

▶ STATE COURT COMMISSION OR TASK FORCE COMPOSITION

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## Every Court Leader Should Know

Court leaders frequently interact with individuals who likely would not be involved with the courts were it not for untreated or undertreated mental illnesses or substance use disorders. Conversely, behavioral health providers interact with individuals who likely would not be engaged in treatment if not for court mandates and conditions. Therefore, the court and behavioral health systems are synergistic partners with a shared ability to influence and improve the court and community response to individuals with mental health and co-occurring disorders.

### PURPOSE (THEORY OF CHANGE)

“ *Officials throughout the criminal justice system should recognize that people with mental disorders have special needs that must be reconciled with the goals of ensuring accountability for conduct, respect for civil liberties, and public safety.* ”

- ABA Criminal Justice Standards for Mental Health, Standard 7-1.2(a)

As prominently promoted within the Leading Change manuals for State and Local Courts, courts are in a unique position to expand and improve the justice system response to individuals experiencing mental health and co-occurring disorders (“behavioral health”). As primary stakeholders of the behavioral health system, courts are encouraged to act as conveners to improve justice outcomes. More specifically, judges must play a role – “when a judge convenes a community meeting to deal with a social issue affecting their community, people show up.”

### APPLICATION

Just as court leaders are champions of the cause and boundary spanners across the justice system, the ideal composition of State Court Commission and Task Force members should include influential leaders from key stakeholder institutions and fields of discipline.

Before inviting members, it is key to determine what role each member will play in achieving the desired outcomes. Inviting members with maximum ability to impact and promote change amongst their respective circles of influence will help keep the group at a manageable size.



Hundreds of judges nationwide have recognized the critical role they can play as conveners of the cross-system partners that are necessary to reduce the involvement of people with behavioral health needs in the criminal justice system. As the saying goes, “when a judge calls a meeting, people come.” Recognizing this, CCJ/COSCA have called upon chief justices and others to take on this leadership role, either locally or at the state level.

- CCJ/COSCA, Resolution 11:  
In Support of the Judicial  
Criminal Justice/Mental  
Health Leadership Initiative

## SUGGESTED KEY STAKEHOLDERS

### TIPS

- Include dedicated administrative support
- determine and set a regular cadence
- remain action-oriented and assign tasks

### State Level Commission or Task Force

- Chief Justice
- State Court Administrator
- State Behavioral Health Administrator
- State Behavioral Health/Medicaid Authorities/Funders
- Legislative/Executive Branch Delegates
- Law Enforcement Delegate
- Probation Delegate
- Prosecution/Defense Delegates
- Trade Association Executives
- Delegate with Lived Experience
- Associations or Organizations with Local Level Knowledge

### Local Level Commission or Task Force

- Presiding Judge
- Trial Court Administrator
- Legislative Delegate
- County Executive/County Board Delegate
- Sheriff/County Jail Delegate
- Local Police Chief
- Behavioral Health Provider
- Delegate with Lived Experience
- Local Funding Authority

## Importance to Leading Change

At the national level, state court leadership has recognized the important role courts play in addressing the mental health crisis. An effective response to the needs of individuals with mental health and co-occurring disorders requires committed stakeholders across a spectrum of services and time. Our ability to align justice system responses and individual needs depends on state court leaders and behavioral health leaders at all levels understanding the breadth of challenges, identifying intersections between courts and behavioral health, and finding innovative solutions.

### RESOURCES

NCSC: [BH-Commissions-and-Task-Forces.pdf](#)

NCSC: [Task Force Background & Reports](#)

ABA: [Criminal Justice Standards and Mental Health](#)

