

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UH Law Center to host symposium focusing on pre-trial aspects of criminal justice system

Criminal and health law professionals will consider possible reform of procedures and policies as a defendant moves from arrest and jail to trial.

Jan. 5, 2016 – Recent high profile and sometimes tragic criminal cases have made headlines across the country, but much happens between the time a suspect is arrested and finally brought to trial.

The Criminal Justice Institute and Health Law & Policy Institute at the University of Houston Law Center, in conjunction with the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin and several other institutions, are hosting a daylong symposium Jan. 22 to provide information and insights into critical “pre-trial” aspects of the criminal justice system with an eye toward procedural and policy reform.

The symposium, “Police, Jails, and Vulnerable People: New Strategies for Confronting Today’s Challenges,” brings together criminal justice professionals to focus upon best practices in policing, pretrial diversion and detention, and jail safety, particularly as they relate to persons with vulnerabilities such as physical and mental health issues.

“This symposium will feature national experts who specialize in different aspects of the criminal process from the point at which citizens encounter a police officer to the bail decision and jail detention,” said UHLC Professor Sandra Guerra Thompson, CJI director. “Recent cases like Sandra Bland’s untimely death in a Texas jail have brought to the forefront pressing issues about arrest policies, bail hearings, mental health issues, and jail safety. Several Texas legislators will also be on hand to discuss their plans for the next legislative session. “

State Sen. John Whitmire, chairman of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee with oversight of the adult and juvenile criminal justice systems, will be the keynote speaker. A 1980 graduate of the University of Houston Law Center (formerly known as the Bates College of Law), Whitmire ranks first in seniority and is the "Dean of the Texas Senate."

"This event represents an extraordinary opportunity to hear from several national experts about how to address some of the most pressing issues in the Texas criminal justice system today, including mental health diversion, pretrial detention, bail reform, policing practices, jail safety, and suicide prevention," said Michele Deitch, a senior lecturer at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, "We are taking these topics from the headlines in the newspapers and trying to come up with real solutions for legislators, sheriffs, police chiefs, judges, prosecutors, and county commissioners."

The symposium is presented in cooperation with several other institutions including, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The University of Texas at Austin School of Law, South Texas College of Law, SMU Dedman School of Law, The Earl Carl Institute of the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University, the University of Houston-Downtown, Department of Criminal Justice, and the University of Houston - Clear Lake, Department of Criminal Justice.

The program will be from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Jan. 22, at the Student Center South – Theater, Room 103, on the University of Houston campus, 4100 University Drive. Attendees will receive 6.25 hours of CLE credit, including 1.25 hours of ethics credit. For more information, visit <http://law.uh.edu/cji/Police-Jails-and-Vulnerable-People.asp>. An application for TCOLE credit is pending. Seating is limited, so registration is highly recommended.

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About the University of Houston Law Center

The [University of Houston Law Center](#) is the leading law school in the nation's fourth-largest city. Founded in 1947, it is a top-tier institution awarding Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees. The Law Center is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.