



Statewide, Regional, and Trial Court Behavioral Health Positions Are Recommended

State courts and justice partners nationwide are hiring behavioral health positions or embedding clinicians into court operations to provide the necessary leadership and capacity to examine and improve state courts' response to mental illness. There are a variety of models, required qualifications, and types of positions across the nation; and no one model has emerged as most effective. This Court Leadership Brief identifies a variety of positions as examples and describes how various stakeholders have increased their states' capacity to lead change in this important area.

Hyperlinks to job descriptions are provided as available. Some positions are county-funded, others state-funded, and some are contract positions. This brief describes positions other than mental health court and veterans' treatment court coordinators and other positions associated with problem-solving courts. Though some of the listed positions were developed to serve entire states and others are targeted to specific regions or trial courts, the list is organized alphabetically by state.



Arizona, Maricopa County developed positions to integrate mental health treatment into court procedures and outcomes. A [Mental Health Strategist](#) collaborates with court administration, state and county agencies, law enforcement, and high level-decision makers in community organizations with the goals of building system bridges, addressing program inefficiencies, and recommending system improvements to Mental Health program issues on behalf of the Judicial Branch. The Strategist spearheads intergovernmental agreements, memoranda of understanding, and public and private partnership opportunities to acquire mental health resources through various streams of revenue for the Judicial Branch. In addition, to ensure necessary services are provided to Integrated Mental Health Court participants, the Judicial Branch has positions for a [Mental Health Court Coordinator](#) and [Social Worker](#) to serve as non-judicial liaisons for the Bench to assist with coordination of the cases, as well as the identification and resolution of singular and systemic barriers in cases by providing timely, accurate information to the court and parties.

In **Pinal County, Arizona**, a [Treatment Services Program Manager](#) coordinates, streamlines, and ensures conformity to the legal processes associated with the Arizona Rules of Criminal Procedure; investigates other areas of the Court processes that involve behavioral health treatment services and/or providers; and develops processes for monitoring and streamlining service delivery. The Program Manager also develops and provides trainings to all level of the judicial branch and other stakeholders regarding relevant statutory provisions, Rule 11 of the Arizona Rules of Criminal Procedure, and behavioral health services within Pinal County and the State of Arizona; investigates and develops processes to minimize voids within the Court processes; provides consultation regarding available behavioral health services; makes referrals; and

coordinates access to behavioral health services for defendants, including written reports. Another [position](#), focused on the Juvenile Court, plans, directs, and manages the services for cases that involve medical, behavioral health, or other incapacities and represents the court with consumer and community organizations as an advocate for offenders needing supportive services.

California. The California Judicial Council has a [Senior Analyst](#) in Criminal Justice Services' (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.

Colorado. The Colorado Judicial Department, Office of the State Court Administrator, contracts with local behavioral health professionals in every judicial district as Court Liaisons through the [Bridges Program](#). The Court Liaison is responsible for facilitating communication and collaboration between judicial and behavioral health systems. The purpose of the program is to promote positive outcomes for individuals living with mental health or co-occurring behavioral health conditions; to keep judges, district attorneys, and defense attorneys informed about available community-based behavioral health services for defendants, prioritizing those who have been ordered to undergo a competency evaluation or receive competency restorations services; and to connect individuals to treatment.

Connecticut. The Judicial Branch Court Supported Services Division contracts with licensed mental health and addictions outpatient clinics, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), to provide a range of evidence-based and/or research-driven behavioral health services. Some of these behavioral health services include integrated substance use and mental health evaluation, individual and group treatment, anger management, intensive outpatient treatment, testing, medication assisted treatment and medication management. A [Behavioral Health Clinician](#) and a [Multisystemic Therapist](#) job descriptions are provided for reference. Some Judicial Branch positions include a [Clinical Court Coordinator](#) in Juvenile Matters, [Director of Court Relations](#), and [Clinical Social Workers](#).

Florida, Miami- Dade County. This county has hired a number of key positions to improve the court and community response to mental illnesses including a [Project Director of the Jail Diversion Program](#), who provides administration, management and supervision of the program operations and enhancements. The position also supervises the [Crisis Intervention Team \(CIT\) Coordinator](#), the [Misdemeanor Team Leader](#), the [Felony Team Leader](#), [Intake Specialist](#), [Court Case Management Specialist](#), and [Peer Specialists](#). The Project Director also acts as a boundary spanner and liaison with the Florida Department of Children and Families, South Florida Behavioral Health Network, contracted providers, the Court, Police Departments, and other community stakeholders.

Idaho. The Idaho Administrative Office of the Courts established a post for a Statewide [Behavioral Health Manager](#). This individual 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.

Illinois. The [Statewide Behavioral Health Administrator](#) serves as the Illinois Judicial Branch's dedicated voice and resource, committed to furthering behavioral health and justice initiatives as they affect the courts. In this capacity, Statewide Behavioral Health Administrator acts as the project director for the Illinois Mental Health Task Force, provides behavioral health related administrative support and technical assistance to the Illinois Supreme Court, Illinois Trial Courts, the AOIC, and acts as liaison to state and national behavioral health and justice affiliates and organizations. The Statewide Behavioral Health Administrator is responsible for analyzing, developing, and implementing best practices and evidence-based strategies to improve the Courts' response at the intersection of behavioral health and the justice 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.

Massachusetts. [Drug Court](#) and [Ambulatory Recovery Coaches](#) support individuals through stages of change in a variety of recovery programs. This is a person who is grounded in peer-assisted recovery. Because of his/her life experience with substance use and/ or other addictions, the Recovery Coach provides expertise that clinical training cannot replicate. Recovery Coaches report to a Recovery Coach Manager/Supervisor and are fully integrated team members who guide participants along their pathway to recovery. Recovery Coaches also provide essential expertise and consultation to the entire team to promote a culture in which clients' points of view and preferences are recognized, understood, respected, and integrated into support, treatment, rehabilitation, and community-based recovery-oriented systems of care. [Recovery Support Navigator](#) is another position employed by a behavioral health treatment provider to offer non-clinical services to engage, educate and support people with substance use disorders and to assist with identifying and accessing treatment and recovery resources in the community, including prescribers for medications for opioid use disorder and psychiatric medications.

In a position to serve the entire state and 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.

Missouri. Missouri has 81 [Community Behavioral Health Liaisons \(CBHL\)](#) statewide. The goal of the [CBHL program](#) is to form better community partnerships between community behavioral health organizations, law enforcement, and courts to save valuable resources that might otherwise be expended on unnecessary jail, prison, and hospital stays, and to improve outcomes for individuals with behavioral health issues. The CBHL is responsible for the coordination of services for individuals with behavioral health needs who have come to the attention of the justice system through law enforcement, courts, and/or jail personnel. The clientele served have complex mental health and/or substance use needs which are either unmet or poorly coordinated. The CBHL is a part of a person-centered integration team and works with local systems to coordinate care for individuals experiencing behavioral health crises.

New Jersey. 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 30 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.

New Mexico. The New Mexico 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.

Ohio, Cuyahoga County. This county hired a [Mental Health Jail Liaison](#) to oversee specific functions of the Jail Liaison Program related to Mental Health and Developmental Disability (MHDD) Court dockets and provide coordination, direction, leadership and oversight to agency Jail Liaisons. The specialist serves as the point person between the Jail Liaisons, the Jail, and MHDD Court dockets. The Mental Health Jail Liaison Specialist is responsible for monitoring and compliance pertaining to specific activities and goals of the Jail Liaison Program related to the MHDD Court dockets.

Oregon. The Oregon Judicial Department 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**, and a **Behavioral Health Business Analyst**.

In the Oregon Judicial System, a court may order that a defendant is not able to participate in their trial because of the severity of their mental illness. Under statute **ORS 161.370 (“370”)**, the court can then send them to receive mental health treatment to become well enough to “aid and assist” in their defense. To coordinate, process, and monitor “370” cases within the court, the circuit courts employ **Aid and Assist Coordinators** as the person responsible for the county’s community restoration services.

Texas. 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.

In addition, the JCMH has funded three **Community Forensic Coordinator** positions to work with misdemeanor, felony and probate courts to develop and foster professional, collaborative relationships with and between Local Mental or Behavioral Health Authorities (LMHA/LBHAs), Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authorities (LIDDAs), State Hospitals, State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs), courts, community providers, contract providers, probation department, Sheriff, police department, District Attorney and County Attorney offices, public defender’s officer, and defense bar; and engages stakeholders in education on local mental health resources, treatment resources, competency restoration processes, waitlist procedures, and available diversions and services.

Washington. 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.

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