



Hogg Foundation  
for Mental Health

Committee on House Corrections  
Request for Information – Interim Charge #2  
December 4, 2020

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*Interim Charge #2: Examine gaps in services and assess efforts to connect justice-involved veterans, senior citizens, and homeless populations to services while incarcerated and after release at both the local and state levels. Specifically, the committee should evaluate training and technical assistance provided by the Texas Veterans Commission to criminal justice agencies.*

**Recommendation:**

**In order to better utilize existing resources, direct HHSC to create an Office of Forensic Services to coordinate cross-agency efforts to more efficiently meet the treatment and support needs of individuals with criminal justice involvement who are living with mental health and/or substance use conditions.**

The existence of multiple advisory committees and task forces working to address the gaps and barriers in the Texas system of forensic services for people with mental illness is evidence of the multitude of problems that remain in Texas statewide systems. Texas needs to centralize knowledge and expertise in order to maximize resources and benefits.

The Hogg Foundation recently convened key stakeholders to discuss alignment of the recommendations developed by four major advisory committees -- the Joint Committee on Access and Forensic Services, the Judicial Commission on Mental Health, and the Redesign Committees for the Austin and San Antonio State Hospitals. Each of these groups have comprehensive reports and/or recommendations related to Texas mental health forensic services. Many of the recommendations of these committees align or complement each other.

Three areas of alignment identified during the recent convening include:

- statewide coordination of forensic services; creation of a state office of forensic services at HHSC
- use of data that drives decision making, and
- diversion of individuals with behavioral health needs from criminal justice systems.

These issues are not unique to Texas as these themes align with what is being seen around the country. Additional information gleaned from the convening will be available and distributed within the next few weeks.

Many states across the country have invested in the development of a centralized office of forensic services. These offices seek to reduce duplication of effort, minimize the existence and/or the impact of agency silos, coordinate services and resources, and develop systems based on best practices. HHSC is best positioned to foster multi-system coordination and collaboration that addresses the behavioral health needs of Texans involved with the criminal justice system. The resources required for an effective centralized office of forensic services within HHSC would be a strong investment in building a more effective and efficient system in Texas.

**For additional information please contact:**

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