

Mental Health Court NEWSLETTER



Hays County

THIS QUARTER'S REPORT

January - April 2024

FALL 2023 COMMENCEMENT RECAP



Mental Health Court's Fall Commencement Ceremony was held December 11th, 2023 with approximately 50 people in attendance. The court celebrated the first class of graduates and celebrated 4 participant's successful completion of the program. The court hosted 5 guest speakers, heard inspirational speeches from the graduates, and the Judge provided graduation certificates and a personalized gift to acknowledge each graduate. We wrapped up the celebration with refreshments, a visit from a therapy dog team, and photo backdrop,



Congratulations to our first class of graduates! The Mental Health Court team and community are proud of you and your accomplishments.

UPCOMING EVENTS

A poster for the Hays County Mental Health Court Spring 2024 Commencement Ceremony. It features a black graduation cap icon at the top, followed by the text "HAYS COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH COURT PRESENTS". The main title "Commencement Ceremony" is in a large, elegant script font. Below it is a white ribbon graphic with "SPRING 2024" written on it. The date and time "MONDAY MAY 13, 2024 3:00 - 4:45 PM" are listed, along with the location "HAYS COUNTY ELECTIONS BUILDING 120 STAGECOACH TRAIL SAN MARCOS, TX 78666". At the bottom, it says "JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR SECOND CLASS OF GRADUATES!" and "LIGHT REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED". The background is a vibrant, abstract pattern of purple, blue, and green.

Mental Health Court will hold our second Commencement Ceremony open to the public on Monday May 13th from 3:00-4:45 pm at the Hays County Elections Building (120 Stagecoach).

Refreshments will be provided!

RECENT EVENTS



Judge Elaine Brown, Court Administrator Kaimi Mattila, and Sheriff Mike Gleason of Williamson County were invited to speak at the State Capitol on February 15th to discuss the Intersection of Mental Health and Law. This was a panel discussion discussing the Hays County Mental Health Court along with Williamson County Jail Based Competency Restoration Program and Jail Diversion Center.



Mental Health Court staff participated in the Point - In -Time count, an event held by the Homeless Coalition of Hays County. This was scheduled in late January where teams of volunteers went out into the community to survey individuals experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the count is to gather data on the estimated number of unhoused individuals in the county and utilize that data to advocate for more funding and resources for our vulnerable neighbors experiencing housing instability.

KXAN News Story:
<https://www.kxan.com/news/local/hays/hays-county-to-count-homeless-population-2023-found-180-without-homes/>

Want to learn more about the Hays County Mental Health Court? Join us for our next virtual Informational session:

May 9th
3:00pm-4:00pm



EXPANSION OF CRITERIA AND SERVICES

The mental health court has expanded their criteria to include those with felony cases. Previously MHC has only accepted those who have misdemeanor charges, so this expansion will now be able to meet the needs of more individuals within the legal and criminal justice system.

“The addition of felonies to the offenses considered for Mental Health Court will allow more individuals to receive the services offered by the court while improving the health and safety of the community.” - Judge Elaine Brown

Mental Health Court is excited to announce a contract with a local substance use facility. This contract consists of scholarships for court participants who are underinsured or uninsured. The court was awarded additional ARPA funding to ensure all court participants who are in need of substance use treatment can access it even beyond the scholarships.



Judge Elaine Brown and Court Administrator Kaimi Mattila joined a student organization for a round table conversation on the progress of Mental Health Court on Thursday March 22nd. The group discussed criteria expansion, pursuit of new grants such as AOT and Jail Diversion, upcoming events like the Spring Workshop and monthly information sessions, how students can get involved and support community programs like the Hays County Mental Health Court.

"We would like to thank Judge Brown and Court Administrator Kaimi Mattila for their time and candor answering our questions. We are excited to hear how the court expands from here." - President of Student Organization at Texas State



Judge Elaine Brown and Court Case Worker Samantha Vandenberg attended the Texas Association of Specialty Courts Conference to learn about innovative and best practices to bring to Mental Health Court.

"Accessibility to high quality and timely substance use services is incredibly important. We are thankful for both funding and the opportunity that the court and court participants have to take advantage of these treatment services." -Kaimi Mattila, Court Administrator

"We trust that a partnership like the one forged with Hays County Mental Health Court will only strengthen our community's mental health resources and provide more access to underserved men and women in Hays County. While the program is new, it's exciting to observe growth in court participants firsthand. We are optimistic about the potential of helping more people through this collaboration." - Substance Use Facility Outreach Staff

KXAN News Story:

<https://www.kxan.com/news/mental-health-court-offers-substance-abuse-treatment-with-or-without-insurance/>



Mental Health Court is excited to announce the expansion of existing contract with a local counseling facility. The expansion of the contract will provide the court participants the opportunity to participate in a trauma resolution group incorporating somatic interventions and Trauma Conscious Yoga method based skills.

"We are excited to offer new forms of therapy that are dynamic and engaging, and allow clients to learn about themselves off the couch. We hope to give new coping skills that are practical and useful, AND work towards reducing pain that underpins mental health struggles for long term wellness." - Counseling Provider Owner

Spring 2024 MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOP

Mental Health Court held a four day Spring Mental Health Workshop series hosting subject matter experts, social service providers, legal staff, and law enforcement from across the state covering various mental health topics. Over 100 attendees joined us for this workshop series!

- Day 1: Mental Health and Law:
Topics: Mental Health Courts (Tarrant, Hays, and Travis County, Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health), Community Courts (Downtown Austin Community Court), Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs (El Paso County, Tarrant County), Jail Based Competency Restoration (Williamson County and Tarrant County), Hays County Sheriff's Department and District Attorney -Civil Division
- Day 2: Mental Health 101, Substance Use, Trauma and Domestic Violence, Homelessness, and Suicide Prevention
Speakers: National Alliance on Mental Illness, ICON, Hays County Homeless Coalition, Hays Caldwell Women's Center, and Hays Caldwell Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Day 3 and 4: Mental Health First Aid Training - in person and virtual options

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

- December of 2023, our previous interns - Brenna and Hunter completed their internship with the county. We wish the best in their future endeavors. We appreciate all that they have done to support the court and court participants.
- This Spring we welcomed a new member to our mental health court team, Emma Jordan. She is a masters level intern with the Texas State School of Social Work and will be interning with us until August.

"I am excited to be interning with the Mental Health Court. It is inspiring to see their efforts to provide mental health services to those in need. I've learned so much about the intersectionality of mental health and the criminal justice system. I feel grateful to be a part of the life changing work they do." - Emma Jordan, MHC Intern

**Erin Barker - Hays County Sheriff's Department
Mental Health Unit and
Ronden Aranaydo with Hays County DA Office**



Anna Bunker, NAMI



**ADA Daniela Chisolm and Michael Gomez with
El Paso County AOT**



Emma Jordan, MHC Intern