KENTUCKY JUDICIAL COMMISSION ON
MENTAL HEALTH

Kentucky Judicial Commission on Mental Health Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date, Time: September 18, 2026; 1:00-3:00 PM ET
Meeting Location: Administrative Office of the Courts, 1001 Vandalay Drive, Frankfort, KY 40601
Virtual Option: The meeting was also offered virtually through Zoom; a recording can be found here.

Attendees

Hon. Debra Hembree Lambert, Chief Justice, Kentucky Supreme Court
Hon. Denise Brown, Family Court Judge
Terry Brooks, Executive Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates
Matthew Cole, Commissioner of the Department of Vehicle Registration, Kentucky Department of Transportation
Cookie Crews, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Corrections
Lesa Dennis (Zoom), Commissioner of the Department of Community Based Services
Rebecca Frost, Facility Director, Western State Hospital
Erica Hargis (Zoom), Executive Director of Division of Probation and Parole
Yvette Hourigan, Director of KYLAP, Kentucky Bar Association
Hon. Cole Adams Maier, Circuit Court Judge
Jason McGinnis, Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts
Dr. Shannon Moody (Zoom), Executive Director, Kentucky Youth Advocates
Brenda Rosen (Zoom), Kentucky Social Work, Advocacy, Justice and Leadership, LLC
Steve Shannon (Zoom), Kentucky Association of Regional Programs
Dr. Koleen Slusher, LCSW, Director of Kentucky Correctional Psychiatric Center
Dr. Steven Stack, Secretary, Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Hon. John Lindsay Tackett, District Judge
Diane Thompson, Nelson County Circuit Clerk
Hon. Larry Thompson, Kentucky Court of Appeals Judge
Jordan Turner (Zoom), Kentucky County Attorneys Association
Hon. Marcus Vanover (Zoom), Family Court Judge
Dr. Marc Woods, Chief Nursing Officer, Eastern State Hospital
Silas Session, Delegate – Whitney P. Allen Jr.
Derek Smith, Delegate – Phillip Burnett, Jr.
Denise Durbin, Delegate (Zoom) – Russle Coleman
Beth Mcmahan, Delegate – Damon Preston

David Susman, Delegate – Katie Marks
Christina Weeter (Zoom), Delegate – Kelly Foster

Agenda

I. Registration

II. Welcome and Commission Updates

III. Understanding the New Law: Changes to KRS 202A

IV. Committee and Workgroup Updates

V. Agency Update Roundtable

VI. Closing Remarks

VII. Adjourn

Welcome and Commission Updates

The Honorable Debra Hembree Lambert, Chief Justice of the Kentucky Supreme Court, welcomed members to the quarterly meeting of the Kentucky Judicial Commission on Mental Health. She acknowledged the purple ribbons included in the meeting materials in recognition of National Recovery Month and Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. These ribbons serve as a reminder of the individuals, families, and communities impacted by the systems and policies the Commission seeks to improve.

She reflected on the Commission's accomplishments over the past year, highlighting significant progress in education, training, court resources, and systemic improvements. She recognized the successful passage of the Commission's legislative recommendation regarding KRS Chapter 202C through Senate Bill 122. She also discussed ongoing efforts to develop an informational video and supporting resources to assist judges, attorneys, and court partners in understanding and implementing statutory changes.

Chief Justice Lambert welcomed newly appointed Commission members, including Jason McGinnis, Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts; Shannon Moody, Executive Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates; and Kimberly Schwoeppe, General Counsel and Vice President of the Kentucky Hospital Association. Members were directed to the meeting materials, which included the agenda, minutes from the March quarterly meeting, and the Community Mapping Initiative Report.

The meeting materials also included two summaries of the Commission's legislative recommendations for the 2027 legislative session. The first recommendation, developed by the Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse Workgroup, addresses voluntary recommitment options for young adults formerly in foster care. The second recommendation, developed by the Commitment Workgroup, addresses transportation barriers in proceedings under KRS Chapter 202A. Chief Justice Lambert invited any final considerations or objections before the Commission proceeded with identifying legislative sponsors for these recommendations.

Understanding the New Law: Changes to KRS 202A

Dr. David Susman, Executive Advisor for Clinical Services in the Office of the Commissioner at the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, provided an overview of recent amendments to KRS Chapter 202A enacted through Senate Bill 122 during the 2026 legislative session.

Dr. Susman discussed the Cabinet for Health and Family Services' coordination with the Treatment and Access Committee (TAC) to develop and disseminate training materials addressing the statutory changes. He highlighted a series of training opportunities, including a Train-the-Trainer session, which reportedly reached 998 participants. He also referenced the Cabinet's participation in the Judicial College and other ongoing efforts to implement a comprehensive statewide training strategy on the 202A changes. Recordings of the training sessions will be made available to individuals that were unable to attend.

Dr. Susman discussed ongoing implementation efforts, including the development of new administrative regulations addressing community-based outpatient treatment. Additionally, the Cabinet is coordinating with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to develop reporting procedures required under Senate Bill 122, with the first report due October 1, 2027. These efforts include identifying data elements associated with various stages of proceedings under KRS Chapter 202A and establishing procedures to support consistent and accurate data collection.

During the discussion, Dr. Silas Session questioned the use of long-acting injectable medications and whether certain individuals could receive necessary medication without remaining hospitalized for the full 72-hour period. Dr. Susman discussed the statutory requirements governing readmission and review hearings, while acknowledging the potential benefits of long-acting injectable medications in supporting treatment. Dr. Session also inquired about the availability of treatment facilities and services. Dr. Susman referenced Kentucky's 14 Community Mental Health Centers and their role in supporting access to community-based treatment.

Secretary Steven Stack emphasized that timely access to appropriate treatment remains a priority. He expressed concern that the statutory changes could increase demand for inpatient psychiatric services at a time when hospitals are already experiencing significant capacity limitations. He noted that expanded eligibility for involuntary treatment and potentially longer hospital stays could further strain existing resources, particularly where individuals meet statutory treatment criteria but may not satisfy traditional medical necessity standards for inpatient hospitalization. Secretary Stack reiterated the Cabinet's commitment to working collaboratively with system partners to address these implementation challenges.

Dr. Marc Woods echoed these concerns, emphasizing the potential impact on hospital capacity and available treatment resources. He noted that hospitals are actively evaluating strategies to manage psychiatric bed availability and accommodate anticipated increases in demand. While recognizing the value of the legislative changes, he stressed the importance of addressing resource limitations as implementation proceeds.

Chief Justice Lambert thanked Dr. Susman for his presentation and acknowledged the Cabinet's efforts to coordinate training and implementation activities.

Committee and Workgroup Updates

I. Treatment and Access Committee

Dr. Steven Stack, Secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services and Vice Chair of the Treatment and Access Committee, provided an update on behalf of the Treatment and Access Committee. He noted that the Committee's workgroups are prioritizing training initiatives, improvements to court processes, and opportunities to strengthen access to behavioral health services.

a. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Workgroup

Crystal Adams, Director of the Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, was unable to attend. Secretary Stack directed members to the meeting materials for a detailed summary of the workgroup's current priorities and action items.

b. Strengthening Communities Workgroup

Dr. Marc Woods provided an update on behalf of the Strengthening Communities Workgroup. He reported that the workgroup continues to build upon its existing training materials and has reviewed themes identified through the Community Mapping Initiative survey. Current efforts include addressing stigmatizing language and evaluating available resources to inform future training and implementation activities.

During the discussion, Dr. Session referenced efforts in Jefferson County to install suicide prevention signage including areas near pedestrian crossings. Chief Justice Lambert also expressed interest in expanding signage displaying the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number, particularly along a bridge near Lake Cumberland.

Members discussed potential funding opportunities to support these efforts, including available funds identified by Dr. Session. Shawna Mitchell offered to facilitate further coordination among the interested parties to explore next steps.

c. Court Responses Workgroup

The Honorable Stephanie Pearce Burke, District Court Judge for the 30th Judicial District, provided an update on behalf of the Court Responses Workgroup. She highlighted ongoing training initiatives, including opportunities related to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) criteria, and the development of judicial bench cards and other court resources.

Judge Burke also recognized Kentucky's recent achievement of an A+ grade in the TAC's 2026 "Grading the States" report. She reported that Kentucky is the highest score in the country.

Reflecting on discussions during the Judicial College, Judge Burke noted the rapid expansion of assisted outpatient treatment (AOT), which was reported to be available in approximately 63% of Kentucky. She explained that the integration of AOT into the broader KRS Chapter 202A framework would require additional statewide

implementation efforts. The Court Responses Workgroup remains focused on preparing educational materials and other resources to assist courts in adapting to these changes.

I. Civil and Family Justice Committee

Brenda Rosen, Executive Director of Kentucky Work Advocacy, Justice and Leadership, provided an update on behalf of the Civil and Family Justice Committee. She reported that the Committee's workgroups continue to advance their workplan priorities through training, resource development, and collaborative initiatives with agency and community partners.

a. Domestic Violence Workgroup

The Honorable Denise Brown, Family Court Judge for the 30th Judicial Circuit, provided an update on behalf of the Domestic Violence Workgroup. She highlighted the workgroup's continued efforts to strengthen domestic violence prevention, education, and access to resources and services, noting that improving access to resources and services will serve as the workgroup's overarching theme for the upcoming year.

The workgroup continues to advance its priorities through three subgroups focused on judicial training and resources, domestic violence education in schools, and multidisciplinary collaboration. Current initiatives include identifying judicial training needs, improving access to Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) provider information, expanding dating violence prevention resources in schools, and strengthening connections to domestic violence and victim services through platforms such as FindHelpNow.

b. Dependency, Neglect and Abuse Workgroup

The Honorable Marcus Vanover, Circuit Judge for the 28th Judicial Circuit, was unable to attend. Brenda Rosen directed members to the meeting materials for a detailed report on its ongoing initiatives.

c. Guardianship and Commitment Workgroup

Stacy Tapke, Kenton County Attorney, was unable to attend. Brenda Rosen directed members to the meeting materials for a detailed report on its ongoing initiatives.

II. Criminal Justice Committee

The Honorable Cole Adams Maier, District Judge for the 25th Judicial District, provided an update on behalf of the Criminal Justice Committee. She highlighted the Committee's ongoing priorities, which include improving data collection methods, reviewing statewide jail survey findings, and exploring juvenile competency standards.

a. Competency Workgroup

Dr. Koleen Slusher, Director of the Kentucky Correctional Psychiatric Center (KCPC), provided an update on behalf of the Competency Workgroup. She discussed the workgroup's review of the Kentucky Circuit Court Clerk’s Manual and discussed potential revisions to improve process clarity. Dr. Slusher also provided an update on KCPC's inpatient waitlist and current service capacity. She estimated the wait time for inpatient services at approximately two to four months, while outpatient competency evaluations

have an estimated wait time of 12 weeks. She also discussed the availability of outpatient evaluations under Seth's Law and referenced the jail-based program in Fayette County.

During the discussion, Melanie Foote reported that the Department of Public Advocacy (DPA) is taking additional steps to distribute relevant forms and educate system partners on their proper use. These efforts include updated training materials and instructional videos.

b. Prearrest and Diversion Workgroup

Steve Shannon, Executive Director of KARP, Inc., provided an update on behalf of the Prearrest and Diversion Workgroup. He highlighted the workgroup's ongoing efforts to strengthen early intervention and community-based alternatives for individuals with behavioral health needs. Building on findings from the 2025 statewide jail survey, the workgroup is exploring the development of a potential deflection model for Kentucky, including legal considerations, funding opportunities, program protocols, and best practices. The workgroup also plans to engage with the National Center for State Courts to help inform these efforts.

c. Juvenile Justice Workgroup

The Honorable John Tackett, District Judge for the 22nd Judicial District, provided an update on behalf of the Juvenile Justice Workgroup. He reported that the workgroup currently has a leadership vacancy and encouraged interested Commission members to contact Shawna Mitchell or Heather Vice. Judge Tackett noted that the workgroup continues to advance its priorities through two subgroups and directed members to the meeting materials for additional information regarding their activities and progress.

d. Reentry Workgroup

Erica Hargis, Director of the Division of Probation and Parole within the Kentucky Department of Corrections, provided an update on behalf of the Reentry Workgroup. Ms. Hargis reported that the workgroup continues to build upon findings from the 2025 statewide jail survey by engaging jail reentry coordinators and community partners to examine existing reentry practices. The workgroup has also expanded its engagement with Community Mental Health Centers and other behavioral health partners to strengthen coordination between correctional systems and community-based treatment services.

Closing Remarks

Shawna Mitchell thanked Commission members for their time, commitment, and continued partnership. Appreciation was given to agency partners and workgroup leaders for their ongoing efforts to advance behavioral health initiatives across the Commonwealth.

Contact information: JCMH@kycourts.net.

Webpage: Kentucky Judicial Commission on Mental Health – Kentucky Court of Justice (kycourts.gov)

The commission adjourned at 3:00 PM ET.

Additional Information

Noncommission Members and Public in attendance:

- Christina Weeter (Zoom)
- Jamie Gilliam (Zoom), UNITE
- Denise Durbin (Zoom), Office of the Attorney General
- Clark Lester (Zoom), Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
- Hilary Writt (Zoom), Department for Libraries and Archives
- Emma Wilson (Zoom), Kentucky League of Cities

KJCMH Support Staff in attendance:

- Shawna Mitchell, Judicial Commission on Mental Health
- Heather Vice, Judicial Commission on Mental Health
- Maria Macaluso, Judicial Commission on Mental Health
- Rebecca Hisel, Judicial Commission on Mental Health
- Jason Reynolds, Government Affairs
- Audrey Collins, Specialty Courts
- Ashley Clark, Family and Juvenile Services
- Ian Shepherd, Office of Statewide Programs
- Eric Finke, Kentucky Supreme Court
- Andrew Hartley (Zoom), Kentucky Supreme Court
- Indica Meeks, Behavioral Health Liaison
- Elizabeth Nichols, Specialty Courts