

How Counties Are Keeping People with Mental Illnesses Out of Jails and Improving Public Safety

What is Stepping Up?

Stepping Up works to address the overincarceration of people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders. This national initiative gives county leaders the resources and tools they need to meet this challenge in their community by

- Increasing collaboration among behavioral health, criminal justice, homelessness and other systems to develop shared solutions;
- Using data to inform effective policy decisions; and
- Implementing high-impact strategies, with a particular focus on diversion.

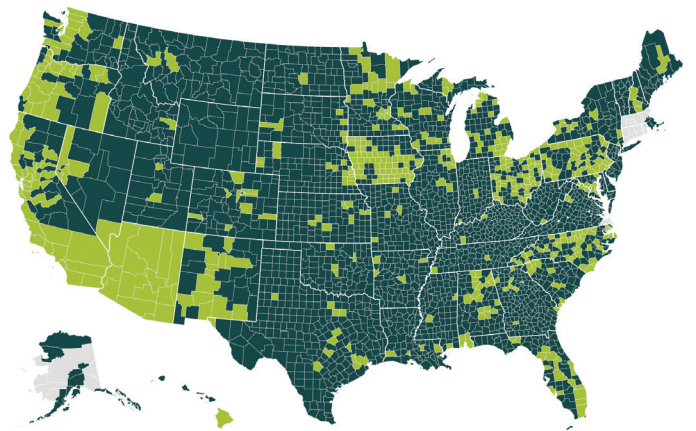
Why is it important?

Committing to the principles of Stepping Up can ultimately lead to

- Fewer people with behavioral health needs entering the justice system when they can be safely served in the community;
- Enhanced community capacity to serve people diverted from the justice system;
- Greater public safety;
- Better health outcomes; and
- Improved access to treatment and other support services.

How far does Stepping Up reach?

There are 520 counties across 43 states in the network—47 percent of the U.S. population resides in a Stepping Up county.



■ Participating Counties

“Stepping Up helped us kick off a conversation that is continuing to this day about the importance of collecting data and collaborating across organizations to improve outcomes for people with mental illnesses, as well as reduce their risk of coming back into the system.”

Mike Brouwer, Douglas County, Kansas, Criminal Justice Coordinator

What have Stepping Up sites accomplished?

Since the initiative launched in 2015, Stepping Up counties across the country have made significant strides. Here are a few examples of the many successes we've seen:

Alabama became the first state to pass a statewide Stepping Up resolution and provides grants to localities to expand diversion interventions.

Berks County, Pennsylvania, implemented a sophisticated data system to identify people who have frequent contact with the health and criminal justice systems and tailor policy solutions to connect them to community-based supports.

Fairfax County, Virginia, expanded crisis response center services, resulting in over 1,800 diversions from potential arrest.

Fulton County, Georgia, invested \$500,000 in improved data systems and analysis; \$800,000 in diversion initiatives; \$100,000 in Crisis Intervention Team, Mental Health First Aid, and trauma training coordination; and \$370,000 in screening and reentry services to establish baseline data and increase connections to care.

Douglas County, Kansas, safely decreased its jail population with serious mental illnesses by 50 percent and has maintained that reduction for three consecutive years.

Yolo County, California, opened a mental health urgent care facility and developed an integrated data-sharing system across criminal justice and health agencies.

What can my county get out of the Stepping Up initiative?

Tailored Resources

The Stepping Up website has a library of free reports, tools, webinars, guides, and handbooks, all of which were designed for county leaders like you. Access the full set of resources at StepUpTogether.org.

Peer Learning

The Stepping Up partners have identified Innovator counties that offer real-world experience and expertise. Each of these counties has demonstrated the ability to accurately assess and track the prevalence of serious mental illness in jail and enact high-impact improvements across systems. Innovators play an essential role in Stepping Up through peer coaching, guidance on the overall direction of the initiative, and more.

Direct Assistance

The Stepping Up partners provide various levels of one-on-one technical assistance to help jurisdictions meet their goals. If you are interested in receiving direct assistance from Stepping Up, email us at info@stepuptogether.org.

How can I get started?

1.

Visit StepUpTogether.org.

2.

Pass a resolution to join the initiative.

3.

Subscribe to receive the latest information about Stepping Up at StepUpTogether.org/Take-Action.

4.

Reach out to info@stepuptogether.org if you have any questions.

Stepping Up is a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails and is the result of a partnership between The Council of State Governments Justice Center, the National Association of Counties, and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation.

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