

Strengthening the Juvenile Justice *Continuum of Care* Across Texas



TEXAS
JUVENILE JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT

MEADOWS
MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY INSTITUTE

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Continuum of Care for Communities



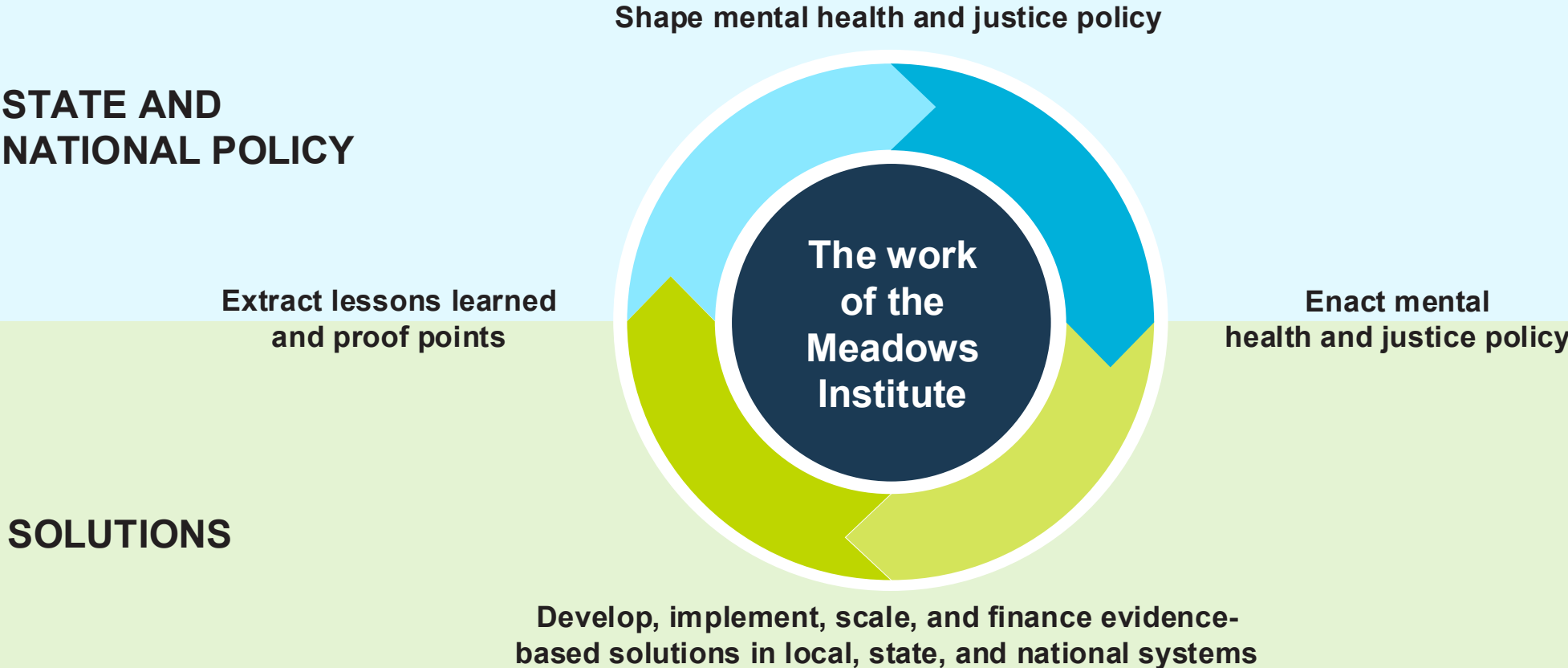
Statewide CoC Report



7 Regional Playbooks



Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute



**OUR
VALUES**

Collaboration and
partnership

Data-driven and
evidence-based

Innovation

Nonpartisanship

Stewardship

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

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THREE AREAS OF FOCUS



**Children and
Families**



Health Systems



**Justice and
Health**

CROSS CUTTING PRIORITIES

**TRAUMA AND
GRIEF**

**WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**

**HEALTH
EQUITY**

INNOVATION

REGIONAL CENTERS

- Hackett Center Houston (Southeast Region)
- Paso del Norte Center (West Region)
- South Texas Center (Central/South Regions)
- Meadows Institute Panhandle (Panhandle Region)
- Meadows Institute Dallas (North/Northeast Regions)



How This Work is Different – And Why it Matters

Every region

Every system touchpoint

Every youth-serving sector

Chiefs as co-authors

Texas now has a
comprehensive, shared
diagnostic.

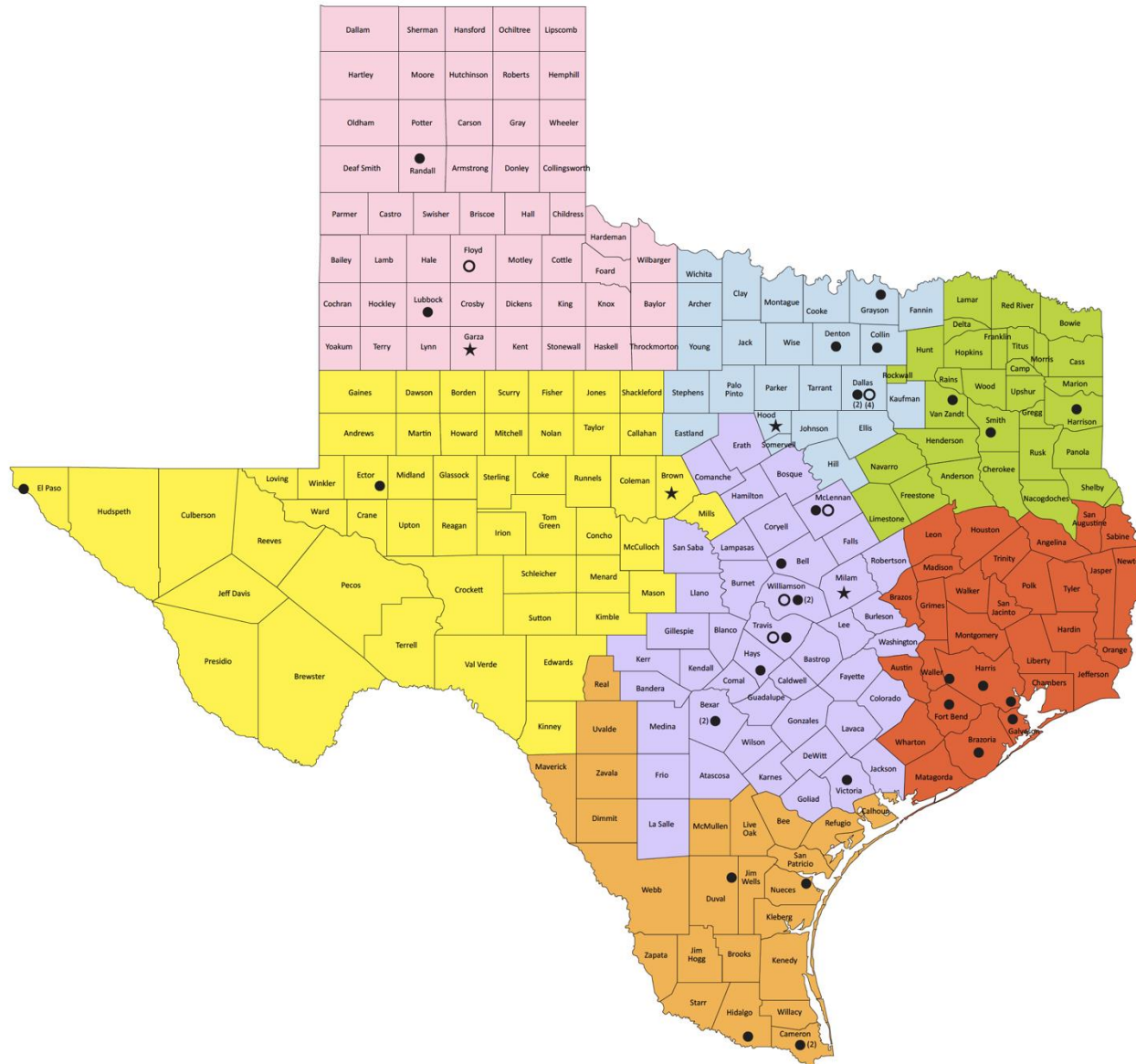
*These are not reports to admire.
They are reports to use.*

CoC SIM Mapping in TJJD's 7 Regions

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TJJD REGIONS

- Panhandle Region
- West Region
- North Region
- Northeast Region
- Central Region
- Southeast Region
- South Region





Built With the Field



Seven Regions



Site Visits



SIM Mapping & Surveys



Cross-Sector Interviews



Youth & Family Voices



Data Analysis

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7 Regional Playbooks

Table of Contents

Project Overview and North Region Context

Regional Resource Inventory and Gap Analysis

Juvenile Justice Service Landscape in the North Region

Behavioral Health Service Landscape in the North Region

Prevention and School-Based Service Landscape in the North Region

Higher Education in the North Region

North Region Data Snapshot

Child Welfare Data Snapshot in the North Region

School Discipline Data Snapshot in the North Region

Arrest Data Snapshot in the North Region

Juvenile Justice Data Snapshot in the North Region

Juvenile Justice System Needs and Opportunities Survey

From Data to Action

North Region Findings and Recommendations

Strengths and Assets in the North Region

Promising Programs in the North Region

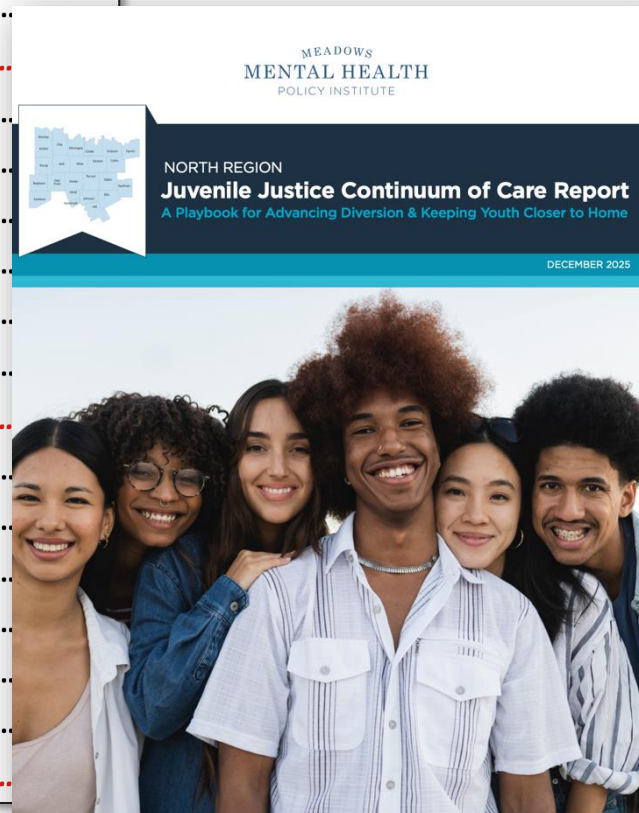
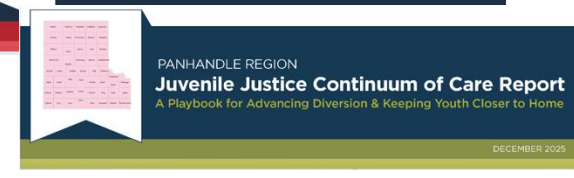
Key Themes and Findings in the North Region

Priority Recommendations for the North Region

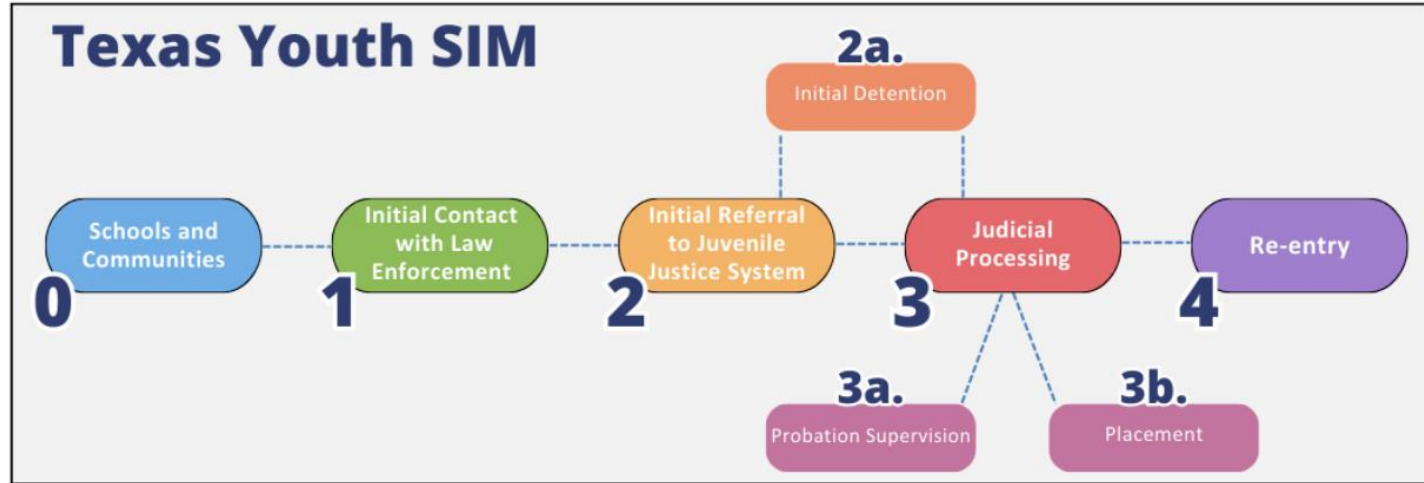
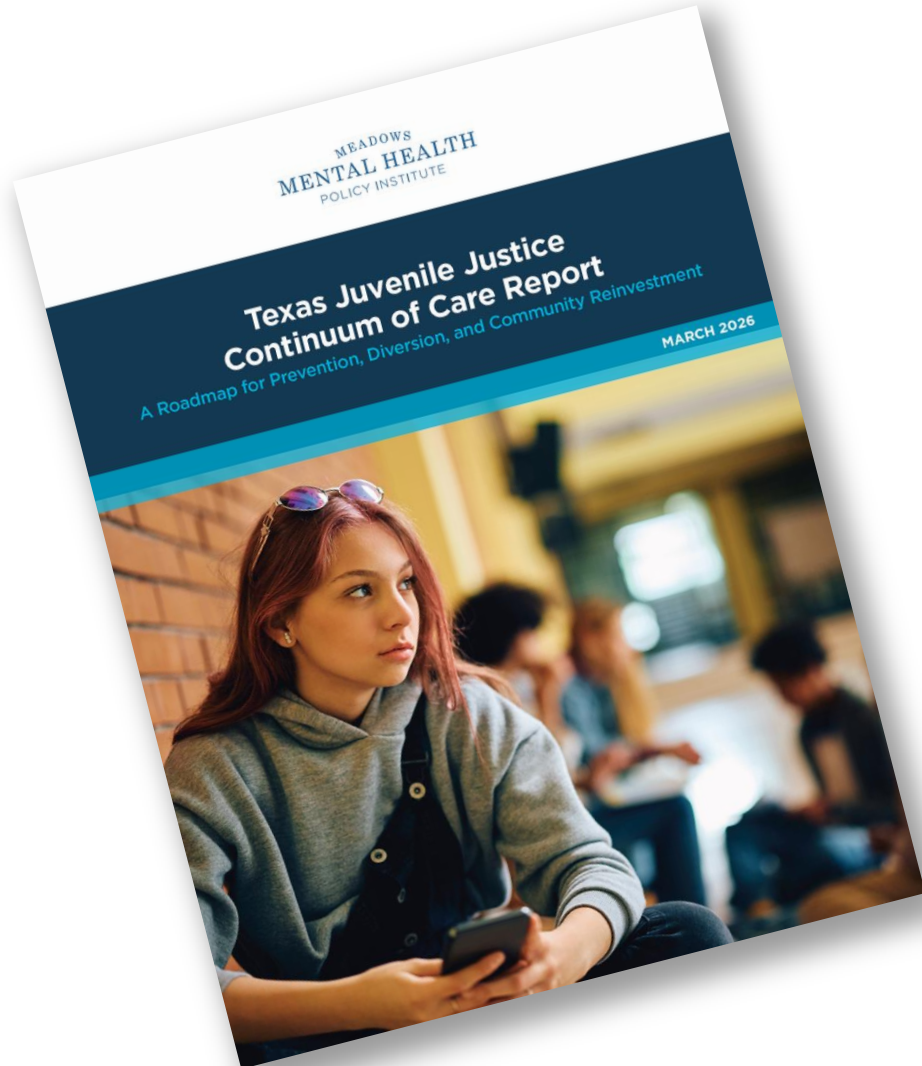
Youth and Caregiver Feedback

Next Steps for the North Region

Appendix Table of Contents



Statewide CoC Report



Each intercept section is organized by the top themes that emerged in our research, and each theme concludes with a list of actionable recommendations categorized by implementation type:

- Statutory or Administrative Rule Change
- Operational or Practice Change
- Partnership Development or Cross-Sector Collaboration
- Funding Change
- Program or Protocol Development
- Training or Capacity Building

Regional Playbook Sections

- 1 *Geographic Context*
- 2 *Resource Inventory & Gap Analysis*
- 3 *Data Profile: Schools/CPS/Justice*
- 4 *Strengths, Barriers, Opportunities*
- 5 *Recommendations & Action Plans*





What We Heard Everywhere:

Statewide Themes

The most powerful thing about this work is that it put evidence behind the field's lived experience.



Different Geography. Same Bottlenecks.

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- Youth waiting in detention for services that don't exist
- Schools driving referrals without diversion infrastructure
- Juvenile departments absorbing unmet mental health and family needs
- Probation as the default service system
- Similar local struggles → opens door to shared solutions

The widening gap between:





What We Heard From the Field

"We're putting kids in detention just to get them a psych bed."

"Our LMHA focuses on adults. Kids get the leftovers."

"There's the hot potato issue when other systems are involved. As soon as the kid comes to us, all of a sudden everybody's hands off."

"Even if we have services, we don't have a way to get them there. It's an hour and a half each way for therapy."

"We've had kids wait in detention for 40 plus days because there was nowhere else to go."

"We're dealing with 13 different dialects in one community. Even finding interpreters for court can be hard."



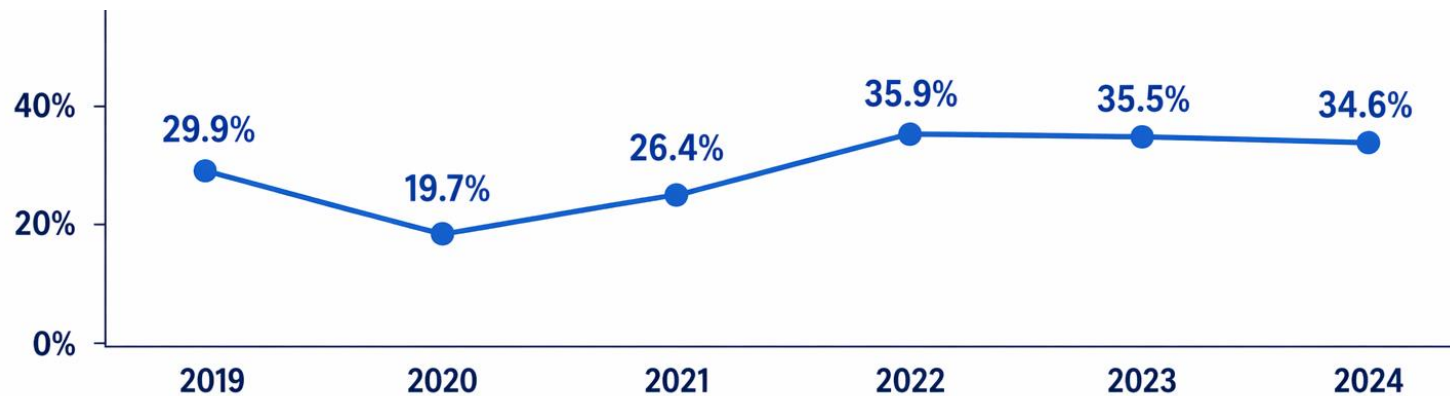
More Programs $\neq$ More Flow

- The problem isn't gaps alone – it's how youth flow through the system
- Youth getting stuck at every intercept
- These bottlenecks often drive detention, commitment, or placement escalation
- Services exist on paper, but handoffs don't line up or eligibility rules conflict

Schools are the Front Door

- Every region shows school-based arrests are driving justice involvement (35% statewide)
- Lack of tiered supports or school-based diversion policies and programs and few law enforcement-led First Offender Programs across the state, but all schools now have officers

*Share of Juvenile Referrals Occurring on Campus or School-Related Activity**



*Source: TJJD. ECI Extract: CY 19-24 Offenses at School.





When Every Door is Closed, Juvenile Becomes the Only One Open

Probation absorbing:

- Mental health crises
- School discipline failures
- Family crisis/struggles
- Substance Use Disorder (SUD) residential treatment

**Common pathway
to treatment
→ Juvenile or CPS**

What's driving placement:

- **Youth sitting in detention waiting for something that doesn't exist**
- Admission denials due to challenging behaviors
- Lack of qualified providers and staff
- Detention used as stabilization
- Lack of community-based alternatives

Public Mental Health & Juvenile Justice

Residential Capacity

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State Hospital Youth Capacity	State Residential Youth Capacity	Pre-Adjudication Detention	Post-Adjudication Detention
3 facilities <i>secure</i>	1 facility <i>nonsecure</i>	46 facilities <i>secure</i>	37 facilities <i>33 secure/4 nonsecure</i>
91 beds	74 beds	3,333 beds	2,385 beds
Total = 165		Total = 5,718	
Youth Mental Health Beds		Juvenile Justice Beds	

Source: HHSC. *Availability of Youth Beds*. Received by email communication to the Williamson County Juvenile Probation Department, April 15, 2024
 Source: TJJD. *Registered Juvenile Facilities in Texas, 2024*.



Complexity is the Rule, Not the Exception | 18

The findings reveal why traditional one-program fixes often fail.

Probation absorbing unmet needs for:

Youth w/Developmental Disabilities

Youth w/Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Mental Health with Aggression

Younger Youth (ages 10-13)

Firearms/Serious Violent Offenders

Probation Can't Fix This Alone

The juvenile justice system is absorbing other systems' struggles.

📌 **Key Insight:** Solutions sit largely outside of the juvenile justice system.

Need for cross-system investment and a unified ask to the Legislature:

What do ALL Texas kids need?

Project Spotlight: Youth with High Complexity

Developing shared priorities and unified legislative requests with agency leadership at:

TJJD | DFPS | HHSC | Meadows

TJJD Wishlist

1

**Crisis Residential Step-Down
and Youth Crisis Respite**

2

**Long-Term Residential
Treatment with Specialty Care**

3

**Expanded Youth State Hospital
Beds (with JJ pathway)**

4

**SUD Residential Treatment
(30-90 Days)**

5

**Youth Assessment Centers and
Diversion Centers**



Urban Counties: Complexity at Scale

Where every system collides

Central, Southeast, parts of North

- Highest MH/SUD and trauma complexity
- Large schools drive system entry
- Programs exist, but bottlenecks remain

Urban regions have built excellent doors — but the hallway between them is still too narrow.

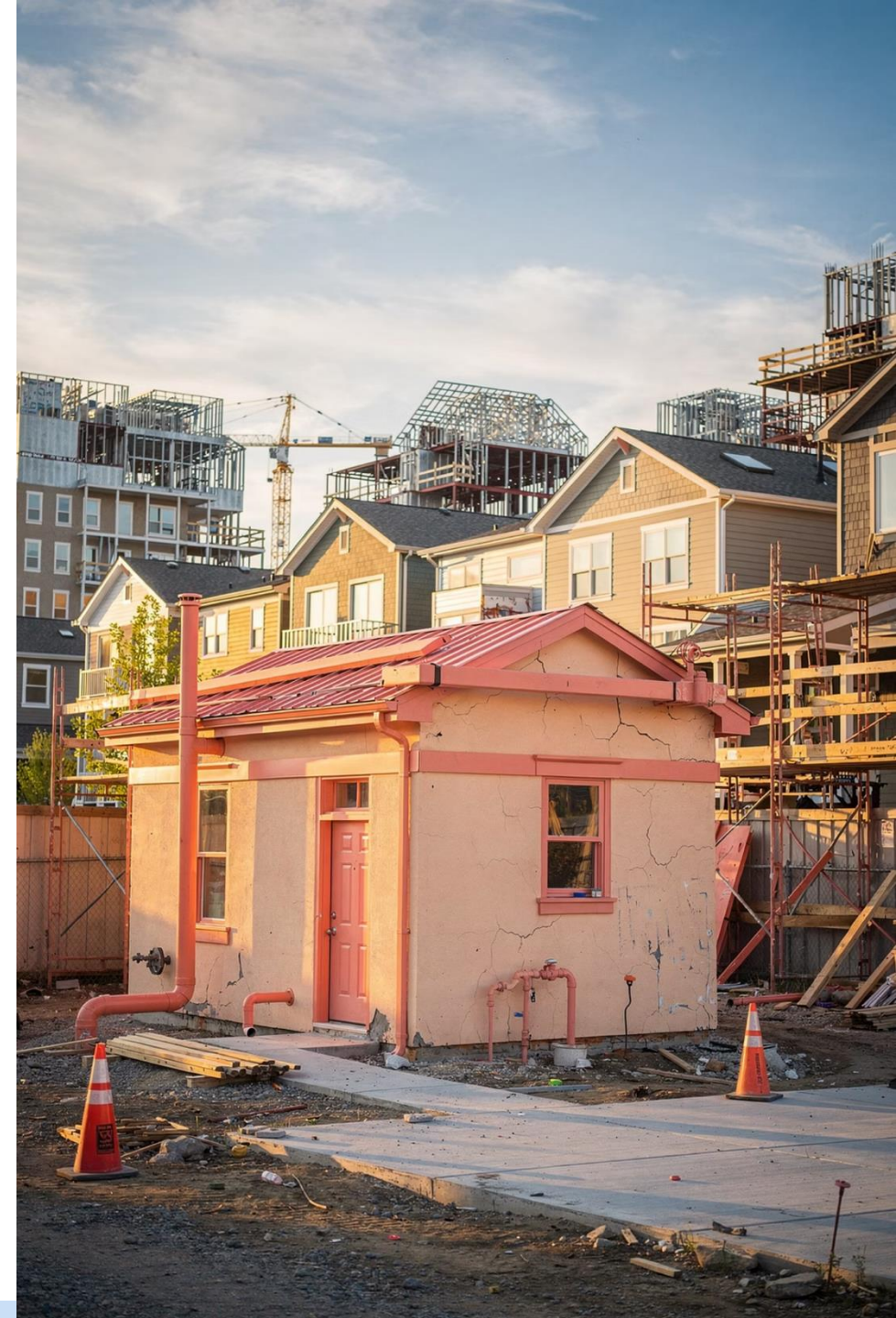
Suburban Counties: Growth Without Infrastructure

Built for yesterday's caseload

Central fringe, Southeast growth counties, North

- School referrals and DAEP outpace program infrastructure
- Diversion options thinner than urban cores
- Workforce growth lags population
- Counties hit the 'medium-size ceiling'

Quiet Creep → Sudden Crisis



Rural & Frontier Counties: Distance Shapes Outcomes

Miles matter

West, Panhandle, parts of Northeast & South

- Transport impacts service time
- 1-2 person departments carry entire systems
- Counties rely on each other without formal support
- Innovation happens out of necessity, not capacity



Border & Disaster-Exposed Counties: Stacked Stressors

When systems are hit from all sides

South, Southeast, West border counties

- Immigration and family separation shape youth behavior
- Disaster recovery diverts staff and funding
- High bilingual and cultural navigation needs

**Under constant pressure most Texans never see,
from forces systems weren't designed to absorb.**



Four Structural Gap Areas

1. Early intervention and diversion infrastructure - especially school-based
2. Behavioral health capacity and workforce - particularly crisis, in-home, and residential
3. Cross-system coordination - especially for youth with complex needs
4. Regional infrastructure that allows counties to share resources rather than solve problems alone

Texas doesn't lack committed professionals or innovative ideas. What we lack is early access, shared capacity, and system coordination, especially for youth with complex needs.



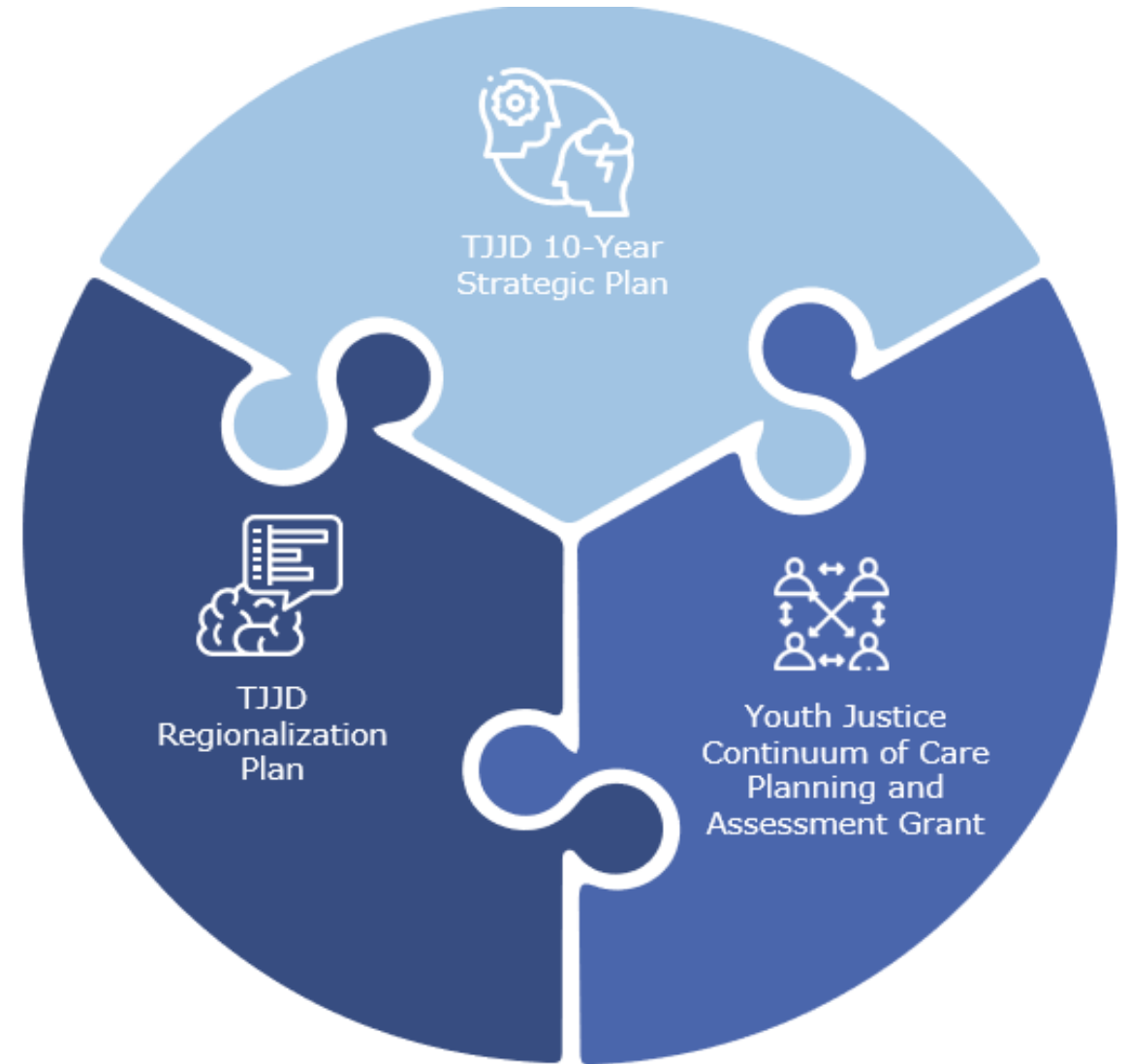
The Direction Forward **From Findings to** **Implementation**

- Fully resourced front-door diversion
- Crisis and step-down capacity
- Cross-agency coordination for youth with complex needs
- Regional implementation support
- Sustainable funding alignment



This Work is Shaping —

- **CoC Reports:** Identify system gaps that impact youth, staff, and Texas communities
- **TJJD Strategic Plan:** Outline how the state will commit to filling those gaps over time
- **TJJD Regionalization Plan:** Assess system progress and show our receipts.
- **Sunset Review:** Informing TJJD's limited-scope Sunset Regionalization Review
- **TJJD Support to Counties:** Established new regional staffing and county support structures



Support for Implementation

Regional CoC Coordinators



**Cross-system
integration**



**Program & policy
development**



**Grant research &
resource mining**



**Complex case
consultation**



**Problem-solving
support & TA**



**Report worksheets &
data collection**

Statewide
Manager



Ally Matteson, LCSW-S,
TBRI-Practitioner

Southeast



Gabriel Grady, LMSW

Central



Kim White, MA

Northeast



Nathan Longoria

North



Marisol Febles-
Sanchez, LMSW, LCPAA

South



Patty Garza, LMSW

Panhandle



Shelby Hatch, Ph.D., LCDC

West



Charlene Quinones, MA

Implementation Lanes: Choose Your Own Adventure!



Lane 1: Quick Wins

- *Alternative Referral Agreement w/prosecutors*
- *Aligning diversion eligibility across school districts*
- *MOUs with each LMHA for rapid JJ referral pathways*



Lane 2: Regional Pilots

- *Regional service-sharing and telehealth/staffing pilots*
- *First Offender and Diversion programs*
- *Youth Assessment Centers and mobile crisis services*



Lane 3: Structural Change

- *Redesigning funding streams to incentivize diversion*
- *Informing TJJD's Strategic Plan/LAR*

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE!



TJJD Grant Opportunities:

Discretionary State Aid

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**Scan for a
Directory of
Juvenile Probation
Chiefs in your Area**



**Scan for a
Directory of CoC
Regional
Coordinators**



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*Scan to download
all reports and
resources*

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