

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 5

Have We Prioritized Policy, Practice and Funding Improvements?

Counties should prioritize policies and processes that will impact one or more of the four key measures: reducing jail bookings, shortening length of stay, increasing connections to treatment and reducing recidivism. County leaders should provide guidance to the planning team on how to make policy recommendations and budget requests that are practical, concrete and aligned with the fiscal realities and budget process of the county. Any budget proposal should identify external funding streams including federal programs such as Medicaid, federal grant opportunities and state block grant dollars as the first source for funding, with any potential county dollars filling final gaps in needed funding. Routine communication with the planning team on its ongoing efforts will help county leaders stay up to speed on the latest developments.

QUESTION 5 IN ACTION

PACIFIC COUNTY, WASH.

POPULATION: 20,920



Pacific County received a Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance to support its planning efforts around reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in its jails. Upon receiving the grant, the county passed a resolution in December 2015 to join the Stepping Up initiative and convened a core planning team consisting of representatives from the jail, behavioral health and public health departments.

After completing a Sequential Intercept Model mapping exercise, interviewing key community partners and reviewing available data, the core planning team started developing a plan to build upon existing supports and relationships to enhance capacity and services to serve people with mental illnesses. As a rural community, Pacific County faces challenges with hiring and retaining qualified

mental health staff and with locating services in accessible areas to best serve its population. Identifying existing resources and finding ways to leverage and expand upon those resources and partnerships helped the planning team to come up with recommendations for no-cost and low-cost changes to policy and practice to impact the four key measures (reducing jail bookings, shortening length of stay, increasing connections to treatment and reducing recidivism).

For example, the county partnered with its five-county regional behavioral health authority to support a crisis team and law enforcement training to help keep people from ever coming to the jail. The planning team also prioritized improving mental health screening in the jail. Working with jail leadership, the planning team selected a non-proprietary, validated screening tool (the Brief Jail Mental Health Screen) to be implemented and the planning team is creating a system for collecting the information from the screening tool in a database that can be queried to help with data collection and future planning purposes. Implementing this tool had minimal startup costs and is sustainable without additional funding. The county also received a state grant to start a mental health diversion program and was able to leverage funding from the county's 0.1 percent behavioral health sales tax as a match to obtain the grant. Using this state grant, the county hired a behavioral health case manager who works closely with the county's housing case manager on mutual clients to provide permanent supportive housing and wraparound services to eligible individuals. The county was also able to use state funding for jail-based behavioral health services.

Pacific County has also built relationships with community partners like hospitals and housing systems and leveraged federal and state funding sources like Medicaid and state and federal grants, which has allowed leaders to create woven funding streams to support the county's work to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in its jail. While the planning team continues with its prioritization process, it also takes advantage of time-sensitive funding opportunities that are in line with the overall vision for the county's initiative and provide an opportunity to create lasting policy and practice changes rather than funding-dependent programs. By prioritizing sustainable policies and practices that will impact one or more of the four key measures, the county is creating a path for long-term success with its initiative.

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.



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