RESOLUTION
FORT BEND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
IN SUPPORT OF REDUCING THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IN
JAIL & OVERALL INCREASING SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH
MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

WHEREAS counties across the nation routinely provide treatment services to the estimated 2 million plus people with mental health needs booked into county jails each year, and;

WHEREAS the prevalence rates of serious mental illness in jails are three to six times higher than for the general public, and;

WHEREAS reducing the number of people with mental health needs in the criminal legal system continues to be a major public health and safety priority that requires effective crisis response at the point of jail admission, and;

WHEREAS adults with mental illness tend to stay longer in jail and cost taxpayers two to three times more during their incarceration, and;

WHEREAS the first forty-eight hours after jail admission is a time of considerable risk with 79 percent of all in-custody suicides occurring within two to seven days of a jail stay, and;

WHEREAS without effective crisis response, people with mental health needs continue to cycle through the criminal justice system or languish in custody, often resulting in tragic outcomes for these individuals and their families, and;

WHEREAS the Fort Bend County Commissioners Court is uniquely positioned to address the impact of serious mental illness in the criminal justice system by its demonstrated commitment to understanding how to effectively respond to the needs of justice-involved individuals, and;

WHEREAS the adoption of resolutions in 2018 and 2020, including to support participation in the *Stepping Up Initiative*, demonstrates Fort Bend County's longstanding commitment to finding and implementing data-informed, care-focused, and person-centered solutions that increase access to care for people with mental health needs, and;

WHEREAS Fort Bend County developed various programs in our justice system to divert and/or provide services to residents with serious mental illnesses, such as our Crisis Intervention Team, and;

WHEREAS it is in the best interest of Fort Bend County policymakers and justice stakeholders to create consensus and collaborate in the design, support, and funding of mental health-focused initiatives in the criminal justice system that preserve the health and safety of residents while increasing access to appropriate care, and decreasing impacts on the jail, case backlogs, and competency waitlists.

2

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT FORT BEND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT does hereby encourage and support the collaboration of justice and health officials in the continued examination of behavioral health-focused programs and initiatives that safely reduce the number of people within the jail with health needs, particularly during the pretrial stage of adjudication by:

Organizing and operating a Behavioral Health Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to provide structure and support for the development and implementation of data-informed recommendations that draws on a diverse team of leaders and decision makers from multiple agencies within the criminal justice and behavioral health systems.

Convening key stakeholders to assess and review prevalence data that will guide decisionmakers in building consensus around evidence-based strategies that address preventable suicides, reduce recidivism, decrease legal liability, and increase access to appropriate community-based mental health care.

Examine current post-arrest practices and programs to identify opportunities for deflection and diversion of cases for people with urgent mental health needs.

Develop a multi-stakeholder action plan with measurable outcomes and utilize innovative models, best practices and policy recommendations that improves service capacity and access to care, while considering barriers that prevent diversion for individuals with urgent mental health needs.

PASSED AND APPROVED this _____27_____ day of _____August_____, 2024.
FORT BEND COUNTY

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Judge K.P George

_____August 27, 2024_____
Date