

# Six Questions Case Studies



**Stepping Up** is a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails. In January 2017, the Stepping Up partners released *Reducing the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jail: Six Questions County Leaders Need to Ask (Six Questions)*, a report outlining a framework for counties to assess their existing efforts to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails. With the release of the report, the initiative hosted a series of webinars and network calls to outline some of the key strategies within the report and feature counties that have been working through the *Six Questions* process. The Stepping Up *Six Questions* Case Studies serve as a quick reference to the counties highlighted in this series. More information on the *Six Questions* and the webinar recording featuring this county are available on the **Stepping Up Resources Toolkit**.



## Question 6

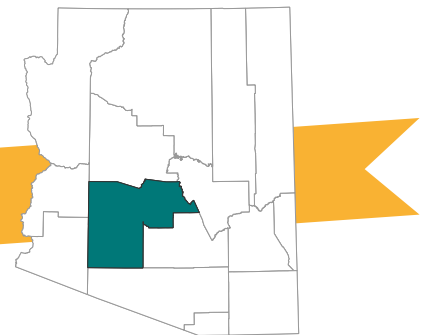
### *Do We Track Progress?*

Once planning is completed and the prioritized strategies are being implemented, tracking progress and ongoing evaluation begins. Planning teams should monitor the completion of short-term, intermediate and long-term goals, as it may take years to demonstrate measurable reductions in jail populations and the prevalence of people with mental illnesses in jail. Showing evidence of more immediate accomplishments, such as the implementation of new procedures, policies and evidence-based practices, contributes to the momentum and commitment necessary to ensure this is a permanent initiative. Tracking data within the four key measures may also provide the justification necessary to secure continuation funding and/or additional implementation funding.

QUESTION 6 IN ACTION

MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZ.

POPULATION: 3,817,357



Maricopa County formed its Smart Justice Committee in 2011 to create a forum for collaborative, data-driven decision making to improve public safety and reduce recidivism in the county. The committee members include leadership from all sectors of criminal justice and the courts in the county, as well as the county manager's office and health and human services agencies. The inclusion of the county's Justice Systems Planning & Information (JSPI) office, which conducts research to inform policy and practice, is key to the committee's ability to be data-driven.

Through the committee, the county developed data-sharing agreements between the Sheriff's Office, Correctional Health Services (CHS) and the regional behavioral health authority (RBHA). The Sheriff's Office provides information on individuals booked into the jail, including demographic information, risk scores and booking and release dates. CHS has information on mental health

assessments, participation in jail treatment programs and referrals to community services. The RBHA has information on individuals' serious mental illness (SMI) status and whether they are currently receiving case management in the community.

Using these three data systems, the county established baseline data on the four key measures (reducing jail bookings, shortening length of stay, increasing connections to treatment and reducing recidivism) and tracks progress toward impacting these measures. The county uses these data to inform key initiatives to impact public safety and its jail population, including in May 2015 when the county passed a resolution to join the Stepping Up initiative to focus on reducing the number of people with SMI in the jail.

The county has leveraged data to identify several targets for improvement along the four key measures. The Sheriff's Office and several municipal police departments have increased law enforcement training and the RBHA and community partners have developed a robust crisis response system to reduce the number of individuals with SMI booked into the jail. And after the data showed that individuals held for longer than three days in the jail had higher recidivism rates than those held for less time, the jail worked with the courts to more quickly and deliberately release low-risk individuals charged with non-violent offenses.

The county also used these data to identify its 59 highest utilizers of the jail and determined that about a quarter of them had an SMI and almost all of them (93 percent) were homeless. These individuals were held primarily on misdemeanor charges like loitering and noise violations and scored low on the jail's risk proxy score. Using cost estimates, JSPI determined that these individuals cost the county about \$750,000 to house in the jail over two years. Having this information provided policymakers in the county with a foundation to start looking at ways to address the homeless and SMI populations in the county and will be useful in assessing if strategies are successful.

Previously, JSPI had to pull data from each of these systems to develop static reports to share with stakeholders. While having these data available in regular reports has been integral to policymakers in the county, with 100,000 bookings per year, this process was arduous and didn't provide the opportunity to share real-time information with decision makers. In 2017, Maricopa County began the process of implementing a database that will automatically store information from the three agencies and allow for fast analysis and real-time sharing of information on a web-based dashboard.

The county also developed an online community resource connection that helps to identify resources in a particular area to connect individuals to services and also helps to keep track if an individual participating in services is arrested and booked into the jail. In the county's next phase of this project, treatment providers will be able to track if clients engage in services, which will help to track key measure three: connections to treatment.

Having these systems and data-sharing agreements in place has allowed Maricopa County to target interventions at the points and scale needed to have an impact on individuals in the jails. The county continues to find new and innovative ways to track its progress toward reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in the jails and improving individuals' chances for recovery in the community.

**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 National Association of Counties, The Council of State Governments Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation. For more information, visit [www.stepuptogether.org](http://www.stepuptogether.org).**



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