

May 16, 2018  
**Day of Action**  
*Toolkit*





# *The Stepping Up Day of Action*

Stepping Up: A National Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jails (Stepping Up) was launched in May 2015 by the National Association of Counties (NACo), the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Foundation and The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center. In the three years since the launch, more than 400 counties have passed a resolution or proclamation to join the initiative and committed to creating cross-systems, sustainable plans to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in their jails.

Whether rural or urban, big or small, counties across the country are joining Stepping Up because of the recognition that the status quo is not working. Federal and state policy and funding barriers, along with limited opportunities for law enforcement training and arrest alternatives in many communities, have resulted in county and other local jails housing more people with mental illnesses than state mental health hospitals. Counties recognize the need for data-driven, systems-level changes to increase access and connections to treatment and services for people while reducing jail populations and improving public safety in fiscally responsible and effective ways.

Stepping Up is hosting a national Day of Action on May 16, 2018. During this Day of Action, counties are encouraged to host an event or participate in local activities to share with constituents the progress they have made in addressing the prevalence of people with mental illnesses in their 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 reduce the number of people with mental illness in their jail.



## NEW TO STEPPING UP?

*Counties seeking to start an initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in their jail may find the task so daunting that they struggle with where to start. Stepping Up provides step-by-step guidance and resources on how to start a local initiative or how to continue and enhance this process. Counties differ greatly in terms of their structures and leadership, as well as their available resources and opportunities. Stepping Up was designed to meet all counties—big and small—where they are and to help move them to where they want to be.*

*To help guide counties through this process, resources such as webinars, networking calls, case studies, planning guides and conference workshops are available on the Stepping Up website at **[www.StepUpTogether.org/Toolkit](http://www.StepUpTogether.org/Toolkit)**. New resources and learning opportunities are added regularly to assist counties in making a difference for their residents.*

*To learn more about Stepping Up and pass a resolution or proclamation in support of the initiative, go to **[www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org)** or email **[info@stepuptogether.org](mailto:info@stepuptogether.org)** with questions.*

## ***WHY Should Your County Host a Day of Action?***

County officials across the country are partnering with criminal justice and behavioral health leaders in their counties to find innovative and effective strategies to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in their jails in ways that not only improve public safety, but also promote positive outcomes for individuals with mental illnesses, their families and their communities.

The work happening in counties to address this issue is not easy and there are no quick solutions to the challenges counties face. Counties that have joined Stepping Up have taken an important first step by committing to address this issue and work collaboratively to find solutions. Many counties have already seen progress with their efforts, whether through changes in policy, practice or funding or in outcomes such as reductions in the number of people with mental illnesses in their jail or increased access to care. This commitment and progress should be acknowledged and shared with your residents.

The Day of Action provides a platform for county leaders to gain support for their Stepping Up efforts, raise public awareness and understanding of the issues and stigma facing individuals with mental illnesses in the community, including those involved in the justice system, and commit to data-driven approaches. It can also give county leaders the opportunity to be transparent about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead and how community members can get involved and become part of the solution. Even if your county is new to Stepping Up, you should still participate! Use this as an opportunity to kick off your county's efforts and gain important initial support from the community.

## ***WHO Should Be Involved in Your County's Day of Action?***

The first step in starting an initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jail is to develop a cross-sector, collaborative team or committee to create plans to address this issue. If such a team exists as part of your Stepping Up initiative, county leaders may choose to assign this team to plan and execute Day of Action events or activities. If a team does not yet exist, leaders will want to establish a team of individuals to plan, organize

and coordinate the event. This team should include representatives from the county board and administration, as well as relevant county departments such as the sheriff's office and behavioral health agency. In addition, if available, a public information officer or county official experienced in media relations should be included.

Regardless of the activities planned for your Day of Action, it will be important to showcase the collaborative and inclusive spirit of your Stepping Up efforts. The following is a short list of individuals or agencies that counties may wish to include in any programming for their Stepping Up Day of Action events.

- Leadership from the county board
- Leadership from local behavioral health or mental health departments, authorities or community-based service providers
- Leadership from local law enforcement and corrections departments such as sheriffs, police chiefs and corrections directors
- Leadership from local courts such as judges, prosecutors and public defenders
- Leadership from housing and other social service organizations that work with this population
- Local chapters of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Mental Health America or other advocacy organizations, and
- Individuals with mental illnesses and/or their families.

## ***WHEN Should Your County Host a Day of Action?***

Stepping Up counties across the country will host their Day of Action activities on May 16, 2018. Not only is May 2018 the three-year anniversary of the launch of Stepping Up, but May is also national Mental Health Month, providing an existing platform for counties to collaborate with local mental health partners to promote the work of their initiatives. Counties may elect to host activities only on that day or throughout the week or month and may combine activities with other relevant events or meetings or host standalone events.

# ***WHAT Should Your County Do for its Day of Action?***

This is an important opportunity for your county to discuss accomplishments, challenges and solutions and to emphasize its commitment to Stepping Up's data-driven approach. Sample talking points are available on the [Stepping Up website](#) that can help form your messaging during your Day of Action event.

Counties have many options for hosting Day of Action events and should select the activity or activities that best meet the county's interests and capacity. Below are just a few examples of potential activities, but counties are encouraged to do what makes the most sense for their efforts.

## ***Hold a Town Hall or Press Conference***

Host a town hall or press conference to speak directly about the county's Stepping Up efforts and share progress. Leaders can invite the public and media and should be prepared to answer questions from the audience. The event could be televised, livestreamed on the county website or the county's Facebook page and video recorded for sharing. This is a great opportunity to give voice to individuals positively impacted by the county's Stepping Up efforts. Work with local mental health providers or advocacy organizations to identify potential speakers.

## ***Host an Open House or Offer Tours***

Host an open house or offer public and/or media tours of facilities such as community mental health centers, jails, crisis centers or human services campuses. Partnering with local non-profit organizations may also provide an opportunity to share some of the work happening through your Stepping Up efforts by showcasing the kinds of services being provided. Have brochures or handouts available to share. This is another great opportunity to share how the county's Stepping Up efforts have positively impacted residents.

## ***Bring Information to Residents***

Host public outreach events at venues such as shopping malls, community centers or parks where residents typically gather. Set up displays, provide brochures or other information about your efforts and conduct presentations about your work and services offered to residents with mental illnesses and their families. County human services fairs are a great opportunity to highlight supports available in the county like health care insurance enrollment and

treatment options. Develop a public relations and communications strategy to share information about what you are doing with your efforts and potentially set up TVs or monitors with rolling videos to engage the audience.

### ***Encourage Engagement and Community Service***

Set up one-time or recurring volunteer activities to encourage resident engagement in the issue. This could include activities like a community service project to benefit individuals with mental illnesses in the community such as planting trees at a community mental health center or homeless shelter. Ask residents to volunteer services to assist area non-profit organizations that serve individuals with mental illness, homeless persons or veterans. Or host a Stepping Up 5k or walk for county residents to raise awareness. The county's local mental health organization may already be hosting a Mental Health Month event that the county could join or plan together.

## ***HOW Should Your County Share its Day of Action activities?***

Careful planning is essential to maximize public awareness of your county's Stepping Up efforts. In addition to educating the public and key local stakeholders, county leaders should be sure members of the local news media are aware of Day of Action activities your team has planned. Below are some effective ways to secure positive news coverage.

### ***Educate the Media***

Inform local reporters, editors and broadcasters early and often about your county's Stepping Up efforts and Day of Action plans. The event planning team may consider involving a member of the news media in the planning process.

### ***Plan to Make the News***

The Day of Action provides an opportunity for counties to coordinate related newsworthy events or announcements. For example, counties may want to use the event to also announce the beginning of a new diversion program or the award of a new grant to work on their Stepping Up efforts. Ask the planning team to use these announcements to make a coordinated media splash.

Be prepared to share this news with key media audiences in a targeted manner. For example, newspapers seek facts and in-depth information, television stations want good visuals and radio reporters want snappy sound bites. All reporters seek good stories and will want access to knowledgeable and articulate sources to make their stories interesting and informative.

### ***Publish a Calendar of Activities***

Make sure the Day of Action and all associated activities are included as soon as possible on the calendar on your county's website. Ask the local paper to share the calendar of activities and ask local television, cable and radio stations to air public service announcements about the event.

### ***Create a Social Media Strategy***

The emergence of social media in recent years provides tremendous opportunities to promote counties' Stepping Up efforts and events. If the county already has a public Facebook or Twitter account, use it to promote Stepping Up and Day of Action activities. The planning team may want to coordinate social media outreach efforts. And be sure to use **#StepUp4MentalHealth** in all posts related to Stepping Up.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA CHEAT SHEET**

### **SAMPLE TWEETS**

More than 415 counties have passed a resolution to join Stepping Up to reduce **#mentalillness** in **#jails**. [YOUR COUNTY] is proud to be part of this movement! Find out more at [www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org). **#StepUp4MentalHealth**

[YOUR COUNTY] is hosting a Stepping Up Day of Action on May 16 to bring awareness to people with **#mentalillness** in **#jails**. Find out more about Stepping Up at [www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org). **#StepUp4MentalHealth**

[YOUR COUNTY] is joining counties from across the country today as part of the Stepping Up Day of Action to reduce **#mentalillness** in **#jails**. Find out more about Stepping Up at [www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org). **#StepUp4MentalHealth**

### **SAMPLE FACEBOOK POST**

Join [YOUR COUNTY] on May 16 for a Stepping Up Day of Action! Stepping Up is a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails. The Day of Action is an opportunity for our community to come together to learn about the county's efforts to connect people to treatment and services instead of jails. [Provide details on your Day of Action activities and how people can participate]. [YOUR COUNTY] is committed to **#StepUp4MentalHealth** for people with mental illness in our community. Find out more at [www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org).

# MEDIA RESOURCES

## STEPPING UP TALKING POINTS

*Stepping Up provides a platform for counties to talk about the issue of mental illness in jails with a collective national voice. Stepping Up's brief, County Elected Officials' Guide to Talking to the Media About People with Mental Illnesses in Jail, provides counties with talking points on the challenges and solutions related to addressing this issue. The guide is available at [www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org).*

## GENERAL MEDIA RELATIONS

*NACo's Media Relations: A Guide for Counties contains helpful tips on speaking with reporters, writing news releases, planning press conferences and much more. The guide is available at [www.naco.org/resources/naco-media-relations-guide-counties](http://www.naco.org/resources/naco-media-relations-guide-counties)*

## Write Media Advisories

Prepare and send a media notice well in advance of the event or activities. Media advisories should include pertinent information such as who, what, where, when and why.

### SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

INSERT YOUR COUNTY'S LETTERHEAD

FOR RELEASE: [Date]  
CONTACT: [Media Contact]  
[123/456.7890]  
[mediacontact@county.gov]

#### [County] Participates in National Stepping Up Day of Action

**[City, State (May ##, 2018)]** – In recognition of May as Mental Health Month, [County] will join its peers from across the country to celebrate the three-year anniversary of Stepping Up: A National Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jails with a Day of Action. Stepping Up has seen remarkable progress, with more than 415 counties across the country joining the movement by passing resolutions or proclamations to make this issue a top priority. Stepping Up Day of Action activities are taking place across the country to share progress and raise public awareness of the issues facing individuals with mental illnesses, particularly those who are involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

[County]'s Stepping Up Day of Action activities include [insert activities].

**WHAT:** [County] Stepping Up Day of Action

**WHO:** [Name, Role, Organization of each speaker or presenter]  
[Name, Role, Organization]

**WHEN:** [Date and Time]

**WHERE:** [Location]  
[Address]

More information on the national Stepping Up initiative is available at:  
[www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org).

###

# SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

INSERT YOUR COUNTY'S LETTERHEAD

FOR RELEASE: [Date]  
CONTACT: [Media Contact]  
[123/456.7890]  
[mediacontact@county.gov]

## **[County] Participates in National Stepping Up Day of Action**

County working collaboratively to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails

**[City, State (May 16, 2018)]** – [County] is participating in the national Stepping Up Day of Action to highlight its progress toward reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in the county jail and improving outcomes for the county's most vulnerable residents.

[County]'s Stepping Up Day of Action activities include [insert activities]

"[County] is proud of the progress we have been making toward implementing innovative solutions to the number of people with mental illnesses in our jail," said [Board chair]. "The partnership between the sheriff and our behavioral health director has allowed us to [describe key innovations]."

The county's efforts began when the board passed a resolution to join Stepping Up.

Stepping Up is a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails. Led by the National Association of Counties, the American Psychiatric Association Foundation and The Council of State Governments Justice Center, Stepping Up provides counties with a framework and tools for creating a collaborative, system-wide plan to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in the county jail in ways that not only improve public safety but promote positive outcomes for individuals with mental illnesses, their families and their communities.

More than 415 counties across the country have passed a resolution or proclamation to join Stepping Up.

"[County] joined Stepping Up to show its commitment to working collaboratively across systems to change the way law enforcement and other county agencies respond to people experiencing mental health crises," said [county official].

Today, [County] joins its peers from across the country who are participating in the national Stepping Up Day of Action to share progress in the county and raise public awareness of the issues facing individuals with mental illnesses, particularly those who are involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system

**More information on the national Stepping Up initiative is available at:**  
[www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org).

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## ***Write News Releases***

Have news releases ready to distribute to the media the day of the event or activities. The release should highlight what's new and newsworthy and include quotes from appropriate county officials, as well as a media contact person.

## ***Take Your Message to the Media***

Don't assume that the news media will cover the event or activities. To be proactive, county leaders can ask for a meeting with the newspaper's editorial board, submit an opinion-editorial, volunteer to stop by the television station for an interview or be an in-studio guest on a local radio program. County officials should be accessible and proactive in working with the media and be enthusiastic about Stepping Up efforts and the Day of Action events.



# TELL US ABOUT YOUR DAY OF ACTION!

*Thank you for your interest in the Stepping Up Day of Action! Stepping Up wants to know what activities and programs your county has planned so it can share this information with other counties to help them have successful events. Please email your plans to **info@stepuptogether.org**. After your Day of Action, be sure to share photos, video clips and other media materials of your activities as well.*

*If your county is on social media, please share your activities, photos and videos directly on NACo's Facebook page at **www.Facebook.com/NACoDC** or on Twitter using the hashtag **#StepUp4MentalHealth**.*



# THE STEPPINGUP I N I T I A T I V E

## *About Stepping Up*

An estimated two million annual jail admissions involve people with serious mental illnesses. Over the past decade, county commissioners and supervisors, sheriffs, judges, corrections administrators, public defenders, prosecutors, law enforcement, community-based service providers and advocates have mobilized to better respond to people with mental illnesses. This crisis is indeed solvable, but it requires a new approach—one that is data-driven and focused on systems-level change. Stepping Up: A National Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jails (Stepping Up) was launched in May 2015 to provide counties with the resources to further address this crisis.

As counties move forward with their efforts, Stepping Up will focus on providing counties with the tools they need to systemically identify people with mental illnesses who enter local jails. The goal is to have every county collecting accurate, accessible baseline data on mental illness in its jail and using this data to quantify the scale of the problem, identify solutions and track progress on their Stepping Up efforts.

Stepping Up is a partnership between the National Association of Counties, The Council of State Governments Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation. With support from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance and private and corporate sponsors, Stepping Up builds on the many innovative and proven practices already implemented across the country.

To learn more about Stepping Up or join the initiative, go to [www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org).

Please contact Nastassia Walsh, NACo Program Manager, with any questions at [nwalsh@naco.org](mailto:nwalsh@naco.org) or 202.942.4289.

THE  
**STEPPINGUP**  
INITIATIVE



660 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NW | SUITE 400  
WASHINGTON, DC 20001 | 202.393.6226 | [www.NACo.org](http://www.NACo.org)

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