



**Justice Center**

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

# **STEPPING UP FOR YOUTH IN KANSAS**

**August 14, 2025**

# Agenda

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I. Introduction

II. Stepping Up Background

III. Behavioral Health and Juvenile Justice Intersection

IV. Overview of Stepping Up for Youth Initiative

V. Discussion

# Speakers

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- Ashley Brown, *Crossover Youth Policy and Practice Coordinator, Kansas Department for Children and Families*
- Dr. Megan Davidson, *Program Director, Behavioral Health, CSG Justice Center*
- Destini Gillian, *Justice Involved Services Coordinator, Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services*
- Clay McCarter, *Director of Special Projects/Early Intervention, Kansas Department of Corrections*
- Mario Salinas, *Deputy Director of Juvenile Programs, Sedgwick County Department of Corrections*
- Stephanie Ueberall, *Deputy Program Director, Corrections and Reentry, CSG Justice Center*

# The Council of State Governments Justice Center

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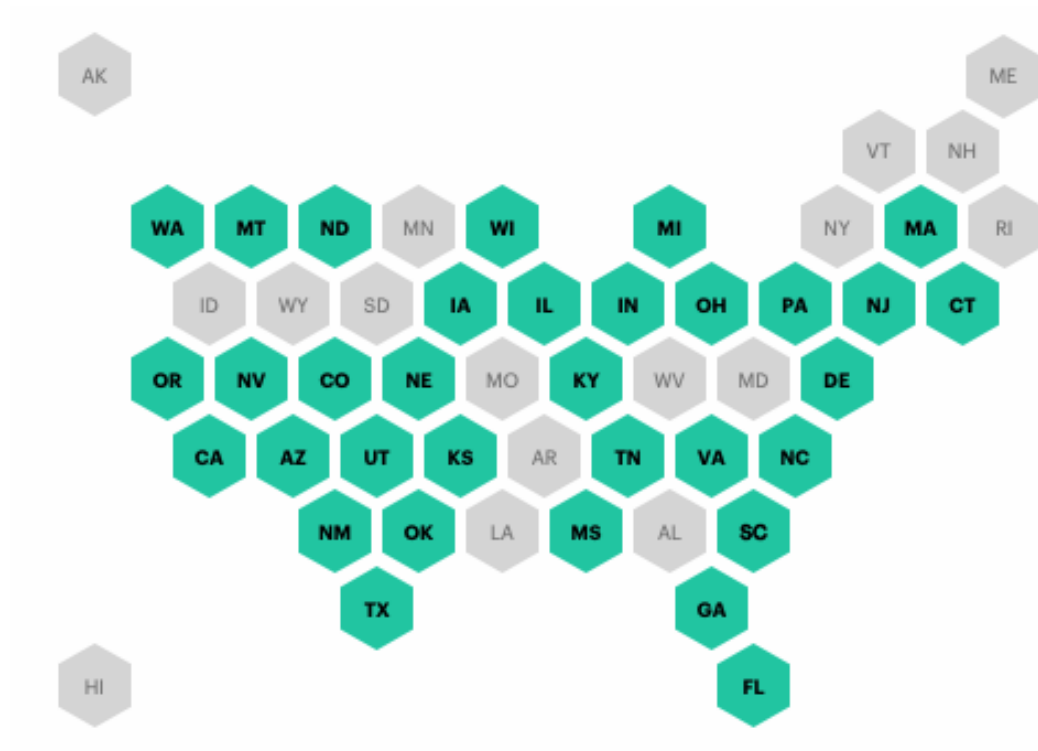
We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.

# How We Work

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- We bring people together
- We drive the criminal justice field forward with original research
- We build momentum for policy change
- We provide expert assistance

**We've helped improve outcomes for millions of youth and families in contact with the juvenile justice system across the country.**



# CSG Justice Center Signature Behavioral Health Initiatives

## Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program



**STEPPINGUP**

**Judges**  
**Psychiatrists**  
Leadership Initiative



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# STEPPINGUP

**Stepping Up** is a national initiative focused on strengthening coordinated responses to safely reduce the over-representation of people with behavioral health needs in jail.



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#StepUp4MentalHealth  
[www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org)

# National Estimates of This Crisis

Of the **8 MILLION** bookings to jails annually, about **1.3 MILLION** involve people with serious mental illnesses (SMI).



Source: H. J. Steadman et al., "Prevalence of Serious Mental Illness Among Jail Inmates," *Psychiatric Services* 6, no. 60 (2009): 761–765.



Framework and supporting resources to guide counties in their local efforts



Key metrics to inform data-driven decision-making



Repository of best practices at the intersection of mental illness and criminal justice.



Network of counties leading and learning from one another

**Training, Technical Assistance, and Capacity-Building**

# STEPPINGUP

## 10 Years and Counting



More than **580** counties across **45** states have joined Stepping Up to reduce the prevalence of mental illnesses in jails.



**48%**  
of Americans live in a Stepping Up county.



Approximately **1.3 million** times each year, people who have serious mental illnesses are booked into jails.



**50+** Innovator Counties are blazing the trail in data collection.



**5** states have launched statewide Stepping Up initiatives.



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# Most youth in detention have behavioral health needs.

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Nationally, 60–70 percent of youth in detention have a mental health need, compared to 20 percent of the general youth population.

Jennifer E. Duchschere et al, "Addressing a Mental Health Intervention Gap in Juvenile Detention: A Pilot Study," *Evidence-Based Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 8, no. 1 (2023):236-251.

# Diverting youth with behavioral health needs from the juvenile justice system promotes better public safety.

When youth are formally processed by the juvenile justice system, they experience far worse outcomes in the five years post-arrest than their matched peers that were diverted, including:

More likely to be re-arrested and incarcerated	More engagement in violence	More peers involved in delinquency	Lower school attainment and graduation rates	Fewer skills to manage their emotions	Lower perception of opportunity
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Elizabeth Cauffman, Jordan Beardslee, Adam Fine, Paul J. Frick, Laurence Steinberg, "Crossroads in juvenile justice: The impact of initial processing decision on youth 5 years after first arrest," *Development and Psychopathology*, 33, no. 2 (2021):700-713.

# Agenda

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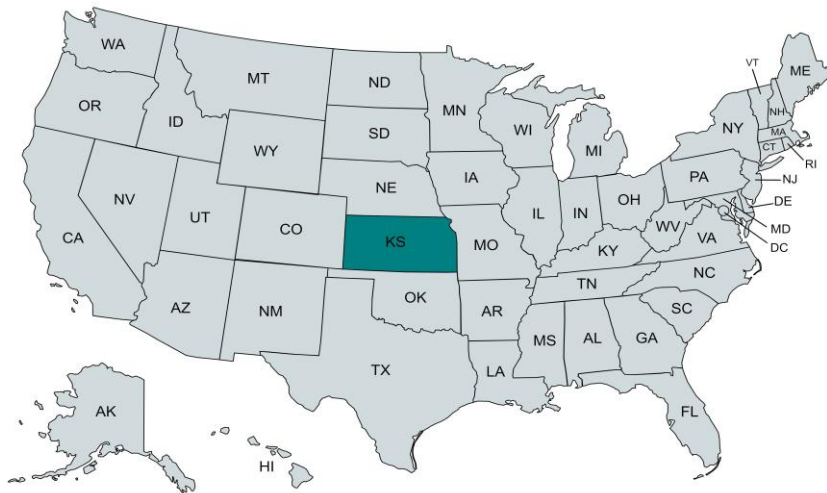
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# Kansas is the **FIRST** state in the nation to launch a statewide Stepping Up for Youth Initiative.

## **This initiative is led by:**

- Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC)
- Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS)
- Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF)



with mapchart.net

# Stepping Up for Youth in Kansas

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## Overarching Goal of this initiative:

- Identify, implement, and expand best practices centered on improving community-based services, cross-systems collaboration, the efficient use of resources, and outcomes for youth with behavioral health needs who experience the juvenile justice system.

# State and Local Components of Stepping Up for Youth in Kansas

## State Efforts

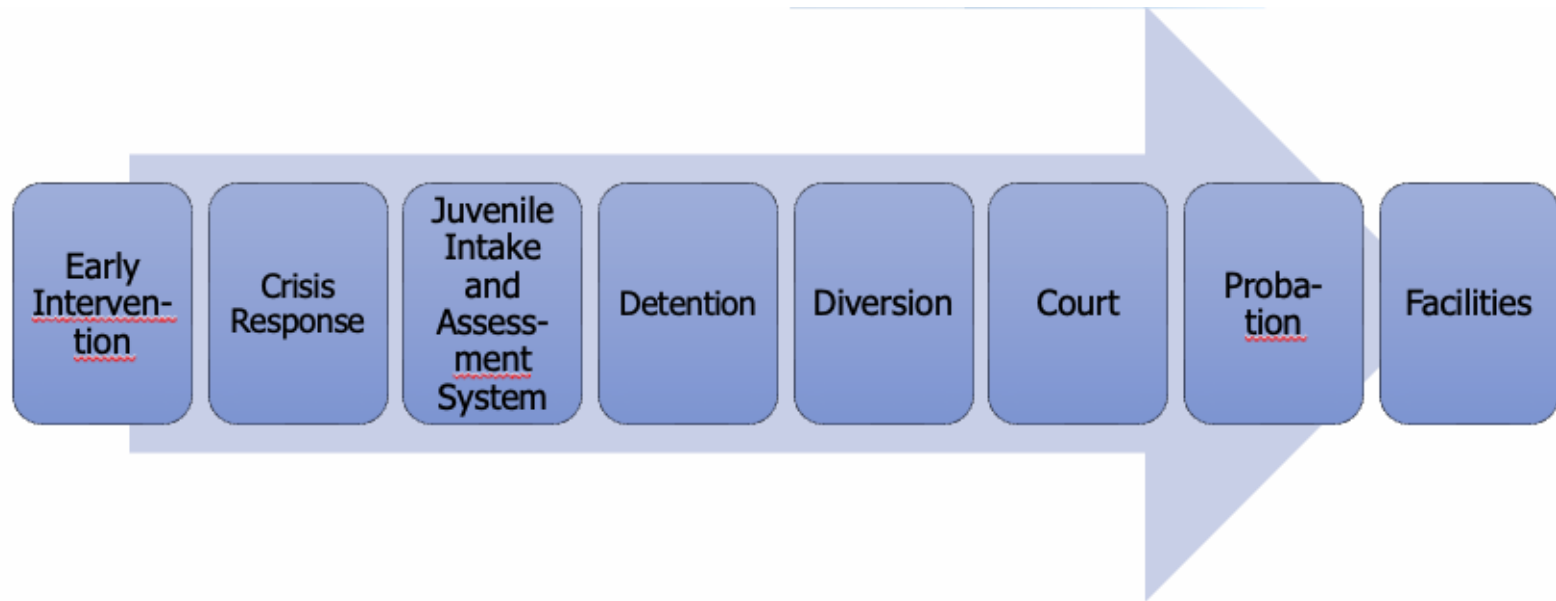
- **Objective:** Align state policies to reduce statutory barriers, maximize funding, and increase cross-systems collaboration and efficient use of resources.
- **Results:** Legislative, appropriation, and administrative recommendations, including agency policies and practices

## Local Efforts

- **Objective:** Adapt and implement the Stepping Up model for the juvenile justice system.
- **Results:** Youth-centered framework, creating key metrics to track performance, and designing localized solutions with counties delivered through a technical assistance center

# We examined key intersections of juvenile justice and behavioral health interventions.

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# Key State Assessment Findings and Recommendations

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# Key Findings from the State Assessment

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- Many youth in Kansas have behavioral health needs and are pushed into the juvenile justice system primarily to receive services, rather than because they are a public safety risk.
- Kansas lacks a coordinated, statewide, cross-systems network of community-based services to meet youth's needs, protect public safety, and ensure resources are used efficiently.
- Youth end up in costly detention or correctional facilities due to the lack of community-based services, and there is a lack of consistency in the services they receive in such facilities statewide.

# Two-thirds of youth in Kansas with a major depressive episode did not receive mental health services.

"Mental Health America Youth Data," Mental Health America, accessed August 28, 2024, <https://mhanational.org/issues/2024/mental-health-america-youth-data>. MHA reported data from SAMHSA's Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

**85 percent of youth  
detained in Kansas  
screened positive on the  
GAIN-Short Screener for  
mental health or  
substance use needs.**

*KDOC, Detention GAIN-SS Report, 2025.*



# Youth in the KS Juvenile Correctional Complex have significant behavioral health needs.

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77% have a mental health diagnosis

43% have a significant mental health diagnosis and require individualized treatment plans

41% take psychotropic medications

*KDOC, KJCC Mental Health Services Report, 2023-2024.*

# Develop an early intervention system for youth.

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Reduce inappropriate involvement in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems and promote the more efficient and coordinated use of state funding.

- Strengthen cross-systems coordination.
- Scale and strengthen existing/new community-based interventions statewide.
- Address gaps in public agency and provider capacity and the workforce.

# Develop statewide detention standards.

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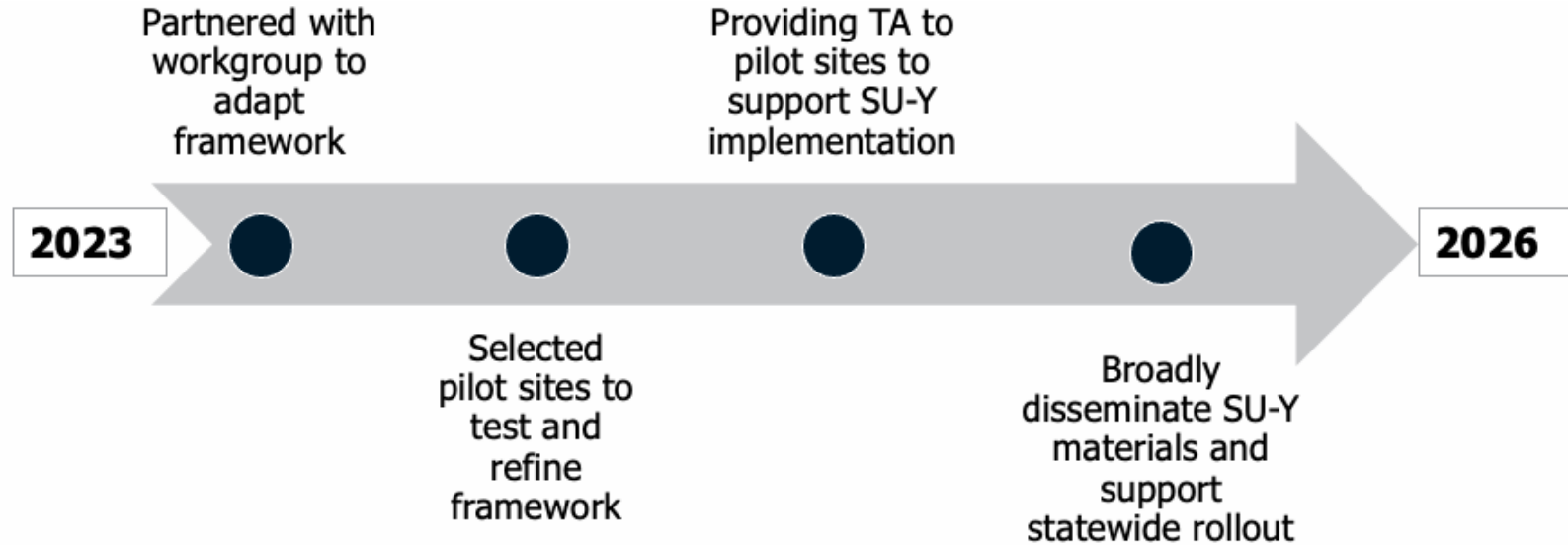
Strengthen the appropriate use of detention and improve the use of research-based assessments, services, behavior management strategies, and reentry practices.

- Develop detention best practice standards.
- Support all JDCs in participating in performance-based standards.
- Leverage and maximize the use of Medicaid and existing state funding to support detention alternatives.
- Develop alternative-to-detention strategies to divert youth in crisis.
- Strengthen reentry planning and services for youth.

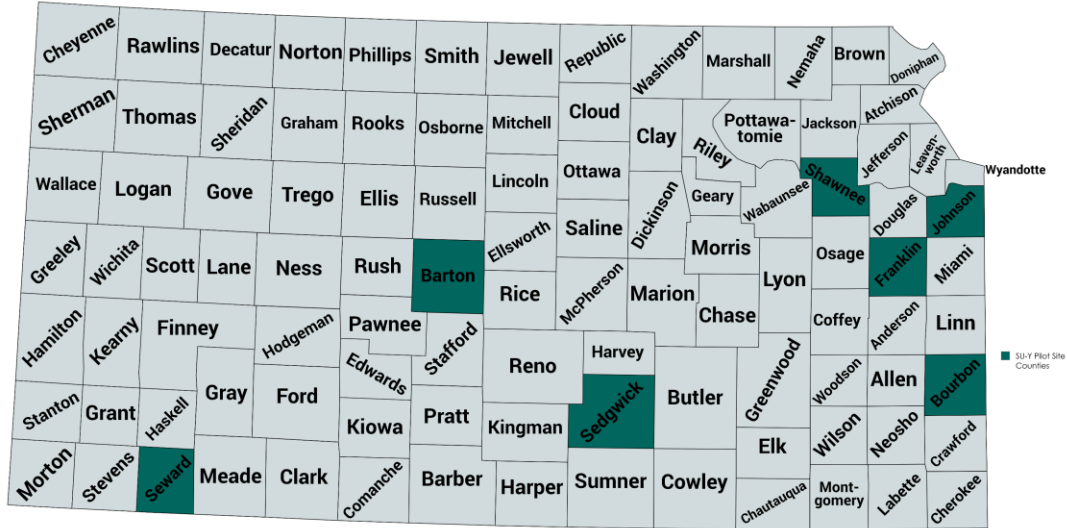
# Local Technical Assistance: Piloting Framework for Youth in Kansas

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# Launch of Stepping Up for Youth TA Center



# SU-Y Pilot Site Counties



Created with [mopchart.net](http://mopchart.net)

# Structure of Framework

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Set of guiding principles

Essential questions to guide the work

Key data indicators to track and utilize for decision-making

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**1.** Do we have cross-systems buy-in and consensus?

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**2.** How do our current processes and strategies align with best practices?

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**3.** What data tracking and reporting infrastructure is needed to measure and achieve shared goals?

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**4.** How do we monitor and adapt our policies and practices over time?

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# Stepping Up for Youth Framework



# Pilot Activities and Status

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Organize a cross-system team



Engage in system mapping across agencies



Review strengths and gaps



Identify key areas for improvement



Develop an action plan



Implement new policy, practice, or program

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# Thank You!

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The presentation was developed by members of The Council of State Governments Justice Center staff. The statements made reflect the views of the authors and should not be considered the official position of The Council of State Governments Justice Center, the members of The Council of State Governments, or the funding agency supporting the work.

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