

Megan Quattlebaum:

Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome. I'm Megan Quattlebaum and I am the director of the Council of State Government's Justice Center. I'm so happy to have hundreds of you here tuning in with us today from across the country to learn about county's journeys with the Stepping Up initiative, how they got started, the progress they've made, the achievements they've had over the years and their plans for continued success with Stepping Up. Now, as you may know, the Stepping Up initiative started in 2015 as a partnership between the Council of State Government's Justice Center, the National Association of Counties and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation, really in recognition of the growing over representation of people with serious mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders in county jails.

People living with mental health conditions and co-occurring substance use disorders come into contact with the justice system for a whole number of reasons. Those include lack of community based resources to support this population with treatment and services, disproportionately higher rates of arrest and recidivism compared to people without behavioral health needs and more criminogenic risk factors than the general population. County jails and their partner agencies in the justice system all play a role in ensuring that people with mental health conditions and co-occurring substance use disorders, whose offenses don't indicate a public safety risk, are quickly connected to treatment and community supports. And they are teaming up with partners in the behavioral health, social service and housing systems to address this challenge head on. Ensuring engagement in community based treatment and supports leads to reductions in contact with law enforcement and reductions in re-bookings into jail. And it promotes health and public safety.

Many counties, and we are so proud of them have joined Stepping Up's latest call to action, Set Measure, Achieve. This is a national effort to establish and reach measurable goals that demonstrate reduced prevalence of behavioral health needs in our jails. And as counties across the country, and you're going to hear from many of them today, have progressed in their Stepping Up work, they've identified racial and ethnic disparities in their justice and behavioral health systems, and they are exploring policy and program options to actually reduce those disparities through Stepping Up.

Another equally important piece of this work is that people with mental health conditions and co-occurring substance use disorders, and those people who make up their support systems, have to be involved in shaping responses to addressing behavioral health needs in the justice system. Many counties are actively including people with lived experience in the discussions that are happening around these issues in their jurisdictions. They're doing this through their criminal justice coordinating councils and through other means, and they're elevating the voices of people with that experience. So today we are so thrilled, we really have an incredible program lined up for you. I am hopeful that it will equip and inspire you to start or expand this truly life changing work in your own home community.

So before I introduce you to our moderator and our speakers for today, I do want to acknowledge and thank our partners at the United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. They have supported the development and implementation of Stepping Up since its very first days. And they have served as such critical thought and strategic partners on this initiative. This event and this initiative wouldn't have been possible without PGA's support and we thank them so much for being a part of this vital work.

As you watch this broadcast, I encourage you please join in and participate. Be part of the discussion. We'd love to hear your thoughts on how justice, crisis, behavioral health, social service and housing systems, not to mention people who are directly affected by mental health conditions and co-occurring substance use disorders, how all of them, all of us can play a role in this vital work of stepping up. And to all of our Stepping Up partners out there in the counties, please, we want to hear from you. Share with

us, share with our listeners today, your proudest Stepping Up accomplishments. All of you can participate in this conversation via Twitter. You can use the #justicebriefinglive, or you should see a comments box here in Vimeo, down at the bottom of your screen.

Just so you know, we are going to hold some time at the end of this discussion for questions. So please use the hashtag, use the comment box, submit whatever questions you have. We want to hear those and we want to get to those within the program today. And soon after today's event, we're going to post a video recording, the transcript, the presentation decks, all of it on the CSG Justice Center's website. I hope you'll sign up for email list serve. So you can be the first to hear when information is available.

So as I said, we have a really, really great program lined up for you today. And we are delighted to have the honorable Larry Johnson from the National Association of Counties with us. He's going to share how counties are utilizing their funding from the American Rescue Plan and investing resources to help implement programs and trainings to serve people leaving jails. Commissioner Johnson is the current president of NACo and was elected to the DeKalb county, Georgia Board of Commissioners in November, 2002. That makes him one of the youngest ever elected to serve in this capacity. He was reelected for his fifth term in November, 2018. Active in NACo since 2005, he served in numerous leadership positions within the organization. In 2017, he was appointed as chair of NACo's large urban county caucus. And in 2005, he chaired NACo's health disparity subcommittee. Commissioner Johnson graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a bachelor's in community health and later earned a master's in public health from the University of Northern Colorado.

Next up, he's the executive director of the American Psychiatric Association Foundation and a member of the APA executive team. In June of this year, he was selected as the president of the Bar Association of the District of Columbia. Before joining the APA foundation, he held several management positions with AARP for over 15 years, including serving as vice president and a member of the AARP national leadership team. Before joining AARP, he was in the private practice of law for 16 years. He's also a board member of the Thurgood Marshall Center Trust, an adjunct professor at Georgetown University and the Howard University School of Law and the national chairman of the public policy committee of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. Let's welcome Rawle Andrews, Junior.

We are then going to meet Dr. Ayesha Delany-Brumsey, one of our own here at the CSG Justice Center. She is going to serve as our esteemed panel moderator and will lead a conversation with expert panelists who are going to talk about their experiences implementing Stepping Up in their own communities. At the CSG Justice Center, Ayesha oversees our behavioral health division and all of its various portfolios. These all focus on how parts of the criminal justice system interact with the mental health, substance addiction and homelessness systems among many, many others. Aisha received her PhD in clinical psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles. Aisha is such a great colleague and asset to our team. And I am thrilled to have her here to moderate this discussion.

First things first though, I want you to please join me in welcoming Karhlton Moore. He is the director of the United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. And he is going to speak with us today about the exceedingly high rate of mental health conditions in our nation's criminal justice system. Director Moore is someone many of us know well. Prior to his appointment at BJA, he served as the executive director of the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services, where he actually led Ohio's grant making operations since 2005. And something that means a lot to us in this discussion, he, in that role, supported the work of Stepping Up that was happening in counties across Ohio. Director Moore has also served as the facilitator for former Ohio governor John Kasich's task force on community police relations, a precursor of the Ohio Collaborative Community Police Advisory Board. Director Moore, we are so thrilled to have you here. Thank you. Welcome. I'm going to pass it off to you to take it away.

Director Darhlton F. Moore:

Thank you for that kind and warm welcome, Megan. I'm very excited to be here today to celebrate the wonderful progress the Stepping Up initiative has made. Congratulations to the 550 and counting jurisdictions and the many strides you all have made in the last seven years. I want to take a moment and share my own experience with Stepping Up in the great state of Ohio. When I was working at the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services, where firsthand, I got to work with communities to help bridge the gap between our criminal justice and behavioral health systems. I had the wonderful opportunity to watch Stepping Up spread across the Buckeye state. And I saw firsthand as communities were in a better position to address behavioral health needs instead of relying on our criminal justice system.

As you hear today from just a few of our other Stepping Up communities and their leaders, you will learn about the different approaches each has taken to improve outcomes within their communities. When we initially launched the Stepping Up initiative back in 2015, it began as a cross systems collaboration designed to provide counties with support to reduce the incarceration and re-incarceration of individuals with mental health, co-occurring substance use disorders in jails. Over the last seven years, Stepping Up has used a data driven framework that has assisted 553 counties through training, resources and zeroing in on jail based metrics that reflect the impact of their community's efforts.

We know that far too many people with mental health conditions are in our criminal justice system. Some of whom enter and reenter the system again and again. This includes the over 2 million people who come into our jails, placing sheriffs and jail administrators in the position to be mental healthcare providers. Not only do people with complex needs come into jail at higher rates, but they also stay in jail longer and are at a higher risk of returning to jail than those without mental health conditions and co-occurring substance use disorders.

The Stepping Up initiative has been working to change this. Stepping Up has provided counties with resources and tools to model change that is based on making data driven decisions. I cannot stress this piece enough. Data provides communities with the ability to quantify the number of people with serious mental illness in their justice system, and to identify the policy and program improvements to address these needs. Better yet, data assists communities to identify opportunities to divert people from entering the justice system, who can be better served through a behavioral healthcare response.

The counties that have joined this national movement have been able to zero in on their data, using their jail based metrics that reflect the impact of their community's efforts. These counties are diverse in many ways, but have come together in their commitment to reform county justice systems. I am pleased to report that more than half, that's right, more than half of the US population now lives in a Stepping Up county.

Next, you will hear specifics about how three stepping up counties have reduced their average daily jail population and bookings of people with serious mental illness. Community responder programs, law enforcement, and mental health collaborations, and deflection and aversion options can work. And these experts from their communities will tell you how. As we look ahead to the next seven years, we hope to see more counties sign on to the Stepping Up initiative, which will focus on bringing voices, not just from leaders in the field, but also from those who have lived through the experience. We want to hear and collaborate with people who are passionate about improving racial equality and bringing about meaningful change, to increase access and equal opportunity to engage in diversion and program options.

While we have a great and expansive network built already, including our great partners at the CSG Justice Center, the National Association of Counties and the American Psychiatric Association

Foundation, we encourage others to join in and keep this momentum going. Thank you to our partners. Thank you to our supporters. And finally, a big thank you to all our local leaders on the front lines of this work. I am so very proud of all that has been accomplished and look forward to continued progress.

Larry Johnson:

My name is Larry Johnson. I'm a proud commissioner from DeKalb County, Georgia, and I'm honored as serving as the president of the National Association of Counties. NACo strengthens America's 3069 counties, serving nearly 40,000 county elected officials 3.6 million county employees. We are delighted you have joined us today to celebrate the stepping Up initiative that's gotten us tremendous progress. More than 550 counties has joined the Stepping Up initiative since we've launched it with the Council of State Government's Justice Center and American Psychiatric Association Foundation seven years ago.

COVID 19 pandemic has created a paradigm shift in a way we offer mental health and behavioral health services in our community. The number of people seeking services is rising and our workforce is thriving to meet this growing need. Counties had implemented policies and programs from law enforcement training to crisis response to treatment services for substance use disorders to re-entry programs for people leaving jails. We are investing resources from the American Rescue Plan to advance our behavioral health systems and legal systems to improve outcomes and public safety. For those of my colleagues who have already joined the call for actions, I want to say kudos to you. I'm proud of you for making a difference, for stepping up, but we know there is more to do. So please, please, please share these resources with other counties around you because we cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

Last year, Stepping Up launched a Set, Measure, Achieve to support us in developing concrete goals to reduce the number of people with mental illness and substance use disorders in our jails. By setting goals, measuring our progress and working to achieve, we're demonstrating that county leaders are having a positive impact for some of our most vulnerable residents. NACo continues to be committed partners in helping us reduce the number of individuals with mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders in jails. Through this initiative, like Stepping Up, we're elevating innovative county examples and making a difference for some of our most vulnerable residents. Thank you. Thank you, again, for serving your counties and your involvement in Stepping Up.

Rawle Andrews Jr.:

Hello. My name is Rawle Andrews, executive director of the American Psychiatric Association Foundation. Over 30 years, the APA foundation has worked tirelessly to eliminate stigma, increase mental health and wellbeing across the United States and beyond, and worked to build the infrastructure for the future of the psychiatric and behavioral health workforce through our fellowship programs. It is our privilege to join you as we celebrate seven years of stepping up. The seven years of the Stepping Up initiative has been a proud partnership between the APA foundation, the Council of State Government's Justice Center and the National Association of Counties. It's been powerful and it's been impactful.

Today, over 552 counties across 43 states are actively working to decriminalize serious mental illness. One of the reasons Stepping Up is so successful is because if we're able to decriminalize serious mental illnesses, what we call SMIs, that means that over 2 million of our neighbors in need with serious mental illness, don't end up in jail and they actually get the help they need. By not doing that, we've made our jails warehouses for people with serious mental illnesses.

Believe it or not, in 44 states, there are more people in jail with serious mental illnesses than there are in the largest psychiatric hospitals across north America. That's not a sustainable solution for how we treat

our community members in need. We can do better. And over these seven years, we have done better, but there's still more work to do. Because we do have to reduce the number of people with SMIs who are incarcerated. We have to reduce the length of stay for our neighbors in need who find themselves incarcerated, largely for no other reason than they suffer from a serious mental illness. We need to increase the connection of care for our neighbors in need. And we need to reduce recidivism for those who have SMIs because we know people with SMIs spend longer time incarcerated than those who don't suffer from serious mental illness.

They're not treated well, in terms of their psychiatric care, while incarcerated. And then when they're released, they have no access to care or limited access to care, which means they have problem in employment, they have problem with housing, they have problems with other assistance for daily living needs. We can do better. We must do better. We have to step up and we have to step up inside and outside the courtroom to do it. So please join us in this movement, stick with us in this movement. And let's all declare that SMI is not a crime. Thank you. We appreciate all you have done and we'll continue to do.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

Hello everyone. And thank you for joining me today for an exciting discussion, featuring our expert panelists, who are here from three counties that have committed fully to the Stepping Up initiative. I'd like to take a moment to introduce all three panelists before we jump right into the discussion after that. So panelists, please turn on your camera as I introduce you. Our first speaker is the Fairfax County, Virginia Director of Diversion Initiatives who oversees the Diversion First Initiative and the Opioid and Substance Use Task Force. She has worked for Fairfax County government for over 25 years in various clinical and administrative positions. She has also had extensive experience in data analysis and evaluation, strategic planning, program development, and cross system services, with her work spanning across multiple systems, including health and human services, public safety and courts. Just want to say a big thank you and welcome to Ms. Lisa Potter.

Next, we have an award-winning public servant with two decades of experience in criminal justice, prevention, interventions and advocacy. She's currently the Franklin County, Ohio justice policy and programs director, and the executive board president of the Unity Community Center in Delaware, Ohio. Over the years, she has been instrumental in piloting several initiatives, including one currently recognized as a specialty docket by the Supreme Court of Ohio. After conducting research and advocacy and continuing her advocacy for equitable justice, she became a board member with a European forum for restorative justice, representing the United States. She's a certified life coach and diversity executive committed to people and their growth. Let's welcome our second panelist, Ms. Ruchelle Pride.

And finally, he started his career with Midland County, Texas Sheriff's office. He joined the Lubbock County Sheriff's office in 1999 as the administrative Lieutenant of the detention division. Later, he was promoted to the rank of captain in the detention branch and transferred to law enforcement as a member of the tactical operations unit. He was also the commander of the honor guard until his appointment by the Lubbock County Commissioners to the position of sheriff in 2009 and in March, 2010, he won the primary election for the Sheriff of Lubbock County. I'm very pleased to welcome Sheriff Kelly S. Rowe.

So again, just a big thank you to all three of our panelists for being here today. And without any more ado, I'm going to jump right into the questions. So this first question is for you, Sheriff Rowe. Sheriff, you've been involved with Stepping Up for several years now and have also been a justice and mental health collaboration program or JMHCP grant recipient. So for other counties who are just starting this work, they need to know who's coming into their justice system with behavioral health needs. It's a big

first starting point. Can you discuss how you started implementing a validated screening tool for mental illness in your jail and how you collected data from this screening? We often see sites struggle with that important first step, and I'm sure they would really appreciate hearing your words of advice.

Sheriff Kelly S. Rowe:

Well, thank you for that, Ayesha. And you kind of hit the nail on the head. First and foremost, as a sheriff in most places across this country, we have all come to recognize the fact that we are operating the defacto mental institutions of our country. And that so many folks are entering into our systems on a regular basis. I think when you just look at our numbers, which are pretty well in line with the rest of the state of Texas, and I think probably fairly close nationally, we're seeing that nearly 50% of the individuals coming in under initial intake and booking are being identified as having received some level of client services, mental health client services prior to their arrival in.

So it is one of those challenges. And in one of those that it's difficult to give a lot of advice because I realize, and we recognize in many, many conversations around the state, that so much of Texas and the rest of the nation is rural and frontier. And that most all of the jails are very small to medium sized and very limited in resources. So we're fortunate where we are here, that we contracted with our local mental health provider who provides us 24 hour a day assessors who are in to do the full scale assessments on these individuals and find out exactly what's going on with them.

On the front end of that, the state of Texas introduced, a number of years ago, what is now referred to as the CCQ check through our TCICNCIC system, which stands for continuity of care query. And with that, with any individual, once they're booked in and they're processed and they're run through our TCIC system, it will inform us as to whether or not they have ever received any mental health services from any state agencies. Now, it won't tell us any detailed information. It won't give us any diagnosis information, but it will at least give our staff a lead to follow up on, to work on throughout this assessment process.

So every individual that's coming in is ultimately going through some level of an assessment. And when we look at those, the tool they've actually developed is a hybrid tool made up of several different validated instruments that are being conducted by mental health professionals. Again, as I said, that are contracted through our local mental health authority. So we're removing, or at least our mind is, we're removing the stigma of that uniformed officer trying to conduct the assessment process. And from that, we're able to provide basically in and of itself, what it is, the continuity care these individuals need when they come in. We can get them back stabilized as quick as possible on the medications they need and make it easier for us to manage their long term, potentially their long term, stay within the facility.

But to the last part of that question, in terms of what words of advice to give is, again, having a great relationship with whoever your local mental health authority is key to this. Now, again, the smaller facilities, hopefully those aren't too far away, but we do hear stories, especially here in Texas, that those can be as far away as two and three counties. But having that relationship with them to provide that support when the officers themselves identify these individuals, utilize your state approved forums for that. If you don't have one in your state, look to our friends nationally and in other states that may have assessment instruments that they've implemented, as we have in Texas. And that way, again, at least you've got that.

And if possible, dedicate particularly motivated staff. I've been quite surprised at the number of folks that we hire that are being hired as corrections officers, as jailers, that absolutely have a very significant interest in this because they've either had family members, or whatever the case, that have been touched by mental illness. And they'll take a much more vested approach at doing that versus letting it get just kind of pushed through as part of a booking process. And then, again, that collaboration with

the local mental health authority to validate those results and then have the follow up capabilities to, again, try to get them stabilized, get them on the medications they need and be better positioned to manage them in your population.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

No, thank you. I think you said you couldn't give advice, but I think that's spot on. And really what we hear from a lot of communities across the country that it's very important to have a good relationship with your behavioral health provider, your local mental health provider, so that they can help provide that support. And what I think is really interesting, too, is you don't just have a relationship with them, you've really figured out a few ways to make sure that your team and your jail gets the information they need about someone's mental health needs without violating their privacy or violating HIPAA. And I think that's really an important thing that you just offered to us. So thank you so much for that, Sheriff.

Now I'd like to turn to Ms. Potter because we know diversion is a big focus of your county's Set, Measure and Achieve work. Can you tell us a bit more about why you signed on to Set, Measure, Achieve, and the role that diversion opportunities play in helping you address behavioral health needs in the justice system? And are you starting to see any progress in reduced jail bookings for people with serious mental illnesses?

Lisa Potter:

Thank you. Ayesha. Fairfax County signed on to Set, Measure, Achieve to advance the goal of reducing the prevalence of the behavioral health population in the jail. We have a lot of data that we track, but these four measures really help us to hone in on key metrics and also provide a shared terminology and well defined data points to monitor. Starting with baseline data, then reviewing the measures on a regular basis really allows us to determine success, but also potential gaps in quality improvement opportunities. The measures are really interconnected and to affect change across the Set, Measure, Achieve metrics, it's been really helpful to have services starting with pre-arrest and also at various points of deeper end criminal justice involvement. When we started our countywide diversion first initiative in 2016, we were really intentional about planning and implementing services and supports along the criminal justice continuum, following the sequential intercept model.

So for example, jail bookings are reduced through alternatives to arrest, including community based crisis receiving centers, crisis response services, such as mobile crisis units, teams to provide outreach for those who have frequent public safety contacts. For those who are booked, standardized screening, and here we use the brief jail mental health screening, leads to further assessment and linkages to services. And from 2015 to 2021, we have seen a 33% increase in referrals to jail based behavioral health services due in large part to that standardized screening. Pre-trial supervised release program, and three specialty dockets of veterans treatment docket, drug court, and mental health docket, all help to reduce average length of stay. And these programs, along with reentry services, increased connections to care and also recidivism.

Community based treatment and supports including peer support, housing linkages to healthcare help to reduce recidivism. So we are seeing progress in reduced jail bookings. We started our programming in 2016. So from baseline 2015 to 2021, we have seen a 35% decrease in the jail behavioral health population with misdemeanor charges, which is our primary population. We had seen some reductions prior to COVID and we're monitoring data post COVID and we'll be looking for consistent trends over time.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

So, I mean, first, just congratulations on seeing that really significant drop in bookings for people with behavioral health needs. I know that's obviously the focus of Set, Measure, Achieve, but I also know that's a real challenge for many counties that are looking to try to reduce the number of people in their jails with behavioral health needs. That is a big achievement that you've had. And it's great to hear how being able to track that data, lets you not only know what your progress is, but where you also want to implement new initiatives to make an impact.

And also just a big congratulations on that 33% increase in connection to care. Because that's also important to make sure that people who are coming into your jail system and leaving the jail system have the kind of support that they need. So thank you so much for talking us through that.

And next I'd like to turn to Miss Pride. Franklin County was one of the first counties to declare racism as a public health issue. And you're actually leveraging your Stepping Up work to advance your goals around racial equity as part of Stepping Up towards justice. So could you share how you brought stakeholders to the table and how you developed your data framework and any lessons learned for other sites who might be interested in doing something similar?

Ruchelle Pride:

Absolutely. Thank you. So our office launched a Stepping Up towards justice framework in 2020, which acknowledge that racism is a root cause of poverty, bad health, broken families and damaged communities and causes people to be over incarcerated yet underserved. The framework emphasizes the need for better data collection efforts at each intercept point and guides us in that decision making. And we had an emphasis on some of the key components, which is the why. Why is there a racial disparity in persons who commit or charged with offenses of a certain type through that sequential intercept mapping? How are decisions made by justice authority? So law enforcement, prosecution, court, probation at each of these points? And what are the established criteria used to decide when to arrest, when to divert or recommend, rescind, violate, prosecute or dismiss? So there were so many nuances and intricacies in how we reach the need to develop that data framework.

So data reports supporting Franklin County Stepping Up toward justice initiative was presented to our county administration, our common pleas court, our municipal court, as well as the Franklin county criminal justice planning board, which is our board that focuses intently on our justice ecosystem. And it is your senior leadership and elected officials that are part of that conversation. So some of the metrics that we began to look at is the length of stay in case processing, race inequities and arrest probation technical violations, bond trends, likelihoods of arrest multipliers, population and demographic density, and also looked at that compared to our targeted community alternatives to prison, which is one of our state grant programs that we utilize to allocate funding to our community stakeholders in our efforts to decrease the over incarceration in our communities.

And then we also looked at jail releases by day of the week, time of day and the location. So we certainly brung key stakeholders to the table in a way that we felt was going to be the best way to really get to the heartbeat of the problem. As we talk about the latter part, kind of the lessons learned, one of the things that I learned and our team really focused in on very intently was if you don't invite people to the table, when the table is set, they feel like they're on the menu. So in other words, make sure that we're inclusive, make sure that you are intentional and making sure that every key stakeholder in that justice ecosystem that would be able to contribute to this work is a part of the conversation from the beginning.

No one likes to feel like they're behind the ball. No one likes to feel as if they don't understand the why or the how. And honestly, it's just a respected practice to ensure that if I'm going to have a relationship where it may require me to ask for your data, share your data, that of course you be involved in the

process itself. So those are some of the lessons learned from us that we certainly made sure that, over the years, as we developed this, that we were really intentional about.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

That's fantastic. And I really like that reminder that when you're setting the table and you're bringing people together that it's so important that you're really intentional about ensuring that everyone's at that table. And that they're aware that you're going to be talking about how do you address racial equity as you're also doing the work of reducing incarceration with people with behavioral health needs, that that's the intention and that's why you're bringing folks together. So I think that's a really important point that you raised that other communities who are trying to do this work could think of as their most important first step for sure, after setting the intention to do the work. So thank you so much Miss Pride.

Ruchelle Pride:

Absolutely.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

Next I'd like to go back to Sheriff Rowe. Can you start by just sharing how your justice and mental health collaboration program grant supported your Stepping Up work? I know that JMHCP grants are a real resource that a lot of communities have utilized, but they're also resources that many communities are not familiar with. So in particular, can you tell us about how you leveraged your partnership with the local university to assist you with tracking data and how did the data inform your decision making?

Sheriff Kelly S. Rowe:

Well, that is a great question and it really was something. In the work we do, in the requirements we have just to book, process, classifying, everything we have to do with regard to inmate management while they're coming through our facilities we, in most cases have great systems that are collecting lots of data, but in our case, and I think this is probably also true in many other places, we really didn't have good reporting. We refer to that as our legacy data at this point in time, and it was very hard to make management decisions because we just really didn't have a great feel of what information we had available to us and what that was telling us in terms of how we could better utilize our services and resources to maximize this.

So as a result of that, being able to collaborate with Texas Tech University, they were more than willing to jump in and partnership with us. Those funds from the grant certainly assisted with that. But they were actually able to get into the raw data and mine that data in ways that they've got expertise to do and came out and gave us just absolutely amazing results in terms of things that we just hadn't seen.

And one of those in particular, you were just speaking on it a second ago, was average length of stay and how much that has increased since the last criminal justice assessment we did, which was a little over 20 years ago now. Particularly for those with serious mental illness. We're finding out at this point that we're backing up against about 36 days and that is so out of whack. So one of the primary things we looked at as being one of the big wins out of this was we were actually able to begin ultimately tracking those individuals coming through our facilities with serious mental illness.

And as a result of that, that would then dovetail into a work group that meets every week can go over these cases, case by case, and then in turn, see where they are in the system, where is their case or cases at, and then make the appropriate connections with either the courts, the district attorney's office

or their defense attorneys, which in most those cases we have a special needs defender's office down here that sees directly to those cases and work to see what we can do to facilitate getting those moved and bring that average length to stay back down as much as we possibly can, till we get them through the criminal justice process and off to whatever's going to happen afterwards.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

Yeah. No, that makes a ton of sense. And I think you reminded me of something that I talk a lot about, which is that if you can't see a problem, you can't solve it. And so having that partnership with the university, they were able to help you see what was happening in your jail and in your system in a different way, because they could really analyze your data for you and help you understand that the length of stay was a lot longer than you actually wanted it to be, and now they're able to do that deeper dive in, figuring out how do you help drive that down for specific people and also of course, across your system. So that is one of the real beauties of JMHCP, that it can help communities partner with their local universities or other researchers to really understand what challenges and see the challenges that you're trying to address. So thank you so much for outlining that for us.

I know we're getting towards the end of our time for the panel, but I want to try to squeeze in two more questions, first for you, Miss Potter and for you Miss Pride. So Ms. Potter, Fairfax county has been a Stepping Up innovator site for nearly three years. Congratulations on that. Can you explain how the innovator county network has supported your work and how you've leveraged your expertise? Why should other counties strive to become part of the Stepping Up Innovators Network?

Lisa Potter:

I think one of the most valuable aspects is having a community of peers across the country. We can share our experiences, examples of what works well, challenges and lessons learned related to policy, strategy and program implementation. We hear about best practices and promising practices and learn how others are capturing and reporting metrics.

Having concrete measures also allows us to track progress in key areas and to benchmark with other localities. It's really difficult to know how we're doing in the context of other programs nationally if we're not using the same definitions and data points. So having that common framework and common language really helps us to get a better sense of how we're doing in that broader context.

Also, it's really validating to hear about issues that we may think are unique to us. And we learn that some challenges are universal. So not only is it validating, but we also get to brainstorm with others and find out maybe some ideas about how we may want to do things differently.

We've learned so much from other jurisdictions when we were beginning our work and we really appreciate the opportunity to help support localities who may be able to glean some information based on our experience. And also some of the lessons we've learned along the way.

I would really encourage other jurisdictions to work toward becoming an innovator county. Being part of this community provides great support, tools and resources. You hear about effective programs, hear from experts in the field, and also have an opportunity to weigh in our national strategies.

One final thought, also having consistent metrics increases accountability to all stakeholders. So being able to provide that data really provides that opportunity to have transparency with partner agencies and particularly with the community. And also allows counties to prepare for potential funding opportunities, whether that's local, state or federal or even other funding streams. I think that applies to areas where you may be doing really well or areas where you may be struggling and want to fill a gap.

So I really would strongly encourage other counties to participate. It's been a great experience and it's also great for our partner agencies to see how their work contributes to this effort nationally.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

Thank you so much. I really do think of the Stepping Up Innovators as serving as kind of a brain trust for each other, to be able to share what's going well, how do we figure out this thorny issue? Here's what we tried and here's why it worked or here's why it didn't work. And so I'm great to hear that that's how it's been working for you. And I really also like your point about the way that data can really be of tool to hold yourself accountable as the county and for all your partners, but also it's a real resource to engage additional funding, especially when you can show some of your success or even be able to demonstrate the problems you're trying to address really concretely. So thank you for that, Ms. Potter.

Now Ms. Pride, I'd like you to take us home with the final question before we open up for Q&A. So Franklin County has taken a system wide approach to serving people with behavioral health needs. How do you apply the Stepping Up framework to the planning and the implementation of those different initiatives, such as your right response program, the Paris clinicians, with 911 dispatch, the programming that you have in your new jail and the rapid resource center for improving connections to care?

Ruchelle Pride:

Yeah. So thank you. So in 2015, our Franklin County Board of Commissioners passed the resolution, making our commitment to being a Stepping Up Innovator County a true formalized process, and a call to action to really address the disproportionate amount of individuals who enter our carceral settings with that severe pervasive mental health that has been diagnosed and documented. And so what we did was we brought together representatives from all justice disciplines to discuss successes, challenges and our active efforts to further the Stepping Up initiative. Through this intentional collaboration, Stepping Up Ohio became a part of a national call to action, to response, being both proactive in that measure and ensuring that our residents that are suffering from mental health challenges had an alternative path to recovery and healing without the default burden of what Sheriff Rowe referred to as that defacto mental health incarceration that our jails have turned into.

So through the understanding of local county jail and criminal justice trends, implementation of specialty dockets, de-siloed relationships and a host of other best practices, we truly could begin the work. So you mentioned our right response program, and that was something that was huge in really addressing this and meeting our residents where they are to help navigate the best place for them to go. Our Columbus Division of Police launched the right response program in 2021 where the 911 dispatcher would triage calls coming into 911. This right response program was built off the concept that not all emergencies require public safety response, that in many cases calls coming into 911 can be better addressed by addressing, first, the social determinants of health and facilitating community linkage to care and resources.

So as of the beginning of this pilot in 2021, it has expanded and services have really stretched to two shifts each day, diverting about 50% of calls through linkage to appropriate services. This of course now frees up our law enforcement officers to deal with true public safety related calls.

What we also did is we looked at our medical provider in our jail setting. So our new jail medical service provider, which is Armor, was installed in 2021. And we began to look at some key metrics and what we wanted to make sure was provided to our residents who were being booked into our jail setting. So increased medication, assistant treatment, emphasis on mental health screening and assessing, increased medical and mental health staffing and embedding medical and mental health staff within the

acute and non-acute mental health pods was the new correctional model that we have, which will be opening in the fall. We have our new, I'm excited to say, that we embedded a real strategic inmate management model, which puts those officers who are in that space with our residents directly connected to them. They are there, they are responsive. They are open to what we understand to be the true human-centric approach to what it looks like when you're in a space that obviously no one desires to be in, how much more impactful it can be to have those necessary people and resources there with you in that same environment.

So we really were dedicated to that. We increased, of course, the ability to offer long acting injectables to individual suffering from severe mental health disorders and substance addiction and improving overall data collection and tracking to support Stepping Up efforts. With the new model of our correctional center, we then decided to beef up what you reference as our rapid resource center, which is currently co-located at our jail facility that we refer to as our Jackson Pike facility. We have a rapid resource center that has been co-located there to ensure that when residents leave our jail setting, they can go in and get everything from a hot cup of coffee to service linkage.

And so we wanted to make this place a one stop shop. We wanted to truly be an engaging and intentional concept that would put us in a place where we could really do our best work immediately. And we have peer navigators, peer supporters that are there to help further that work. And when we developed the RRC, we just wanted it to be something that we could have in partnership with many community stakeholders. So it certainly was a multi-agency collaborative effort with our Franklin County and Columbus Public Health and some of our medical providers. And we wanted to make sure that as we look at our new facility, that we would have even a more robust, what we are lovingly referring to, as a rapid resource center, 2.0, which will be larger. It will be more emphasis on bringing in community members and stakeholders to provide real time service. And we are also moving to 24 hours.

So we're the rapid resource center, no matter what time a person is released from our jail, they can go into that rapid resource center and be greeted by someone who is truly there to assist them in navigating that next step. So these are just a few initiatives that we have embedded to just ensure that our jail settings are more therapeutic, more trauma informed, and more intentional in the care that we provide.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

Thank you so much. And it's great to hear about all the initiatives that you've been putting in place and how you've been layering on them to make the system more responsive and make sure that people are connected to the types of support that they need. So just again, a big thank you to Miss Potter, Miss Pride and Sheriff Rowe.

Now we've saved just a couple of minutes to take questions from those of you tuning in around the country. And as a reminder, there are two ways to submit questions to our panelists on social media, using the #justicebriefinglive or in the Vimeo comments box at the bottom of your screen. A few of you've already sent in some questions, so I'm going to choose one.

We've got one that's, I think, actually pretty universal. The person's talking a lot about how they've been having a great deal of trouble getting started on their Stepping Up work. And they're really just struggling around how did they get that work going in their county. So I think the way I'd pose it to you, and I think I'll pose this to all three of you. Can you give me your 30 second, what advice would you give to other communities looking to launch or expand their Stepping Up efforts? And what do you wish you might have known sooner? And maybe what I'll do is I'll go Miss Potter, Miss Pride, and then Sheriff Rowe, you can take us home. So Miss Potter to you, 30 seconds on your advice?

Lisa Potter:

Okay. I would suggest be bold. Keep moving forward. There are a ton of resources out there. The Stepping Up website has some fantastic resources, a strategy lab, for examples of successful programs, webinars, information briefs, case studies. I also think it's super helpful to do sequential intercept model mapping, it can be really helpful to identify the resources available in your community currently. And also where the gaps are. Very important to have community leaders as champions and also champions at all levels. Involve all stakeholders, especially the community, and take time to reflect on where you came from, how far you've come and celebrate your successes.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

Thank you so much. Miss Pride, I'll pass to you.

Ruchelle Pride:

I second, everything Miss Potter said, to be honest, but if I could add anything, do have to be bold. You have to shoot for the moon and you'll land somewhere in the stars. And the biggest thing is don't reinvent the wheel. This is what this network is for. There are so many things that are available at our fingertips to really connect with one another and really understand what are those best practices? What are those things that you can bring to your county? And of course, with your community and their needs at the forefront, how can we then mirror this to adapt to their needs and what we know to be the outcomes we want to achieve? So it's just being strategic and leaning on your network to really begin the footwork to get to where you want to be.

And so I think that we, again, know that this is such an incredible resource to have in our Stepping Up community. And I can't stress enough how critical it is to tap into that. And that will be a part of the guide to get you where you need to go.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

Thank you, Miss Pride. Sheriff Rowe, bring us home.

Sheriff Kelly S. Rowe:

Well, there's not really a whole lot left after those two, because they hit most of the biggest points there. The only one thing I would add a little bit, and this goes clear back to when we were developing the actual initial Stepping Up initiative tool, which is do your level best in your key positions to educate everyone. Educate the public, educate those leaders that you're wanting to get on board to assist in breaking down those silos. Because that's the complication every community runs into is everybody wants to do their own thing. They always have. "It's the way they've always done it." And by educating them on what those impacts are, what those costs are on the communities, by trying to treat mental illness in our criminal justice system really has served to help most communities that I've been in and around break those barriers down, get people to a table to where they can actually start working through the very things that both Miss Potter and Miss Pride just talked about and being able to begin to move forward on trying to solve these problems that haunt every jurisdiction.

Ayesha Delany-Brumsey:

Thank you so much. I love to be able to end a panel on some wisdom like that. So I just want to thank, again, all three of you for being with us. I want to thank everyone who's in this virtual room with us and for those of you who want to keep the conversation going after today and learn how to get involved,

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please visit stepuptogether.org. Again, that's stepuptogether.org. It's been a real pleasure. Thank you for your time. And thank you, more importantly, for the work that each of you is doing in your local jurisdiction.

Megan Quattlebaum:

Wow. Thank you so much, Ayesha. And a big, big thank you to our incredible presenters and panelists today for a fascinating and insightful conversation on such a critical topic. And thank you so much to all of you for tuning in. If you could, we would really, really appreciate it if you could please take a minute to tell us what you thought about this event. A survey link is now available on social media and in the Vimeo chat. And this is also going to be delivered to you by email if you registered for this event. We really, really value your feedback and please share it. It helps us to improve our events going forward.

If you preregistered for today's event, we're going to send an email with a recording of today's discussion. And if you didn't preregister that's okay. You can still access the same on the CSG Justice Center website. With that, on behalf of all of our speakers and participants today, thank you so much for joining us. It's been a pleasure being with you all. I really enjoyed the discussion, have a safe and pleasant week.