

ILLINOIS MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

& Illinois Courts' Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda 2026-2028

Submitted by:
The Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee
for Justice and Mental Health Planning (JMHP) and
the State Court Behavioral Health Administrator



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Illinois Mental Health Task Force Action Plan Progress Report and Illinois Courts' Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda (2026–2028)

Executive Summary

This Illinois Mental Health Task Force Action Plan Progress Report and Illinois Courts' Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda marks a transition of focus from the [Mental Health Task Force Action Plan](#) approved by the Illinois Supreme Court in November of 2022, to a new "Illinois Courts' Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda" aligned with the 2026-2028 [Illinois Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda](#). During its November 2022 Term, the Illinois Supreme Court approved the Mental Health Task Force Action Plan and subsequently charged the Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning (JMHP) and the State Court Behavioral Health Administrator with leading implementation. As the Illinois Courts' first mental health focused action plan, the strategic initiatives and recommendations served as an initial roadmap for improving the court and community response to individuals with mental health and co-occurring substance use disorders.

The Action Plan's strategic initiatives emphasized the courts' role across a continuum of leadership, awareness, and collaborative opportunities organized using the [Sequential Intercept Model](#). The Action Plan included recommendations under each of the following eight Strategic Initiatives:

- Courts as Conveners and Leaders
- Training Opportunities Across the Intercepts
- Awareness Across the Intercepts
- Sequential Intercepts Zero and One: Community Services and Law Enforcement
- Sequential Intercept Two: Initial Detention and Court Hearings
- Sequential Intercept Three: Jails/Courts
- Sequential Intercept Four: Reentry
- Sequential Intercept Five: Community Corrections

Moving forward, the Illinois 2026 – 2028 Illinois Courts' Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda provides a directional framework for how the Illinois Judicial Branch will build capacity by espousing the [Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrator's Resolution 1](#) call

to lead, examine, educate, and advocate to improve the courts' response to individuals, families and systemic mental health challenges. Therefore, the Agenda sets forth specific actions that will:

- Build mental health capacity in the courts,
- Champion reforms through collaboration and advocacy,
- Expand access to court adjacent services, and
- Strengthen judicial and justice partner relationships.

Illinois Mental Health Task Force Action Plan Strategic Initiative Activities and Implementation Highlights

Strategic Initiative: Courts as Conveners and Leaders

To incorporate court-related mental health leadership within judicial branch and justice partner efforts that influence mental health responses and resources, judges and judicial branch staff are engaged in the following national and state advisory groups, committees, commissions, and task forces.

- The Illinois Supreme Court was among the first to act, establishing a Behavioral Health Administrator position within the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts.
 - At the time of this report, the Behavioral Health Administrator is serving in the following National and State Leadership and Advisory roles:
 - Chair, National Council for State Court Behavioral Health Administrators
 - Member, Judges and Psychiatrists Leadership Initiative, Advisory Committee
 - Chair, Illinois Department of Human Services, Mental Health Planning and Advisory Committee, Criminal Justice Subcommittee
 - Member, Illinois Department of Human Services, Forensic Work Group
 - Member, Illinois Governor's Office, Chief Behavioral Health Officer Cabinet
- JMHP Members, the Behavioral Health Administrator, or the AOIC Problem-Solving Court Manager are integrated into applicable Illinois Supreme Court and Illinois Judicial Conference established activities, including:
 - Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Elder Law
 - Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Juvenile Courts
 - Illinois Judicial College Committee on Judicial Branch Staff Education
 - Illinois Judicial College Committee on Judicial Education
 - Illinois Judicial College Committee on Probation Education
 - Illinois Judicial Conference
 - Strengthening Juvenile Detention Practices
 - Best Practices for Emerging Adults in the Justice System

- Strengthening Communities through Restorative Justice Practices

Implementation Highlight - With Support from the Illinois Supreme Court, in September of 2024, JMHP hosted a statewide multi-disciplinary leadership convening titled: Rethinking the Intersection of Fitness to Stand Trial, Fitness Restoration, and Mental Health Systems.

Strategic Initiative: Training Opportunities Across the Intercepts

The Action Plan recognized that a key component to enhancing the court response to individuals with behavioral health challenges is to provide continuous educational and learning opportunities at the intersection of systems. Notably, CCJ/COSCA Resolution 1-2024 [In Support of the Commitment to Ensure that All Judges and Court Staff Have Access to Behavioral Health Training and Ongoing Education](#) emphasizes the “need and responsibility for all state and local courts to lead and promote these education efforts.”

- To effectuate specific Action Plan recommendations, the following continuing education seminars were offered through the Supreme Court of Illinois Judicial College and archived on its PATH Learning Management System:
 - 6-part series re: The Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code and Civil Mental Health Proceedings.
 - 3-part series titled Navigating Fitness to Stand Trial Proceedings
 - Single training titled: Common Psychotropic Medications
 - Single training titled: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Criminal Justice Involvement
 - Single training titled: Harm Reduction Strategies, the Recovery Continuum, and Evidence-Based Substance Use Disorder Treatment
- The AOIC Probation Services Division and the Supreme Court of Illinois Judicial College have established 17 courses to address the training needs of new Problem-Solving Courts (PSC), and the ongoing training needs of experienced PSC.

Implementation Highlight - With support from the Illinois Supreme Court Judicial College, the national Judges and Psychiatrists Leadership Initiative curriculum was presented at the 2024 and 2026 Illinois Judicial Education Conferences.

Strategic Initiative: Awareness Across the Intercepts

While the court focuses on justice and public safety, behavioral health systems focus on wellness and recovery. Ultimately, the systems are structurally reliant on one another to enhance positive societal outcomes. Awareness of the prevalence and impact of behavioral health disorders on the court and justice system is key to enhancing partnerships and responses.

- The Behavioral Health Administrator and the AOIC's Communication Division developed the [Behavioral Health, the Bench, and Beyond](#) e-newsletter (ongoing) to provide information and updates regarding Mental Health Task Force Action Plan activities and court adjacent state-led behavioral health initiatives.
- JMHP Members, the Behavioral Health Administrator, and the Problem-Solving Court Manager continuously facilitate outreach efforts with the Illinois State Bar Association, various behavioral health and public health associations, executive branch agencies, etc., resulting in ongoing conference and meeting presentation invitations.

Implementation Highlight - With support from the JMHP, the Behavioral Health Administrator developed the [Illinois Innovations Webinar Series](#) (ongoing) to highlight "Illinois-based" approaches and strategies that are aligned with initiatives and recommendations within the Illinois Mental Health Task Force Action Plan.

Strategic Initiative: Intercepts Zero (Community Services) and One (Law Enforcement)

Court professionals' knowledge and support of current behavioral health and social support resources, law enforcement and co-response trends, and evolving practices is essential to providing individuals with an optimal opportunity to live stable and healthy lifestyles within the community.

- JMHP Members, the Behavioral Health Administrator, and the Problem-Solving Court Manager continuously share and promote statewide resources across the judicial branch.

Implementation Highlight - Illinois Innovations Webinar Series sessions covering topics including the Illinois Department of Human Services and Illinois State Police Statewide Deflection Initiative, Illinois's Comprehensive Crisis Continuum, the Illinois Helpline, Recovery Oriented Systems of Care, and early intercept resources are archived and included on the [Illinois Courts: Leading Change webpage](#).

Strategic Initiative: Intercepts Two (Initial Detention/Court Hearings) and Three (Jails/Courts)

Intercepts Two and Three represent the critical period between initial detention and active court processing (booking, initial hearings, and jail). The overarching goal of these stages is to identify court-involved individuals with behavioral health disorders, promote person-centered justice, and connect them with treatment services to reduce further penetration or re-exposure to the criminal justice system.

- Continuous reforms in fitness to stand trial processes and resources are being driven by the courts, resulting in judicial branch participation in activities led by the executive and legislative branches, such as the Illinois Department of Human Services' Forensic Work Group and the P.A.104-0318 Fitness Task Force.
- The court's enhanced emphasis on Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) as a civil court pathway to care for eligible individuals with severe psychiatric disorders continues to shape state-level forensic system strategies and has led to the allocation of federal grant funding.
- The continued implementation and assurance of problem-solving court best practices is reinforced through the Supreme Court of Illinois Problem-Solving Court Standards and Certification process.

Implementation Highlight - Federal Grant funds obtained by the AOIC supported development of the [Winnebago County Court's Wellness Track](#). The Wellness Track is a specialized court docket designed for adults who have been arrested for nonviolent misdemeanor offenses and have underlying mental health issues, substance use disorders, or homelessness that may have contributed to their behavior leading to their arrest.

Strategic Initiative: Intercepts Four (Reentry) and Five (Community Corrections)

As people transition from jail or prison back into the community or correctional supervision are on probation or parole and require support from criminal justice agencies and community-based behavioral health, mental health, or social service programs.

- As outlined within the Courts as Conveners and Leaders strategic initiative, JMHP Members, the Behavioral Health Administrator, or the AOIC Problem-Solving Court Manager are strengthening judicial branch and cross-sector partnerships and communication to strengthen support and resources to reduce the impact of social and environmental factors that affect an individual or entire community's health status.

Implementation Highlight - The AOIC and the IDHS established a three-year, \$100,000 Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to increase access to Moral Reconciliation Therapy® (MRT) for probationers across the state. The IGA supports the AOIC's Probation Services Division by developing MRT Train-the-Trainer capacity and instructor training

External Funding Support to Lead Change Highlights

The AOIC has prioritized and secured external grant funding to support Mental Health Task Force Action Plan strategic initiatives.

[Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program \(BJA\)](#)

- The AOIC was awarded a \$550,000 grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance as part of the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP). The JMHCP is a competitive grant program that supports innovative cross-system collaboration for individuals with

mental illnesses or co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders who encounter the justice system. Grant funds supported five pilot projects, each providing court users with linkages to community behavioral health services.

[SAMHSA Assisted Outpatient Treatment Grant](#)

- The AOIC received a competitive grant award from the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services. The grant project titled “Assisted Outpatient Treatment: A Pathway to Community Care” allocates up to \$2,915,393 over four years. The project utilizes grant funds to operationalize statutorily permissive civil outpatient pathways to mental health care in Cook and McLean Counties.

[State Justice Institute](#)

- The AOIC was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the State Justice Institute (SJI). The grant allowed the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to provide the JMHP Fitness to Stand Trial Subcommittee technical assistance to examine and recommend best practices within fitness to stand trial processes in the Illinois courts.

Conclusion

Building on these achievements, the 2026–2028 Illinois Courts Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda focuses on the role of the Judicial Branch in fostering solutions to emergent challenges. The scope of the Agenda shifts emphasis from a singular focus on mental health and incorporates the term “behavioral health.” Behavioral health is an umbrella term covering mental distress, mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and associated behaviors that intersect with the justice system. The term is also used to describe the support systems that promote mental, emotional, and social well-being and provide access to treatments and services.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the Justices of the Illinois Supreme Court, the Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning, the Illinois Mental Health Task Force, and all court and justice partners who

contributed to and participated in efforts supporting the Action Plan.

Illinois Courts' Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda: (2026–2028)

Alignment Across the Judicial Branch

This Illinois Courts' Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda updates and consolidates prior court efforts prioritized within the Mental Health Task Force Action Plan and the State Court Behavioral Health Administrator's Strategic Agenda. This integration aligns with the 2026-2028 Illinois Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda and operationalizes national guidance from the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators. It emphasizes leadership, consistency, education, and cross-system collaboration.

Behavioral Health Strategic Goals and Strategies (2026-2028)

Strategic Goal 1. Leadership and Governance

Objective: The Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning (JMHP), in partnership with the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) Behavioral Health Administrator, will provide coordinated leadership, oversight, and accountability for implementation of the Strategic Agenda, ensuring alignment with Judicial Branch priorities.

Strategies

1. Integrate behavioral health initiatives within existing court frameworks to avoid duplication and promote system coherence.
2. Facilitate statewide communications that inform, educate, and engage judges, court personnel, and justice partners.
3. Identify and prioritize high-impact initiatives for implementation across the state.
4. Track and report on key activities and outcomes.

Impact: Clear governance, efficient implementation, and sustained statewide direction.

2026-2028 IJC Strategic Goal Alignment: 1.3, 1.8, and 4.4

Strategic Goal 2. Fair and Consistent Court Processes

Objective: Improve consistency, efficiency, and protection of due process in

cases involving individuals with mental health needs.

Strategies

1. Promote statewide consistency in Fitness for Trial, to Plead or to be Sentenced (725 ILCS 5/104-10 et seq.) practices through the development and dissemination of standardized forms, template orders, and judicial guidance.
2. Support the application of Involuntary Outpatient Commitment (405 ILCS 5/1-119.1), Agreed Care and Custody Orders (405 ILCS 5/3-801.5), and Advance Directives as pathways to community-based mental health care.
3. Promote equitable availability of problem-solving courts and diversion opportunities across jurisdictions.
4. Develop resources to support judges and court staff regarding best practices and legal standards for mental health cases.

Impact: Reduce delays, increased person-centered justice, and improved outcomes.

2026-2028 IJC Strategic Goal Alignment: 1.8, 2.6, and 3.1

Strategic Goal 3. Data and Evaluation

Objective: Strengthen the courts' ability to use data to inform decision-making and evaluate system impact.

Strategies

1. Expand the collection of behavioral health-related data across relevant case types.
2. Coordinate with the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts to align data collection with existing case management systems and reporting structures when applicable.
3. Enhance data-sharing and coordination of mental health cases with the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery.
4. Conduct ongoing analysis of legislative and policy changes affecting court-processes and resources involving individuals with behavioral health needs.

5. Encourage system mapping across criminal and juvenile court systems to identify intervention points and system gaps.

Impact: Evidence-based policymaking, improved resource allocation, and enhanced transparency and accountability in court operations.

2026-2028 IJC Strategic Goal Alignment: 2.1, 4.4, and 4.7

Strategic Goal 4. Education and Workforce Capacity

Objective: Equip judges, court staff, and justice system partners with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to respond effectively to court-involved individuals with behavioral health needs in all case types.

Strategies

1. Provide Illinois Judicial College approved continued learning opportunities on the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code, mental health cases, and interacting with litigants experiencing behavioral health challenges.
2. Continue and expand programs such as the Judges and Psychiatrists Leadership Initiative to strengthen cross-disciplinary understanding and practical behavioral health responses.
3. Collaborate with justice system partners to promote shared training opportunities.

Impact: Improved courtroom interactions, stronger collaboration, and increased professional competence.

2026-2028 Strategic Goal Alignment: 1.7, 4.3, and 4.5

Strategic Goal 5. Juvenile and Emerging Adult Focus

Objective: Improve outcomes for youth and emerging adults with behavioral health needs by promoting developmentally appropriate, legally sound, and community-based responses that reduce system involvement and support long-term success.

Strategies

1. Promote early identification, screening, and linkage to community-based services at judicial oversight points of system contact.
2. Support policies and practices that prioritize alternatives to detention of youth with behavioral health needs while maintaining public safety and due process.
3. Encourage adaptation of court practices, supervision strategies, and service models to reflect research on adolescent and young adult development.
4. Encourage diversion and early intervention strategies to limit deeper system involvement for youth and emerging adults.

Impact: Lower rates of continued justice system involvement and improved behavioral health and life outcomes for youth and emerging adults.

2026-2028 Strategic Goal Alignment: 2.6 and 5.6

Strategic Goal. 6 Cross-System Collaboration and Sustainable Funding

Objective: Strengthen partnerships and resources necessary to support sustainable, effective behavioral health initiatives within the courts.

Strategies

1. Collaborate with executive and legislative partners to advance shared policy, funding, and system-change efforts.
2. Pursue and coordinate federal, state, and other funding opportunities to support court-based behavioral health initiatives.
3. Support the development and sustainability of diversion programs, problem-solving courts, and community supervision models aligned with court objectives.
4. Collaborate with courts, bar associations, law schools, and justice partners to build behavioral health literacy, lead system improvements, and enhance resource knowledge.

Impact: Strengthened partnerships and reduced justice system strain.

2026-2028 Strategic Goal Alignment: 3.5, 4.4, 4.7, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.7

Implementation and Oversight

- **Oversight:** Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning (JMHP), in partnership with the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) Behavioral Health Administrator
- **Primary Point of Contact:** Behavioral Health Administrator
- **Monitoring:** Ongoing accounting and review of key activities
- **Integration:** Alignment with the 2026-2028 Illinois Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda and annual Operational Plan

Conclusion

Through this Illinois Courts' Behavioral Health Strategic Agenda, the Illinois Courts reaffirm their commitment to fairness, accountability, and person-centered justice. The 2026–2028 Strategic Behavioral Health Agenda represents a forward-looking plan to enhance the Illinois Courts' response to behavioral health challenges. Each Strategic Goal and Strategy represents an opportunity to:

- **Lead** → Encourage and create consistent statewide processes and provide leadership.
- **Examine** → Use quantitative and qualitative data and resource mapping to drive decisions, expand access to resources, and improve support for litigants and court professionals.
- **Educate** → Deliver specialized training for judges, court staff and justice partners to enhance individual and system responses.
- **Advocate** → Strengthen relationships, secure funding, and promote access to community services.

Appendix A - 2026-2028 IJC Strategic Goal Alignment

1.3. Strengthen support for vulnerable populations, including parents and guardians in abuse and neglect cases and others facing behavioral and mental health challenges.

1.7. Train judges and staff in cultural competence, plain language, and best practices to foster a culture that treats all court users with dignity and respect.

1.8. Expand equitable access to problem-solving, treatment, and specialty courts so participation does not depend on geography or income.

2.1. Operate a modern court system with digital filing, electronic case management, consistent virtual hearing practices, and performance measures that use data to improve fairness, timeliness, and service.

2.6. Improve how collection, eviction, family, juvenile, probate, and foreclosure and other sensitive case types are handled with tailored forms, efficient processes, and trained staff assistance.

3.1. Maintain a judiciary and workforce committed to the highest standards of ethics, fairness, and professional leadership.

3.5. Collaborate with bar associations, law schools, and justice partners to promote professionalism and strengthen public trust.

4.3. Engage communities directly through civic education, outreach and opportunities for dialogue and feedback such as listening sessions and advisory groups.

4.4. Strengthen partnerships with state and local government leaders and agencies to promote shared understanding, support for the judicial branch, and collaboration on issues impacting courts.

4.5. Collaborate with schools, civic groups, and media to improve public understanding of how courts work and judicial independence.

4.7. Communicate policies and explain their purpose and impact.

5.4. Secure resources and partnerships that allow courts to innovate and

improve services for the public.

5.5. Diversify funding through grants, capital planning, and partnerships that strengthen stability and modernization.

5.6. Invest in juvenile programs and services that reduce reliance on detention and improve outcomes for youth.

5.7. Enhance funding for indigent defense and problem-solving courts to advance fairness in the criminal justice system.