

STEPPINGUP

A National Initiative Reducing
Overincarceration of People with Mental
Illnesses

Building Stepping Up Data Capacity: A Toolkit to Assess & Advance Your County's Readiness

The CSG Justice Center | Omni Institute

October 21, 2025



Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Stepping Up: A National Initiative
3. A Partner Collaboration
4. The Stepping Up Readiness Toolkit: An Introduction
5. Sustainability Planning
6. Wrap-Up
7. Questions and Answers



Presenters

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Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

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

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

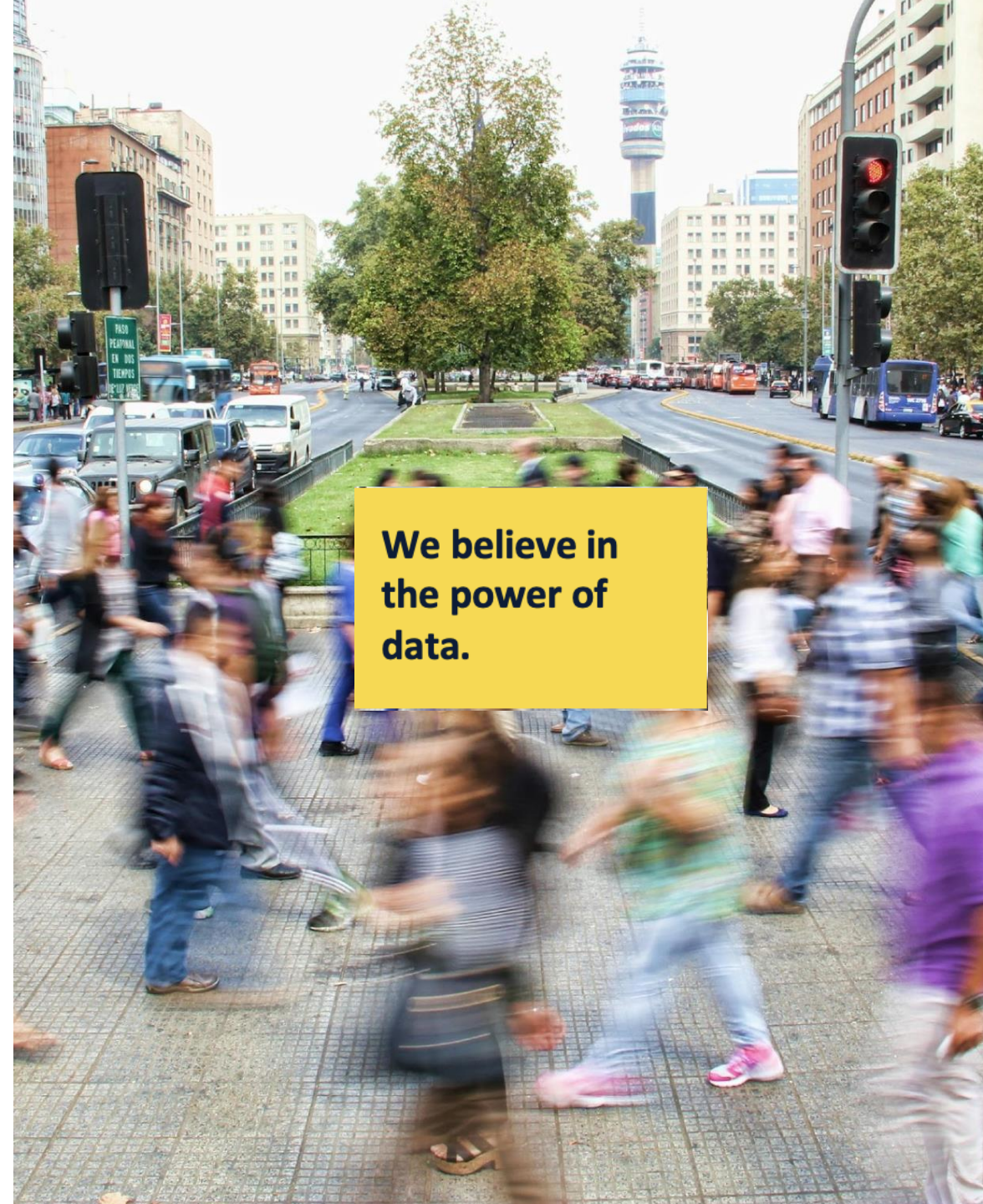
About Omni

Omni Institute is a nonprofit social science consultancy that provides integrated research, evaluation, and capacity-building services to foster understanding, guide collaboration, and inform action to accelerate positive social change.

Our clients are change-makers.

- Government
- Nonprofits
- Foundations
- Social Enterprises

www.omni.org



**We believe in
the power of
data.**

Our Areas of Expertise



Economic Security



- Economic mobility
- Food security
- Homelessness

Children & Families



- Education
- Early childhood
- Family support
- 2nd generation approaches

Behavioral Health



- Substance use disorder prevention
- Treatment
- Recovery

Community Health



- Awareness & promotion
- Assessment & strategic planning
- Equity
- Leadership development

Justice



- Community policing & reform
- Juvenile justice
- Racial & ethnic disparities
- Justice responses to behavioral health needs

Stepping Up

A National Initiative

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.



#StepUp4MentalHealth
www.StepUpTogether.org

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.

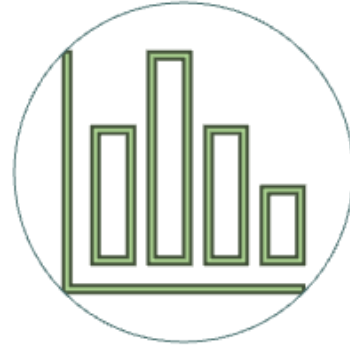


5 states have launched statewide Stepping Up initiatives.





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

Four Key Measures



1. Reduce the number of people with mental illnesses booked into jails



2. Reduce their average lengths of stay in jail

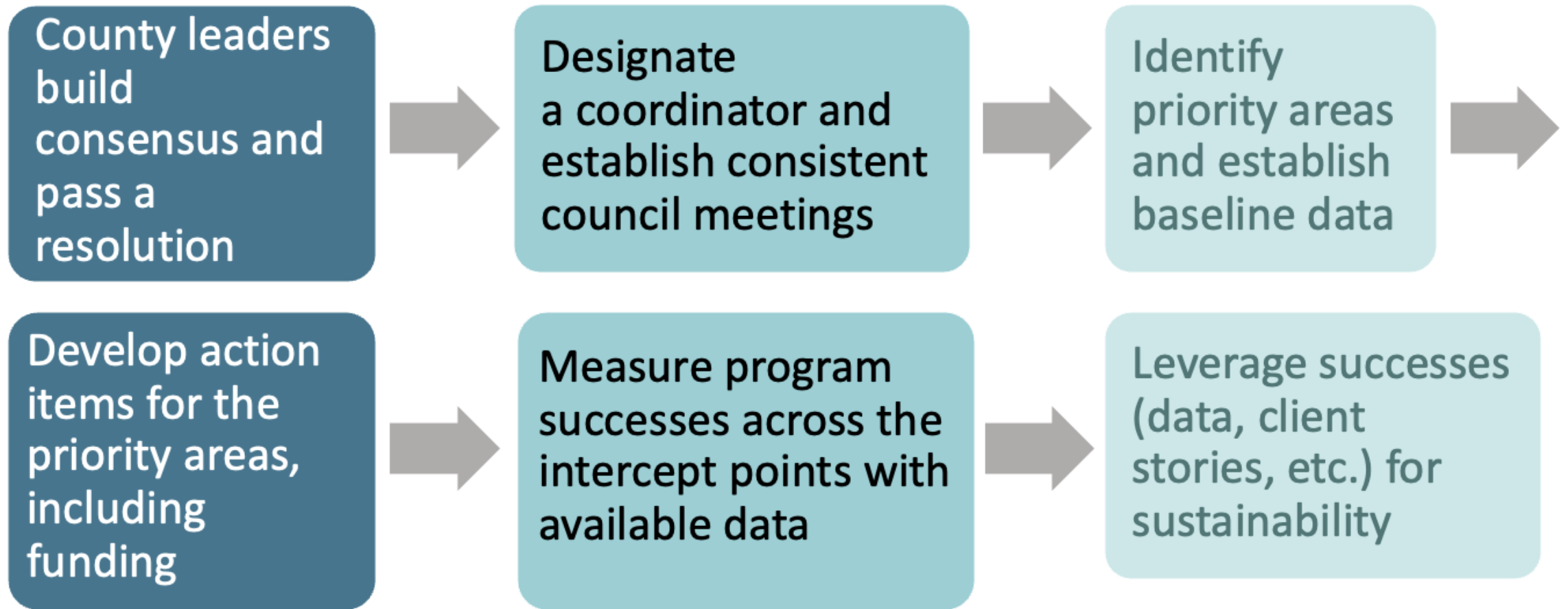


3. Increase connection to treatment for people who have mental illnesses



4. Reduce recidivism rates for people who have mental illnesses

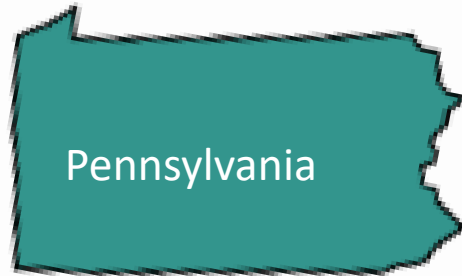
General Recipe for Stepping Up Success



A Partner Collaboration

The CSG Justice Center, Omni Institute, and the KS Stepping Up Technical Assistance Center

What is a Stepping Up TA Center?



The goal of a **Stepping Up TA Center** is to build county capacity to identify and address the behavioral health needs of people entering local jails. This way, they can be connected to care and experience improved outcomes, and ultimately, counties can increase public safety.



TA Center's Support to KS Innovators

Supporting the Innovator Network

- Focus on expanding the Innovator network and strengthening data infrastructure to demonstrate impact at both county and state levels.

Consistent Check-Ins and Biannual In-Person Meetings

- Worked to develop an agreed-upon definition of SMI for all KS Innovators to use; grew into a strong interest in building data capacity.

Partnership with Omni

- In 2024, the TA Center partnered with Omni to begin learning about each Innovator's data capacity and developing building blocks to advance their data.

Areas of Work



Stepping Up Readiness Toolkit

An Introduction to the Toolkit

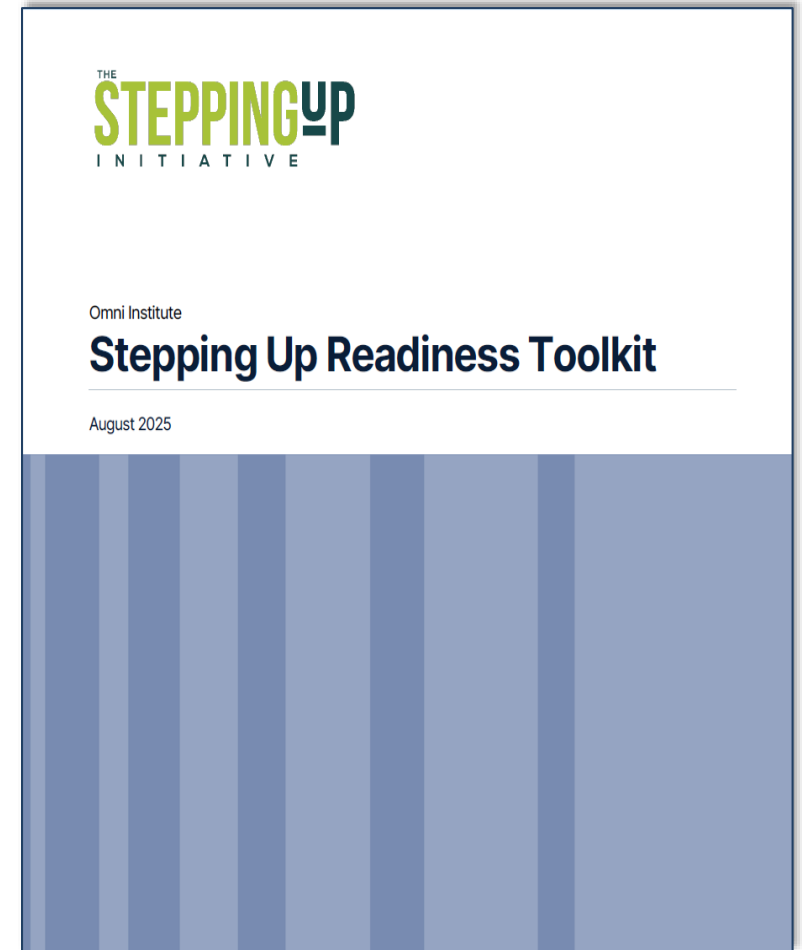
Stepping Up Readiness Toolkit Overview

Intended for counties interested in implementing Stepping Up:

- Counties new to Stepping Up
- Counties reengaging with Stepping Up
- Counties looking to increase or sustain their capacity

Rationale and Purpose

- Provides a framework for understanding and building key readiness domains.
- Allows partners to self-assess their current capacity and changes over time.



Capacity Levels

Stepping Up has three capacity levels to cover varying degrees of capacity and readiness:



Entry-Level Capacity

Counties with entry-level capacity may be...

- Early in the process of establishing their readiness to implement Stepping Up for the first time
- Or those that previously implemented Stepping Up and are reengaging in the initiative.

The Stepping Up Coordinator's Handbook would be a great place to start for entry-level capacity counties!

Reducing the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jail: Six Questions County Leaders Need to Ask

The Project Coordinator's Handbook

Choosing a Stepping Up Project Coordinator

Determining who will serve as the project coordinator is the first step for a jurisdiction in the Stepping Up planning process. A criminal justice coordinator can fill this role, if that position already exists. If not, the county can contract for these services, or the county planning team can designate someone to serve in this role—such as a staff member from the jail, behavioral health care provider, or community supervision agency—in addition to that person's regular duties. The person selected should have knowledge of the local criminal justice and behavioral health systems, have excellent facilitation and organizational skills, and demonstrate the ability to proactively drive the planning process to ensure progress.

This handbook is designed to complement the [Reducing the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jail: Six Questions County Leaders Need to Ask](#) (Six Questions) framework as a step-by-step facilitation guide for project coordinators. For each of the framework's six questions, this handbook provides:

- A summary of the question and its related objectives for the planning team;
- Facilitation tips to assist the project coordinator in managing the planning process; and
- Facilitation exercises designed to achieve objectives and establish an efficient process for capturing the work of the planning team.

The Role of the Project Coordinator

Your role as the project coordinator is critical to the success of your county's Stepping Up efforts. It is the project coordinator who ensures that key leaders are engaged, manages meeting agendas and minutes, coordinates subcommittee work, provides research and data to guide the decision-making process, and continuously motivates the planning team.

This handbook is designed to help you manage your county's planning process. It will guide and systematize the flow of your work as you develop meeting agendas and decide how best to utilize members of the planning team. Other members of the planning team may benefit from having access to this handbook, especially those who are providing facilitation support, such as leading subcommittee work. You are not required to fill out or submit this handbook to the Stepping Up partners.

Additional complementary training materials are available through the [Stepping Up Toolkit](#), including webinars, briefs that provide information and guidance for applying the Six Questions, and other [resources](#).

Building Capacity

Counties that are building capacity may be...

- Midstream in building their readiness to implement Stepping Up with more foundational support than entry-level capacity counties.
- Or may already be implementing Stepping Up and need to reset or strengthen in certain areas due to turnover or process changes.



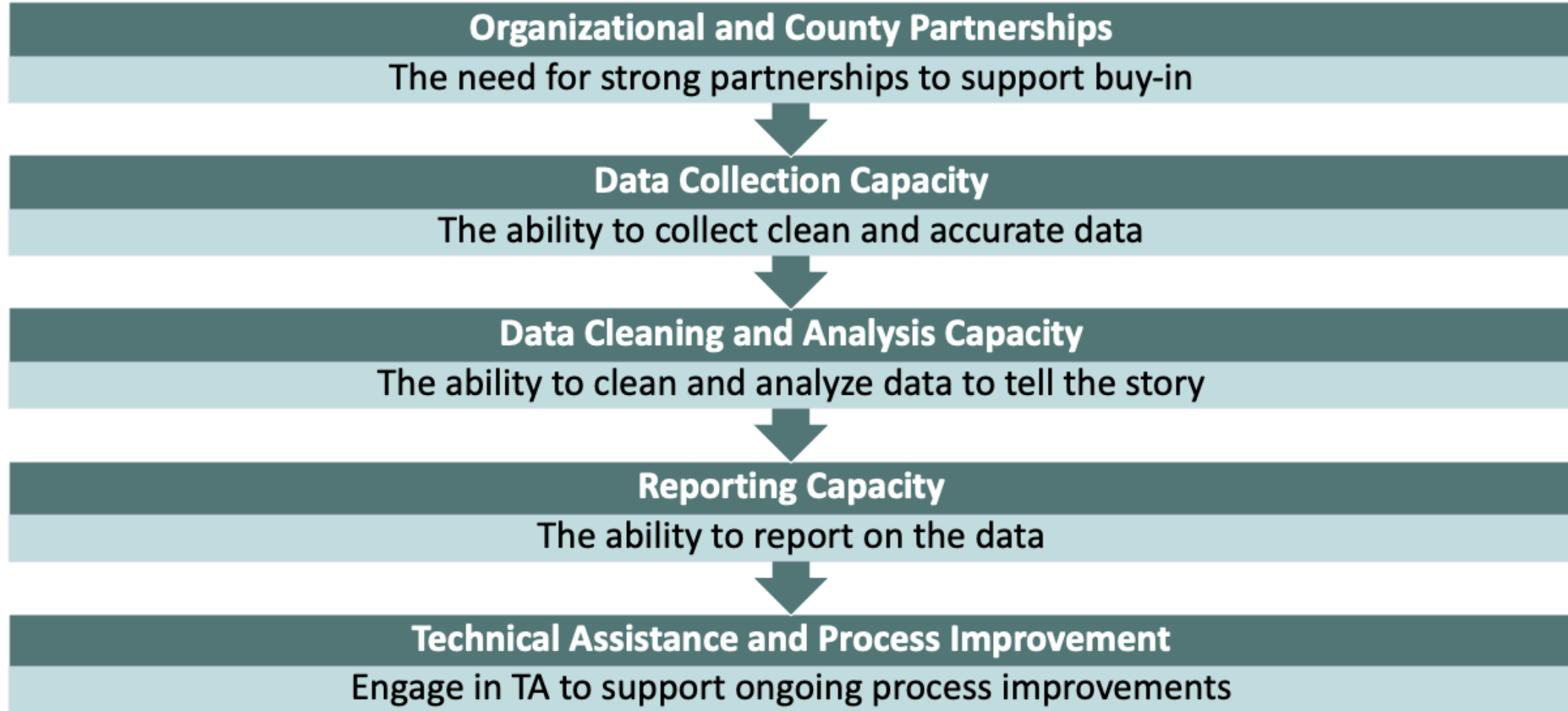
High Capacity

Counties with high capacity may be...

- Successfully starting to implement Stepping Up after building a strong foundation
- Established Stepping Up counties—actively growing and sustaining their initiative
- Or those that already are, or are looking to become, Stepping Up Innovator Counties.



Stepping Up Readiness Domains



Organizational and County Partnerships

Encompasses the relationships counties build with internal leaders and external community agencies—such as jails, mental health providers, and service organizations—to support shared goals through collaboration, data sharing, and coordinated decision-making.

Entry-Level Capacity	Building Capacity	High Capacity
Minimal or no formal partnerships	- Some active partnerships - Periodic engagement with partners - Early stages of collaboration	- Long-standing, trust-based partnerships - Regular, co-created initiatives - Shared decision-making

Data Collection Capacity

Ensures that counties have the systems, tools, and trained staff needed to consistently collect and use reliable data on individuals with behavioral health needs in jail.

Entry-Level Capacity	Building Capacity	High Capacity
• No standardized data collection tools • Inconsistent data collection • Low buy-in for data importance • Low staff knowledge or capacity	• Basic data collection tools in place • Some consistency in data collection • Staff has some capacity to support data collection	• Robust systems and protocols • High fidelity to data collection methods • Staff have high capacity and knowledge • Data collection is already integrated into practice

Data Cleaning and Analysis Capacity

Ensures counties can transform raw data into accurate, meaningful insights through consistent processes, skilled staff, and appropriate analytic tools.

Entry-Level Capacity	Building Capacity	High Capacity
• Data is not regularly cleaned or analyzed • No regular data staff • Limited data software/tools	• Some data cleaning • Some data is analyzed manually or with basic tools • Occasional interpretation of trends or subgroup breakdowns	• There is a strong data cleaning process • Data analysis is already integrated into practice • There is a dedicated analyst or data team • Use of advanced tools for regular and deep analysis

Reporting Capacity

Ensures counties can communicate findings clearly and consistently, using data to drive decision-making, strengthen partnerships, and guide community resources.

Entry-Level Capacity	Building Capacity	High Capacity
• No reporting • Inconsistent reporting • No clear vision for reporting needs	• Semi-regular reporting • Some report templates or guidance • Reports inform some decisions	• Regular reporting tailored to specific audiences • There is a standardized reporting process/template • Reports regularly inform strategic planning and improvement

TA and Process Improvement Capacity

Ensures counties can access and provide resources, training, and continuous quality improvement processes that strengthen implementation and broaden community impact.

Entry-Level Capacity	Building Capacity	High Capacity
No buy-in or capacity to support ongoing TA and process improvement	- Some buy-in or capacity for ongoing TA and process improvement - Some consideration of how the work intersects with other initiatives	- Strategic use of TA - Embedded continuous improvement processes - Strong consideration of how the work intersects with other initiatives

Sustainability Planning

Ensuring a Strong Stepping Up Foundation

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, we recommend being at “Building Capacity” in at least the Organizational and Community Partnership and Data Collection Capacity domains before counties begin implementing Stepping Up.



High Capacity to Sustainability Planning

- High-capacity and Innovator counties should focus on sustainability planning.
- To support strong sustainability, counties can use the checklist in the toolkit to identify potential priorities to address.

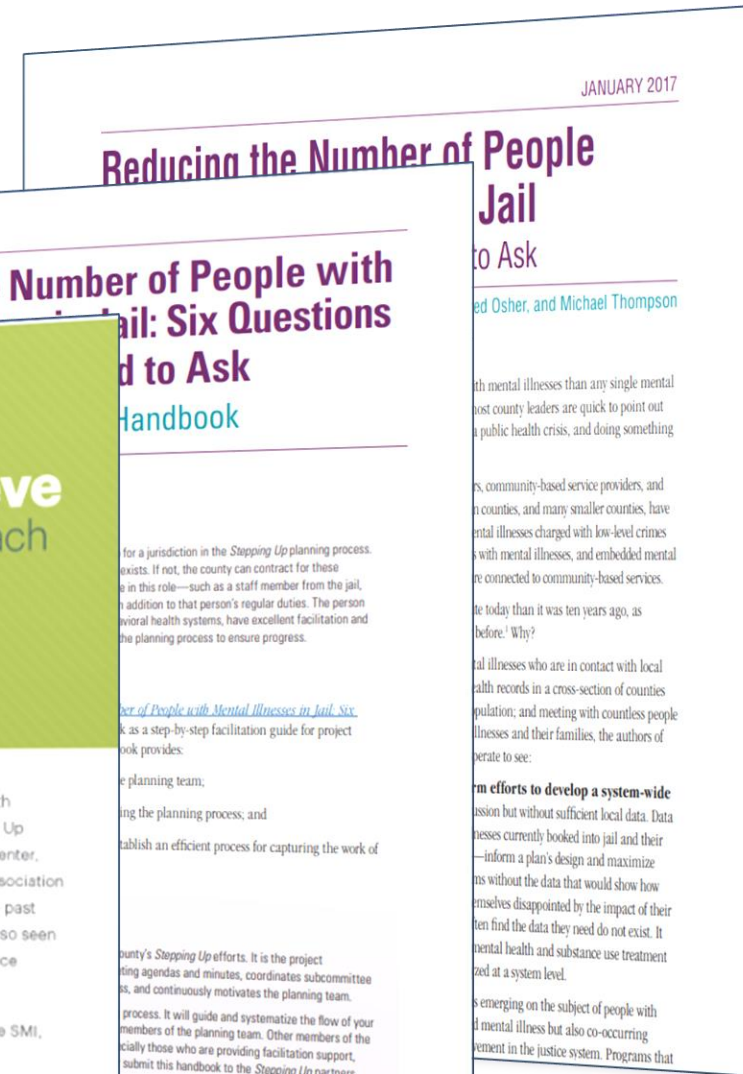
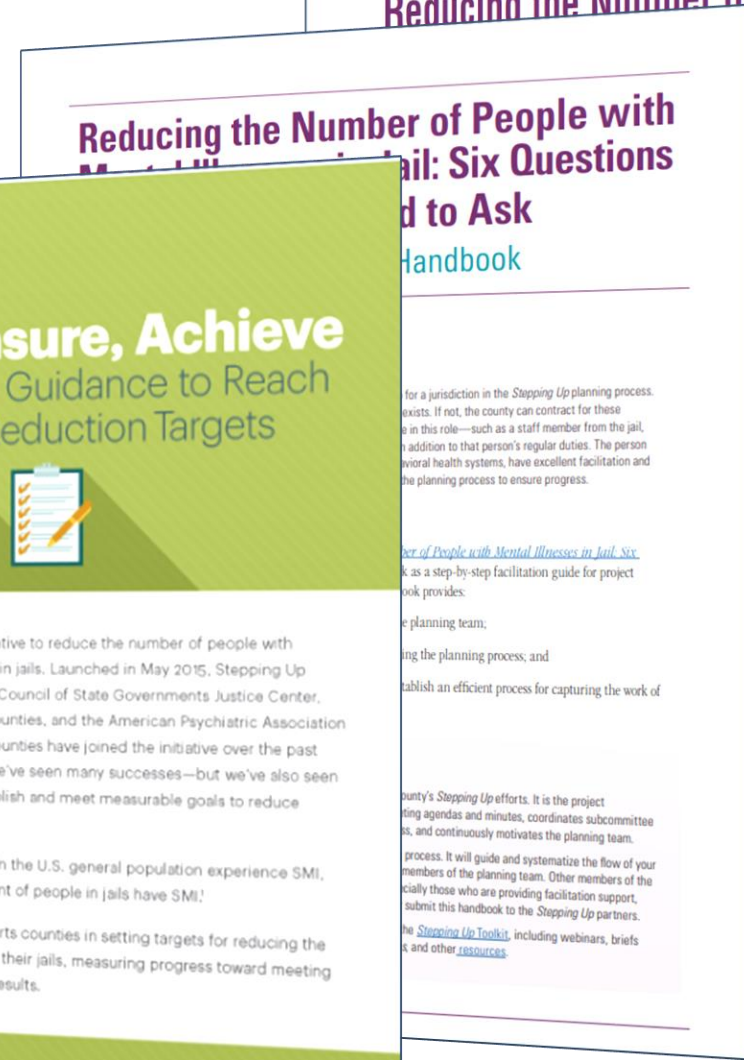
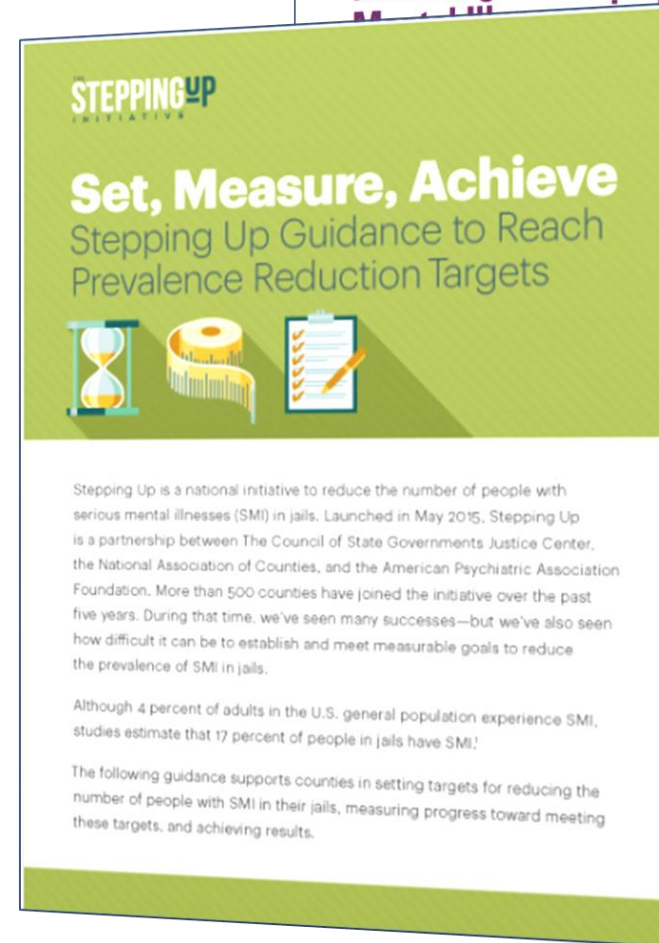
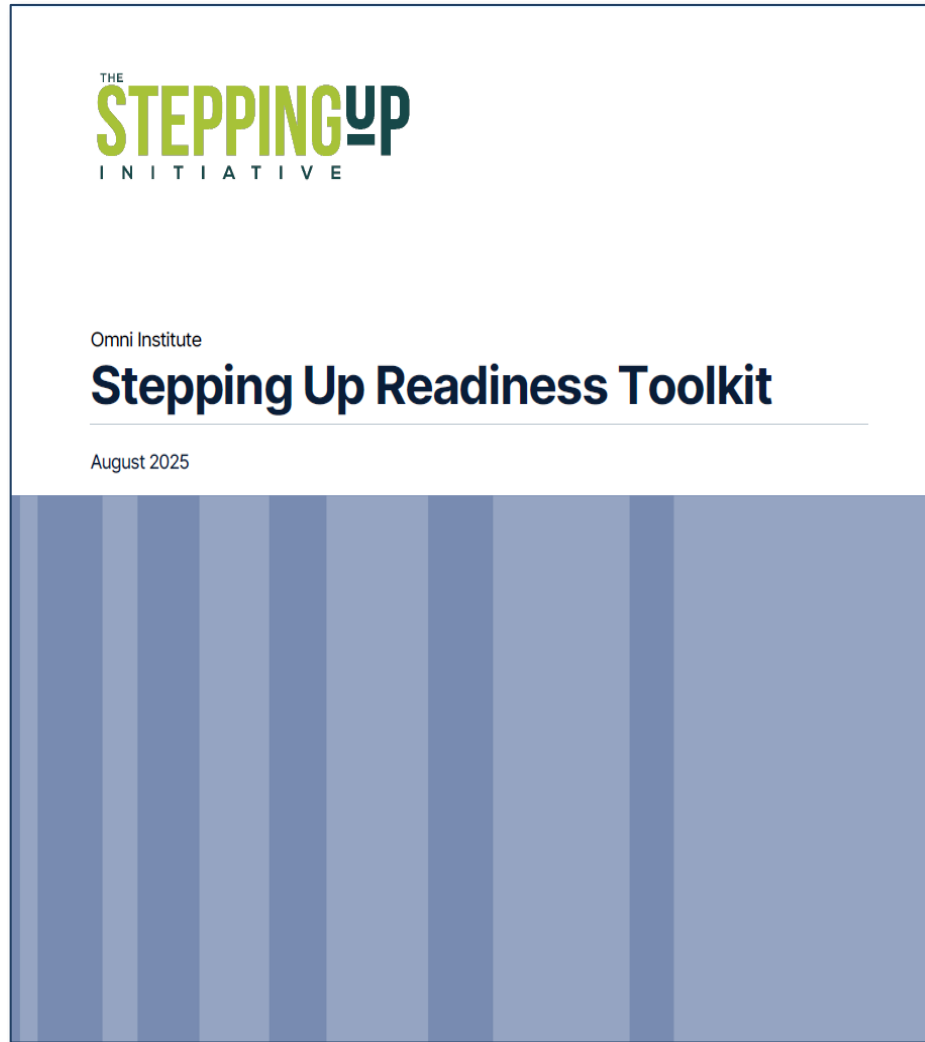
- Embed Stepping Up in County Efforts
- Track and Show Your Impact
- Keep Talent and Leadership Strong
- Support Ongoing Partnerships
- Tell Your Stepping Up Story

Wrap-Up

How to Use this Toolkit

- Work with new or existing Stepping Up Workgroup to assess readiness.
- Identify capacity gaps and opportunities.
- Document and implement strategies for building local SU capacity.
- If in PA or KS, reach out to State TA Center contacts to ask for support!
- Other areas—reach out to steppingup@csg.org.

Stepping Up Resources and Tools





Questions and Answers



Thank You!

Join our distribution list to receive updates and announcements:

<https://csgjusticecenter.org/resources/newsletters/>

For more information, please contact steppingup@csg.org

