

TEXAS COMMISSION ON JAIL STANDARDS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MEMORANDUM

24-04

TO: All Sheriffs and Jail Administrators

FROM: Brandon Wood, Executive Director

REGARDING: Local Mental Health and Behavioral Health Authorities and County Jails

DATE: June 5, 2024

Mental health requirements for Texas county jails:

Texas jails are responsible for providing medical, mental, and dental services to all people in their care. This includes access to mental health professionals at the jail or through telehealth services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If a mental health professional is not present at a county jail or available by telehealth services, the jail must provide the person with access to, at a minimum, a qualified mental health professional within a reasonable time.

Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) or Local Behavioral Health Authority (LBHA) requirements in jails:

Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) contracts with 39 LMHAs/LBHAs to provide **mental health crisis response services**ⁱ to people experiencing a mental health crisis. Jail personnel can request mental health crisis response services by calling their area LMHA/LBHA crisis hotline. Individuals experiencing a mental health crisisⁱⁱ:

- (1) Present an immediate danger to self or others; or
- (2) Are at risk of serious deterioration of mental or physical health; or
- (3) Believe they present an immediate danger to self or others or their mental or physical health is at risk of serious deterioration.

What to expect when calling your LMHA/LBHA crisis hotline:

Crisis hotlines operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are staffed by trained and competent crisis staff to provide crisis screenings and, if determined necessary, crisis assessments.

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- A crisis screening: The LMHA/LBHA will collect information through a phone interview with the individual or jail staff to make a clinical decision about whether an in-depth crisis assessment or emergency care services are needed; and
- A crisis assessment: If a crisis screening indicates that an in-depth crisis assessment is necessary, the LMHA/LBHA will conduct the in-person, audiovisual, or audio-only crisis assessment to collect additional, in-depth information about the person experiencing a crisis and their service needs.

After a crisis screening and/or assessment, the LMHA/LBHA will make crisis intervention strategies and recommendations to the jail's behavioral health provider following the jail's policies and procedures.

Jails can independently contract with the LMHA/LBHA or a private healthcare provider to provide additional mental health services for people in custody.

How to locate your LMHA/LBHA:

To locate the LMHA/LBHA in your area and the associated crisis hotline, visit the following website: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use/mental-health-substance-use-resources/find-your-local-mental-health-or-behavioral-health-authority>.

Who to contact if you have a concern about access to crisis services:

If you have a concern about access to behavioral health crisis services or would like to file a complaint about services received, please contact the Client's Rights Office available at each LMHA or LBHA, contact the [HHS Ombudsman for the Behavioral Health](#) (OBH) or call the Ombudsman hotline at 1-800-252-8154, Option 1.

ⁱ Crisis services include those captured in 26 TAC, Chapter 301, Subchapter G, specifically subsection 301.351

ⁱⁱ A crisis is defined by 26 TAC, Chapter 301, Subchapter G, specifically, subsection 301.303(13)