



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Counties Across the Country Participate in
National *Stepping Up* Day of Action**

Events Highlight County Progress in Reducing Prevalence of Mental Illness in Jails

WASHINGTON, DC—The *Stepping Up* initiative marks its three-year anniversary today with a national Day of Action to raise awareness of the progress happening in counties to reduce the number of people who have mental illnesses in jails.

During this Day of Action, county officials are hosting events or participating in local activities to share with constituents the progress made in addressing the prevalence of people who have mental illnesses in jails; raise public awareness and understanding of this important issue; and emphasize their commitment to creating data-driven, systems-level changes to policy and practice to achieve *Stepping Up* goals.

Stepping Up was launched in May 2015 by the National Association of Counties (NACo), The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation (APA Foundation) to mobilize local, state and national leaders to develop data-driven, systems-level changes to policy and practice that addresses this crisis. The goal is to have every county collecting accurate, accessible data on individuals with mental illnesses in its jail and using this data to quantify the scale of the problem, identify solutions and track progress on their *Stepping Up* efforts.

Since the launch, more than 425 counties in 43 states, representing 40 percent of the U.S. population, have committed to building local leadership teams, identifying the number of people with mental illnesses entering their jail system, ensuring that those people are connected to services upon their release, and developing a comprehensive plan for systems-level change.

Below is a sampling of some of the *Stepping Up* Day of Action events happening across the country. Also, follow [#StepUp4MentalHealth](https://twitter.com/StepUp4MentalHealth) on social media for more coverage of county events.

Pacific County, Wash. officials are partnering with a local mental health advocacy group to host a mental wellness walk to raise awareness of this issue in their community. Contact: Pat Matlock, Pacific County Sheriff's Office, 360-875-9396.

Forsyth County, N.C. is holding an open house to provide resources to the community and accepting donations for individuals being served by its *Stepping Up* program. More information can be found [here](#). Contact: Sarah Isom, 336-703-3122.

Maricopa County, Ariz. is hosting a public event featuring county supervisors, the sheriff, the presiding judge, behavioral health and social services providers and community advocates to report on the progress happening with their *Stepping Up* efforts and to encourage continued use of data to inform their policy and practice. Contact: Erika Flores, 602-506-2263.

Franklin County, Ohio is holding a public event highlighting ways to keep people with mental illnesses out of jail, divert them from jail once arrested, provide treatment to them while incarcerated, and link them to services upon release to prevent their return to incarceration. More information [here](#). Contact: Michael Daniels, 614-525-2197.

Johnson County, Kan. is holding a press conference to announce its selection as a *Stepping Up* Innovator County and discuss progress made in the county since it helped to launch *Stepping Up* in May 2015. Contact: Sharon Watson, 913-715-0730.

Douglas County, Kan. Board of Commissioners is passing a proclamation announcing May 16 as *Stepping Up* Day and will be conducting outreach to peer counties to encourage them to get involved in the initiative. Contact: Sgt. Kristen Channel, 785-832-5204.

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ABOUT THE STEPPING UP INITIATIVE

Stepping Up is a national initiative to reduce the number of people in jail who have mental illnesses. The initiative—a collaboration between the National Association of Counties, The Council of State Governments Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation—asks communities to come together to develop an action plan that can be used to achieve a measurable impact in local criminal justice systems of all sizes across the country. For more information visit <https://stepuptogether.org>.