

CENTRAL REGION

KEY FINDINGS & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



REGION SNAPSHOT

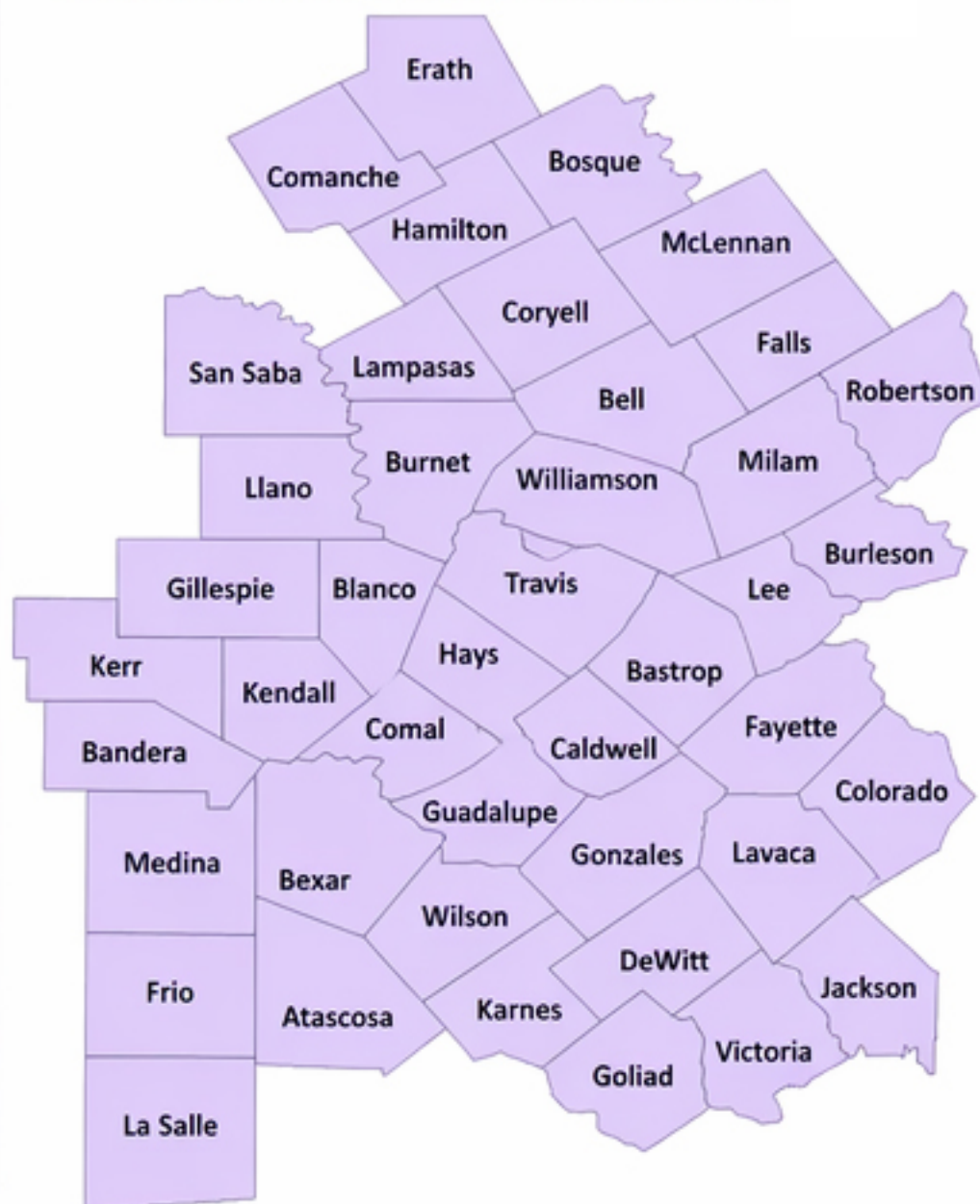
The Central Region includes 29 counties with a blend of urban hubs, fast-growing suburban communities, and deep-rooted rural counties.

It includes two of Texas' largest and most influential counties—Bexar and Travis—home to San Antonio and Austin.

The region has the strongest behavioral health infrastructure in the state, creating a strong foundation for innovation, prevention, and early intervention.

Regional collaboration and strategic investment can turn this foundation into a model continuum of care for Texas.

TJJD CENTRAL REGION COUNTIES



ABOUT THE CONTINUUM OF CARE (COC) PROJECT

The Continuum of Care (CoC) Project, led by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department in partnership with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, engaged youth, families, system leaders, and community partners across Texas to assess strengths, identify gaps, and build a shared vision for a coordinated, community-based system of care.

The goal is to ensure youth have access to the right support, in the right place, at the right time—reducing unnecessary justice system involvement and improving outcomes.



WANT TO READ MORE?

Dive deeper into data, resources, and recommendations in the full Central Region CoC Report.



SCAN HERE

to access the full regional report

KEY FINDINGS



1. STRONG BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

- Robust network of MST teams, crisis respite, CSC programs, and YCOTs.
- Concentrated along the I-35 corridor, creating opportunities for early intervention and diversion.



2. SCHOOLS DRIVE SYSTEM ENTRY

- School discipline and unmet behavioral health needs are common entry points.
- Strong interest in school-based early identification and support.



3. SMALL COUNTIES AS SERVICE HUBS

- Rural departments build in-house prevention, crisis response, and mentoring.
- Many keep youth out of court—despite limited providers and resources.



4. DIVERSION OPPORTUNITIES EXIST BUT ARE NOT SCALED

- Promising programs in pockets of the region.
- Lack of consistent pathways, eligibility criteria, and sustainable funding.



5. YOUTH WITH COMPLEX NEEDS CYCLE THROUGH SYSTEMS

- High rates of multi-system involvement (mental health, substance use, child welfare).
- Limited placement options for high-acuity youth.
- Detention often becomes the default response.



6. CROSS-SYSTEM COORDINATION REMAINS A KEY GAP

- Breakdowns in communication and information sharing.
- Desire for shared tools, regular case staffing, and formal agreements.
- Need for stronger family engagement and navigation supports.

STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON

- ✓ Strong behavioral health ecosystem along the I-35 corridor
- ✓ Experienced, innovative workforce bridging clinical & probation
- ✓ Embedded and co-located service models
- ✓ Strong higher education pipeline to support workforce growth
- ✓ A culture of innovation and problem-solving

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Expand Crisis & Diversion Infrastructure



Strengthen School-Based Diversion



Build Workforce Pipeline & Recruitment



Improve Cross-System Coordination



Support Family Engagement & Navigation



Develop Regional Funding & Data Strategies

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

SHORT-TERM (0–6 MONTHS)



- Strengthen local partnerships and referral coordination
- Map and align existing resources and gaps
- Identify priority counties and expand pilots



MID-TERM (6–18 MONTHS)

- Expand crisis response capacity and diversion options
- Formalize cross-system coordination structures
- Launch workforce recruitment and training initiatives



LONG-TERM (12–24 MONTHS)

- Scale regional models across counties
- Stabilize funding for services and workforce
- Build a sustainable, community-based continuum of care



BOTTOM LINE

The Central Region has the strongest behavioral health infrastructure in Texas and a culture of innovation, but must close coordination gaps, expand diversion and crisis capacity, and invest in workforce and families to ensure every youth gets the right support—earlier and closer to home.

