



**Dallas County Criminal Justice Advisory Board  
General Membership Minutes for Monday, March 23, 2026**

**Welcome & Introductions:**

Commissioner Dr. Elba Garcia called the meeting to order at 2:33 PM. Attendees provided customary introductions, including representatives from the Dallas County Criminal Justice Department, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Sheriff's Office, Pretrial Services, judiciary, municipal agencies, and community-based organizations. Commissioner Garcia welcomed all attendees and acknowledged the importance of continued collaboration among justice system partners to address ongoing operational challenges and system improvements.

**Membership & Infrastructure:**

Commissioner Garcia reported that there were no new nominations, appointments, or structural changes presented for consideration during this meeting.

**Meeting Minutes:**

The CJAB General Membership minutes from December 15, 2025 were distributed in advance. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Jesse Reyes and seconded by Ms. LaShonda Jefferson. With no questions, corrections, or objections, the motion carried unanimously.

**Presentation:**

**Dallas County Criminal Justice Department – The Evolution of Jail Population Management (JPM)**

Commissioner Garcia introduced Ms. LaShonda Jefferson, Assistant Director of the Dallas County Criminal Justice Department, and provided a summary of her experience and leadership within the department.

Ms. Jefferson provided an overview of the department's structure, responsibilities, and the growing challenges associated with the Dallas County jail population. She explained that the Dallas County Criminal Justice department was established in 2006 to coordinate criminal justice efforts, reduce recidivism, and improve system efficiency while maintaining public safety. She described the department's four operational units, including Behavioral Health Planning, Criminal Justice Planning, Mental Health, and Jail Population Management.

Ms. Jefferson emphasized that collaboration among agencies is essential, noting that the Criminal Justice Department does not oversee any individual stakeholder. Instead, the department focuses on strengthening collaboration and communication across the system. She explained that the Jail Population Management team reviews the entire process to identify and address any factors that may delay case progression or an individual's movement through the jail system.

Ms. Jefferson outlined several historical developments that contributed to increasing jail population levels. She explained that the elimination of the felony writ list in 2019 resulted in individuals remaining in custody longer when charges had not yet been filed. She also discussed the operational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which created court backlogs and slowed processing times. Additional challenges included the implementation of Tyler Odyssey in 2023, which disrupted system integrations and business processes, as well as Senate Bill 6 and Senate Bill 9, both of which limited magistrates' authority to set bonds for certain offenses and delayed bond settings. She stated that Dallas County's jail population has steadily increased since 2018, with continued upward trends driven by increased bookings and slower release rates.

Ms. Jefferson explained that since 2019 the Jail Population Management team has evolved from simply reporting statistics to proactively reviewing individual cases. Staff members manually research thousands of cases to determine why individuals remain incarcerated, often identifying missing court orders, unprocessed release instructions, unnecessary holds, delays in transfers to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), or communication breakdowns between agencies. She explained that individuals frequently remain incarcerated unnecessarily because no automated alerts exist to flag stalled cases or missed actions across systems. She described how her staff proactively contacts stakeholders to resolve problems and follows up to ensure action is taken. Between April 2023 and February 2026, JPM staff manually reviewed more than 107,000 individuals in custody and found that approximately 35 percent required intervention. Ms. Jefferson stated that from June 2023 through February 2026, more than 16,900 individuals were released following Jail Population Management inquiries, reducing average custody time by approximately 49 days and avoiding significant costs to the county.

Ms. Jefferson also discussed the new Detention Early Warning Report, referred to as the DEWR report, which became operational in February 2026 following Odyssey implementation issues. The report was developed collaboratively by the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, judiciary, clerk offices, Sheriff's Office, and Information Technology staff. She clarified that contrary to common misconceptions, low-level misdemeanor offenders make up only a small percentage of the jail population. The largest group consists of felony defendants awaiting court disposition, followed by inmates awaiting transfer to state prison facilities. She further explained that the county's jail dashboard publicly tracks jail

population trends, booking numbers, release statistics, costs, behavioral health data, and demographic information.

During discussion regarding jail costs, Ms. Jefferson reported that the daily cost per inmate has increased to approximately \$95.58 per day, totaling nearly \$20 million per month. She explained that these figures do not include booking fees or medical expenses. Ms. Jefferson emphasized that the issue extends beyond financial costs and directly impacts individuals, explaining that many incarcerated people lose employment, housing stability, and community connections before conviction, and in some cases, charges are later dismissed entirely.

Ms. Jefferson further explained that ongoing inefficiencies reduce the effectiveness of the system overall. She explained that delayed or inaccurate information can hinder coordination among partners and create frustration across agencies. She also noted that these challenges increase legal exposure, create potential risks to state and legislative funding requirements, and ultimately erode public trust. Additionally, she stated that inadequate responses to behavioral health and substance abuse needs contribute to higher recidivism rates.

Ms. Jefferson concluded her presentation by thanking several key stakeholders present at the meeting for their continued collaboration. As a result of the collaborative efforts, Dallas County has avoided outsourcing custody.

Commissioner Garcia opened the floor for questions. Questions were raised regarding the continued increase in jail costs, and Dr. Watkins explained that recent budget calculations now account for additional indirect and departmental expenses associated with jail operations, including overtime and staffing. Members discussed challenges related to municipal jail magistration procedures, particularly recent changes in Irving's process that now require individuals to be transferred to Dallas County prior to magistration.

Further discussion focused on delays in bond setting and whether enhanced coordination with municipalities could improve overall efficiency. Judge Nesbitt and Judge Autry explained that Senate Bill 9 significantly changed magistrate authority, introducing complications in the bond process. They noted that some municipalities maintain their own judges and jail systems, while others transfer defendants directly to Dallas County, resulting in varied procedures across jurisdictions. Judge Nesbitt also referenced prior efforts to implement centralized video magistration and provide attorneys at first appearance, noting that limitations within the aging jail facility have hindered successful implementation of those initiatives.

Commissioner Garcia reiterated that addressing jail population growth requires system-wide collaboration, improved coordination, and a shift toward treatment-based approaches for appropriate populations

## **Committee Project Updates:**

### **Criminal Justice Administration & Jail Population Management**

Ms. Jefferson provided an update on jail population. She referenced materials included in the CJAB packet and reported that the current jail population is 7,188 individuals, representing a high percentage of jail capacity. The next Jail Population Committee meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2026.

### **Fair Defense**

Jordan Pollock, representing the Public Defender's Office and the Fair Defense Committee, provided updates regarding implementation of the Miami Model and diversion efforts. She reported that the office is participating in efforts to revise Texas emergency detention and substance abuse statutes to mirror Florida's Baker and Marchman Acts. The Public Defender's Office also proposed a Mental Health Bond Docket to comply with Senate Bill 9 requirements and support diversion into felony mental health courts. Ms. Pollock reported that office staff continue touring homeless facilities and working with behavioral health providers to strengthen diversion opportunities. She additionally announced the development of a restoration and reentry program in partnership with Unlocking Doors that will provide legal restoration services, warrant clearance assistance, benefits reinstatement, supervision stabilization, and community resource coordination for clients before and after incarceration.

Ms. Pollock also updated the Board on the Juvenile Justice Task Force, a collaborative initiative involving the Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, county administration, Dallas ISD, the International Rescue Committee, Cafe Momentum, and the Wren Collective. The task force's initial focus is reducing the amount of time between juvenile arrest and case disposition. She stated that the office continues monitoring misdemeanor bond hearing data and is working with the Criminal Justice Department to improve public access to jail population and bond information.

### **Justice of the Peace**

Judge Valencia Nash was unable to attend and no update was provided.

### **Law Enforcement and Jurisprudence**

Ms. Ellyce Lindberg and Judge Kim Nesbit presented information regarding diversion, deflection, centralized magistration, and criminal justice terminology. Judge Nesbitt distributed a chart intended to help stakeholders better understand various programs and system processes currently operating in Dallas County. (Pages shared during the meeting are included as Attachments 1–3 for reference.) She explained the challenges created by Senate Bill 9, including restrictions on magistrate authority and complications involving municipalities with separate jail systems. She also discussed prior attempts to establish

attorneys at first appearance and noted that the physical design of the current jail facility creates operational and security limitations.

### **Pretrial Services**

Tomas Ortiz from Pretrial Services reported that the department supervised 2,241 individuals at the end of February 2026, including participants in electronic monitoring, alcohol monitoring, and general supervision programs. The department recently merged two units to improve efficiency in identifying individuals eligible for release programs. Ms. Ortiz indicated that dedicated duty officers will focus on reviewing overnight jail reports and processing release opportunities while other officers focus on supervision responsibilities.

### **Reentry**

Ms. Christina Crain was unable to attend. However, an update was provided regarding ongoing reentry initiatives, including expanded partnerships with community organizations. The collaboration between Unlocking Doors and the Public Defender's Office was highlighted as a key effort to improve reentry outcomes and reduce recidivism. Additionally, Commissioner Garcia shared a news article highlighting the successful Unlocking Doors reentry efforts and a formerly incarcerated individual who now makes positive contributions to the community.

### **Research**

Dr. Noyes was unable to attend and no update was provided.

### **Juvenile**

Michael O'Brien provided a Juvenile Committee update and discussed major improvements following the Evident Change report released in 2023. He stated that average juvenile case disposition time decreased from approximately 140 days to 57 days, representing a 59 percent reduction. The long-term goal remains reducing disposition times to 30 days. Mr. O'Brien also reported declines in juvenile detention usage and misdemeanor filings while diversion and supervisory caution practices significantly increased. He emphasized that collaborative efforts among probation, defense counsel, law enforcement agencies, courts, and prosecutors have improved outcomes and reduced unnecessary involvement of low-risk youth in the juvenile justice system.

### **Program Update:**

#### **Electronic Disposition Reporting (EDR)**

Ms. Charlene Randolph and Ms. Ellyce Lindberg provided an update on EDR compliance. They reported that Dallas County must achieve a 90% disposition rate by August 1 to maintain eligibility for grant funding. Current data indicates approximately 15,148 cases remain open, with approximately 90 business days remaining to meet compliance goals.

Ms. Randolph and Ms. Lindberg emphasized that collaboration among law enforcement agencies, courts, clerks, and information technology staff remains critical to ensuring accurate case data and timely case disposition reporting. They noted that reporting capabilities continue to be affected by challenges associated with the Tyler Odyssey implementation, including the loss of reporting “buckets” previously used to categorize open cases. Despite these challenges, both reported that ongoing collaboration with IT staff and system stakeholders has continued to improve data accuracy, reporting functionality, and case tracking efforts. Gary Fitzsimmons and IT staff were recognized for their extensive efforts in resolving reporting issues.

**Public Comments:**

No public comments were received.

**Announcements:**

Commissioner Garcia announced that the next CJAB General Membership meeting is scheduled for June 15, 2026. Additional announcements included the Dallas Police Department naming Deputy Chief Monica Igo as the new representative, replacing Executive Assistant Chief Reyes. Commissioner Garcia expressed appreciation for Chief Reyes’ years of service, leadership, and contributions to the Board. Commissioner Garcia also thanked attendees for their continued commitment to improving the criminal justice system in Dallas County.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:44 PM.

Definitions – Deflection/Diversion/Miami Model/Opioid Docket/Magistration - 3/23/2026

**Deflection** and **diversion** occur when law enforcement responds to behavior. **If law enforcement is not involved**, it is not deflection or diversion.

Concept	Focus	Involvement					
		Law Enforcement	Providers	Jail	DAO	Courts	Defense
Deflection = <b>PRE</b> -arrest	<p><b>Currently, the Transition Center at Austin Street (pilot program).</b></p> <p><b>Redirecting someone away from the criminal justice system before an arrest occurs.</b></p> <p>Law enforcement (or sometimes community responders) <b>connects the person directly to services</b> instead of starting the criminal process.</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law enforcement responds to a call or observes suspicious behavior.</li> <li>• No arrest is made.</li> <li>• Person referred to services.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Legal authority to arrest may exist, but the officer does not initiate the criminal process.</p> <p><b>Goal:</b> To keep people out of the criminal justice system. Legal authority to arrest, but officer does not initiate the criminal process.</p>	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Miami Model = <b>PRE</b> -arrest	<p><b>Deflection Model (same as above)</b> <b>Florida has different laws that allow law enforcement to hold a person for 72 hours.</b></p> <p>Law enforcement responds to a call or observes suspicious behavior. No arrest is made. Person referred to services.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Goal:</b> To keep people out of the criminal justice system. Legal authority to arrest, but officer does not initiate the criminal process.</p>	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

## Definitions – Deflection/Diversion/Miami Model/Opioid Docket/Magistration - 3/23/2026

Concept	Focus	Involvement					
		Law Enforcement	Providers	Jail	DAO	Courts	Defense
PRE-arrest Diversion	<p><b>DALLAS DOES NOT OFFER this model of Diversion – This is not the same as Deflection.</b></p> <p>Law enforcement responds to a call or observes suspicious behavior. Legal authority to arrest may exist, but the officer does not initiate the criminal process.</p> <p><b>No arrest is made. Law Enforcement HOLDS THE CHARGES.</b></p> <p><b>Law Enforcement</b> offers the person the option for a diversion program.</p> <p>If the person successfully completes the program, <b>charges are not filed.</b></p>	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Diversion = POST-arrest	<p>Law enforcement responds to a call or observes suspicious behavior.</p> <p>Arrest is made, if Probable Cause (PC) for criminal offense exists. Person taken to jail, and a cause number is assigned.</p> <p>DAO screens, and if approved, person given option to enter a structured pre-adjudication diversion program.</p> <p>If person successfully completes the program, charges are dismissed, and there is no conviction.</p> <p>Examples of Diversion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-Trial Specialty Courts (DIVERT, AIM, SET, VET)</li> <li>• General Pre-Trial Intervention (PTI)</li> <li>• Mental Health PTI</li> </ul> <p>Goal: To reduce incarceration by redirecting offenders to community-based programs. To reduce recidivism.</p>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Definitions – Deflection/Diversion/Miami Model/Opioid Docket/Magistration - 3/23/2026

Concept	Focus	Involvement					
		Law Enforcement	Providers	Jail	DAO	Courts	Defense
<p>Opioid Docket = <b>POST</b>-arrest</p> <p>(Sometimes referred to as a “RAD” docket)</p>	<p><b>DALLAS DOES NOT CURRENTLY HAVE THIS DOCKET.</b></p> <p><b>THIS IS NOT THE SAME AS DEFLECTION OR DIVERSION.</b></p> <p>Law enforcement responds to a call or observes suspicious behavior.</p> <p>Arrest is made, if PC for criminal offense exists. Person taken to jail, and a cause number is assigned.</p> <p>Magistrate in jail - If offense is a State Jail or Third Degree Drug Possession, person is eligible for Opioid Docket.</p> <p>Magistrate in jail - Person given bond to report to “Opioid Docket” <b>within 48 hours of release.</b></p> <p>Person would appear for an “Opioid Docket” and receive a risk/need/clinical assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connected to certified peer support</li> <li>• Evaluated for MAT services</li> <li>• Drug tests</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

1) **Central Magistration** = One Central Physical Facility/Processing Center/Jail (**potential FUTURE NEW jail site?**) where all arrestees are taken upon arrest – so that they can be booked into one jail/processing center, be magistrated (PSA, PSRS, bond & conditions set, etc.). Deflection and Diversion Desks would be optional, and they could also be part of such a facility.

**SB9 now gives more authority to city magistrate judges to set bond versus the authority given to the Lew Sterrett Magistrate Judges—See Art. 17.027 (a-2) TX CCP. The new law allows arrestees, who fall into certain enumerated categories, to ONLY be magistrated by a city magistrate OR a District Court Judge—NOT the Lew Sterrett magistrate judges (i.e., Chapter 54 Magistrates).**

2) **Video Magistration** = REQUIRES buy-in from municipalities willing to participate, and it would allow the arrestee to physically be in a municipal jail, but the Lew Sterrett Magistrate would do the magistration. Bookin would occur in one physical location, while processing would be done virtually at Lew Sterrett/new jail site/processing center.

Things to be worked out include: the logistics of jail-chains; remote meetings between arrestees and Pretrial Services and their appointed/retained defense attorneys BEFORE Magistration; timing of magistrate judges’ dockets in coordination with municipal police departments and their city courts (Lew Sterrett Magistrate Judges do not magistrate arrestees for their Class C charges); prosecutors present (virtually) for Magistration hearing; etc.

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3) **Appointment of Counsel at 1st appearance** = While **not required** under current law, **wherever** an arrestee is booked into jail/processing center, they would receive consultation with an appointed/retained defense attorney, who can advise them of their constitutional rights, the process of the criminal justice system, answer their questions, etc. This could happen in-person at a county jail/central magistration facility or virtually. With either option, it would have to be based on some type of coordinated, standardized schedule and happen BEFORE magistration.