



Statewide Behavioral Health Leadership Positions Are Recommended

Chief Justices and State Court Administrators require behavioral health personnel in the Administrative Office to provide the necessary leadership to examine and improve state courts' response to mental illness. State court leaders have taken several approaches and this Court Leadership Brief describes how states have increased their capacity to lead change in this important area.



The **California Judicial Council** has a **Senior Analyst** in Criminal Justice Service's (CJS) Behavioral Health and Collaborative Courts unit who performs a wide range of duties and acts as the office subject matter expert on mental health and substance use disorder issues. Primary responsibilities include conducting research and outreach, providing local assistance to courts, and supporting the behavioral health programs of the office. This position identifies local training and resource needs and assists in the development of responsive programs including support of CJS Behavioral Health Education Series, conducts research on the implementation of diversion or other programs focusing on mental health issues in the justice system, and acts as a subject matter expert and liaison between the California Judicial Council, the courts, and other behavioral health stakeholders, including the Department of State Hospitals, and the Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health.

Idaho and **New Mexico** established statewide behavioral health manager positions in their respective Administrative Offices. In **Idaho**, the **Statewide Behavioral Health Manager** is responsible for analyzing, developing, and implementing best practices for Idaho's problem-solving courts, community sentencing alternatives, and other cases involving families and children to obtain evidence-based, high quality behavioral health assessment and treatment services. A minimum of five to seven years of progressively responsible experience in the delivery of behavioral health treatment services, including program and staff supervisory experience or organizational management experience is required. In **New Mexico**, the Administrative Office of the Courts **Statewide Behavioral Health Manager** organizes statewide behavioral health training, education, and summits, manages statewide behavioral health grants, and manages, directs, and provides operational support to behavioral health courts. This position also requires experience in managing behavioral or mental health programs.

Illinois Courts recently added a [Statewide Behavioral Health Administrator](#) to its Administrative Office of the Courts. This position will provide oversight and advisement regarding behavioral health projects and issues and develop state and national relationships to support behavioral health efforts as they affect the courts. The Statewide Behavioral Health Administrator is responsible for analyzing, developing, and implementing best practices to obtain evidence-based, high quality behavioral health assessments and treatment services throughout the court system. The Statewide Behavioral Health Administrator may supervise staff as assigned. The position is in the Executive Division and reports directly to the Administrative Director.

Working within the **Massachusetts Executive Office of the Trial Court**, led by the Chief Justice of the Trial Court and the Court Administrator, the [Sequential Intercept Model \(SIM\) Project Coordinator](#) is responsible for providing coordination, administrative and financial oversight of a statewide project facilitating effective collaborations between local criminal justice systems and mental health and substance use disorder treatment systems all in accordance with the SIM. The SIM Project Coordinator coordinates all aspects of SIM mapping workshops in court communities or regions across the state. SIM provides a conceptual framework and action plan for communities to use to effectively divert persons with mental health and/or substance use disorders into treatment whereby reducing the risk of entering or penetrating deeper into the criminal justice system. Mapping workshops bring together local key stakeholders from the criminal justice system, treatment providers, community advocates, and people with lived experience, to map out the key points or “intercepts” where people come in contact with the criminal justice system. A facilitated analysis of the gaps and strengths at each intercept, for diverting people with behavioral health issues into treatment and services, culminates in an action plan for the community to work from. The SIM Project Coordinator provides regular reports to the Chief Justice of the Trial Court on the progress and performance of SIM.

The **New Jersey Judiciary** established a mental health initiative within the Chief Justice’s Statewide Supreme Court Mental Health Advisory Committee. The Committee connects over thirty key state and local stakeholders to examine intersection points between individuals with mental illness and the courts. The present focus is on better serving those with mental illness and criminal charges, including creating or enhancing current mental health diversion programs using an innovative integrated behavioral health and criminal justice framework. The Administrative Director of the Courts dedicated one of the Special Assistants to the Director to lead the pilot effort for the Chief Justice’s mental health initiative project. A newly created high-level manager position is devoted to the success of each county pilot project. The statewide [Mental Health Program Manager](#) collaborates with system stakeholders and coordinates and manages all aspects of the planning/development phases of this project from jail intercept to diversion program entry through specialized court supervision. An additional newly created Judiciary position is a [Probation Mental Health Diversion Officer](#), who will uniquely supervise individuals accepted into the pilot pretrial diversion programs in accordance with criminogenic needs identified using an evidence-based risk tool. The diversion officer will serve as a member of each county’s

multi-discipline diversion team and work closely with the Statewide Mental Health Program Manager, who also manages the existing mental health supervision program for individuals convicted and sentenced to probation.

The **Oregon Judicial Department (OJD)** developed a **behavioral health team** to lead statewide efforts working with the Chief Justice's Behavioral Health Advisory Council. The OJD has a team of Office of the State Court Administrator staff that provides statewide legal, programmatic, and data services and offers related assistance and resources to the courts. The behavioral health team consists of a behavioral health attorney (General Counsel for Behavioral Health), a **behavioral health data analyst**, a **behavioral health business analyst**, and more recently **aid and assist (competency) coordinators** in the circuit courts.

The **Supreme Court of Texas** and the **Texas Court of Criminal Appeals** created the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health (JCMH). An Executive Director, two **Staff Attorneys**, a **Program Manager**, as well as support positions of a Communications Manager and a Legal Assistant, were established to assist in the implementation of the goals of the JCMH. The JCMH works to strengthen criminal and civil courts in the administration of justice for Texans with mental health challenges, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), or substance use disorder through judicial and attorney education, collaboration with mental health and IDD experts, and judicial leadership. The JCMH's primary projects include conducting **Commission Collaborative Council**, and Committee meetings with statewide experts, including a legislative research committee; writing and updating adult and juvenile **bench books on mental health and IDD law**; hosting a yearly statewide **Judicial Summit on Mental Health**; and developing subject matter expertise to provide technical assistance to Texas courts, judges, and attorneys.

The **Washington Administrative Office of the Courts** was awarded, by the Legislature, in its 2021-2023 Biennial Budget effective October 1, 2021, \$1,200,321 to develop and implement a statewide **Behavioral Health Response Team**. This team will facilitate the development and implementation of a coordinated statewide response to individuals involved in the justice system who have behavioral health needs, and assess data needs, develop evaluation efforts, and collect data. Staff will coach and educate the courts to use data and self-assessment tools and participate in a peer-review program to improve their therapeutic court programs. This funding will allow the Administrative Office of the Courts Behavioral Health Response Team to develop subject matter expertise and provide technical assistance, training, and resources to courts and behavioral health system partners throughout the state.



For additional information and copies of all the job descriptions,
contact ptobias@ncsc.org

www.ncsc.org/behavioralhealth

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