \$46,998.

Let's say each court participant (35 people) spent 4 months in jail (instead of being in the court program) that is \$548, 310, and no underlying issues are being addressed.

Hays County MHC has spent to date \$84,000 to link 35 people to treatment, saving the county \$464,310 through this program.

Mental Health Court Effectiveness



- Participants in mental health courts have lower rates of recidivism—and, in particular, are less likely to be arrested for new crimes—than individuals with mental illnesses who go through the traditional criminal court system. Empirical evidence shows this trend continues after graduation when individuals are no longer under court supervision.
- Mental health courts are more effective than the traditional court system and jails at connecting participants with mental health treatment services.
- Over time, mental health courts save money through reduced recidivism and the associated jail and court costs that are avoided, and also through decreased use of the most expensive treatment options, such as inpatient care.

Reosource:

https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/CSG_MHC_Research.pdf

- There is research to suggest that the criminal justice outcomes of mental health court participants who graduate are better than those of individuals who start but do not complete the program or whose cases are processed by the traditional court system.
- There is empirical evidence to support that, when compared with participants' mental health status before enrollment, mental health courts have a positive effect on participants' mental health.

Resource:

https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/CSG_MHC_Research.pdf

Program Evaluation

- Recidivism Rate - 0% - no court graduate has picked up new misdemeanor or felony charge in Hays County
- Success Rate is 93%. 40 out of the 43 individuals admitted into the court program have graduated or are currently compliant in the court program at this time. We have 25 participants in the program currently and have graduated 15 participants from the program. We have another class of graduates later this month.

We also look at other indicators of success:

*Clinical scales are conducted during each phase of the program and after the program measuring symptomology and self reported resiliency

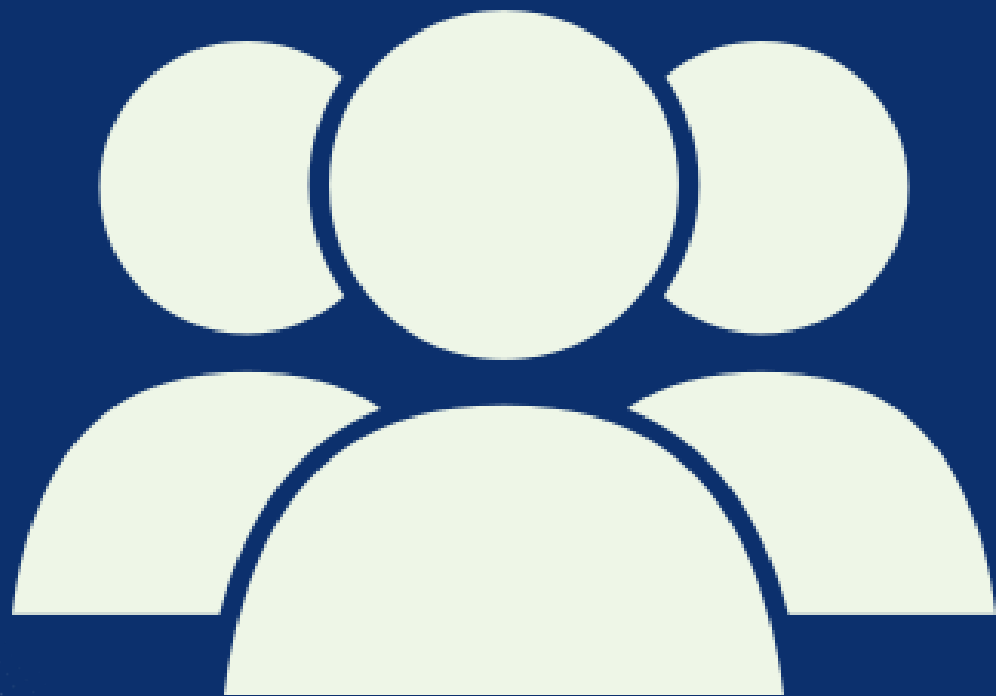
*Phase promotion reflection forms are completed at each promotion phase and before graduation as are anonymous feedback surveys. All court participants report being satisfied with the court programs services and have found it to be beneficial for them.

*Anonymous feedback surveys are administered throughout the program and all have come back with positive results and comments from the court participants. We strive to encourage an environment that is supportive of recovery and meets people where they are in their mental wellness journey and will continue to create this for all court participants.

Criteria and Target Population

Criteria

- 17 years of age or older
- Diagnosis of primary mental health disorder, secondary disorder could be co-occurring substance use disorder or intellectual/developmental disability
- Pending misdemeanor or felony charge within Hays County
- Live in Hays County, if out of county this on a case by case basis
- Nexus between MH disorder and pending charge



Disqualifying Criteria

- Crimes of a sexual nature
- Continuous violence

Referral Process

1

Referral to MHC

2

Referral Email
w/ Attorney and DA

3

MHC Conducts
Initial Screening

4

3rd Party MH
Assessment

5

Staffing to
Determine Eligibility

Admittance to
MHC Program



Program Structure



Commencement Ceremonies



Commencement Ceremonies



These are their stories...

What have you learned about yourself so far?

After experiencing my two mental breakdowns in 2020 and 2021, my life is returning to normal again. I'm becoming myself again.

SB

What have you gained from participating in Mental Health Court up to this point?

Confidence, motivation, & MHC has kept me out of trouble & on the right track. My family relationship has been great since we started.

What have you learned about yourself so far?

I am a lot stronger than I think I am.

KW

What struggles have you encountered during your time in the program and how have you overcome those struggles?

Becoming a new parent but utilized support systems

What do you plan to work on/accomplish in the next phase?

Getting ready for MHC graduation & school graduation.

AW



I have gained security and stability. I have gained a great team through the mental health court program who have been there for me. I have gained some great accomplishments out of this experience such as getting things done, going to counseling, and be able to have tough conversations.

AW

What have you learned about yourself so far?

you can be happy & enjoy life without substances.

CA

What have you gained from participating in Mental Health Court up to this point? *Knowledge and finding myself again. Also to know it is OK to ask for help.*

What advances have you made in treatment? *Using my tools in my toolbox when needed to further my success in my life.*

What struggles have you encountered during your time in the program and how have you overcome those struggles? *Finding out my mother has cancer. I have overcome them by reaching out to my support group and not letting my mind set me back into my old comfort zone.*

J
C



Success Story

- JR is 50 year old court participant who was chronically unhoused for 12 years in San Marcos. He lives with schizophrenia and has struggled with sobriety with multiple substances. Since being in the program those challenges continued and JR admitted to detox, rehab twice, and graduated from IOP (Intensive Outpatient Program)
- JR was awarded an emergency housing voucher last year and moved into his apartment in Kyle right before Christmas. His case worker applied for benefits, insurance, and backpay which he was approved for. JR remained engaged and supported through the court program despite his struggles with his sobriety and mental illness. JR graduated officially from the program in June and we will be celebrating his accomplishments this month for the Summer commencement!

“

“I know I was resistant and did not believe that they are really gonna help you and not let you down. You know when we were walking to court. You said I’m not your enemy, I’m here for you and you just have to trust me. I told you I would commit to this and I trusted you. Thanks for not hurting me.” Text Message from JR to MHCA

“I told you I’m going to need support from ya’ll and the community. I told you I trust you. I’m far from perfect. I just know how to keep my word. Let’s keep working together. I can keep my word. I’m just overwhelmed, it’s like I never have to sleep outside again. Enjoy our victory.” - Text Message from JR to MHCA

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County Wide Mental Health Coordination

Led by Judge Elaine Brown and Chief Stan Standridge (SMPD) to address the Criminal Justice/MH intersect

- Attendees include County stakeholders, MHC, LMHA, Law Enforcement, Jail Staff and Administrators, Judges, PDO office, EMS, and DA Office

Behavioral Advisory Team (BAT)

MH Initiatives of BAT

- Jail Diversion/MH Facility
- Competency Restoration
- Improved Data Sharing
- Improved 911 Response to Crises

Hays Health Department - Peyton Wagner and Matthew Gonzales coordinate and facilitate Adult and Youth MH Workgroups.

- Attendees include community organizations, social service providers, local substance use and mental health organizations that are working towards goals shared by each workgroup to address Adult and Youth Mental Health respectively.

Mental Health Youth Workgroup

Mental Health Adult Workgroup

MHCC

Mental Health Coordinating Committee

- Operates to identify potential funding sources and to coordinate the efforts of the other groups to identify and increase access to mental health resources
- Attendees include representatives and stakeholders from each city in Hays and the county, and chairs from the BAT, Adult Workgroup and Youth Workgroup

Thank you!

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or 512-757-0795