

STEPPINGUP

A National Initiative Reducing
Overincarceration of People with Mental
Illnesses

From Silos to Coordinated Systems:

How to Leverage and Connect Parallel Justice Initiatives
to Advance Local Priorities

April 21, 2026



Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions

2. Review of the Stepping Up Initiative & PA TA Center

3. Cross-System Collaboration: From Silos to Coordinated Systems

4. County Presentations

5. Panel Discussion and Q&A

6. Next Steps



Today's Presenters

Ernest 'Ernie' Stevens, *Managing Director, Behavioral Health*

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Devon Chianos, *Certified CIT Coordinator / Deputy Chief Co-Responder, Dauphin County*

Bobby Juip, *Western Region, CCAP Criminal Justice Advisory Board Specialist*

Kimberly Mackey, *Eastern Region, CCAP Criminal Justice Advisory Board Specialist*

Christopher Murphy, *Central Region, CCAP Criminal Justice Advisory Board Specialist*

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STEPPINGUP

Stepping Up is a national initiative focused on strengthening coordinated responses to safely reduce the overrepresentation of people with behavioral health needs in jail.



Justice Center
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

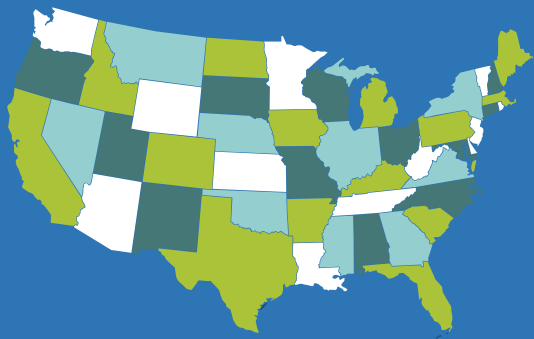
#StepUp4MentalHealth
www.StepUpTogether.org

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.



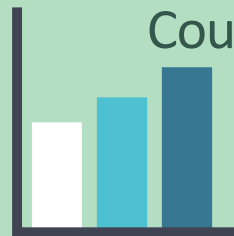
48% of Americans live in a Stepping Up county.



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.



STEPPINGUP

Key Pillars of the Initiative



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

The Stepping Up Six Questions Framework

1

Is our leadership committed?

2

Do we conduct timely screening and assessments?

3

Do we have baseline data?

4

Have we conducted a process analysis and inventory of services?

5

Have we prioritized policy, practice, and funding improvements?

6

Do we track progress?



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 Success with Stepping Up



The Pennsylvania Stepping Up TA Center Can Help with:



Assessing your current data capacity and identifying the next step



Providing a framework for collecting, organizing, and reporting Stepping Up metrics



Developing strategies for increasing the demand for data use



Creating tools to support the sustainability of Stepping Up data



Building cross-systems collaboration



Planning and implementing evidence-based practices

Objectives of the TA Center

- ① Establish and implement data-driven plans
- ② Identify peer mentoring opportunities and facilitate those connections
- ③ Serve as a central information bank for counties
- ④ Work with PA to determine state-level policies that can improve local-level Stepping Up efforts.

Stepping Up Pennsylvania: Counties by the Numbers

35

Passed Stepping Up Resolutions

44

Participate in TA
Center activities

20

Actively engage
with TA center



8

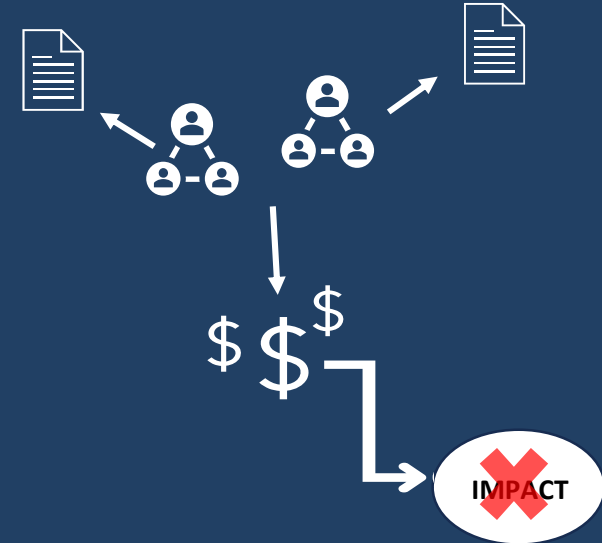
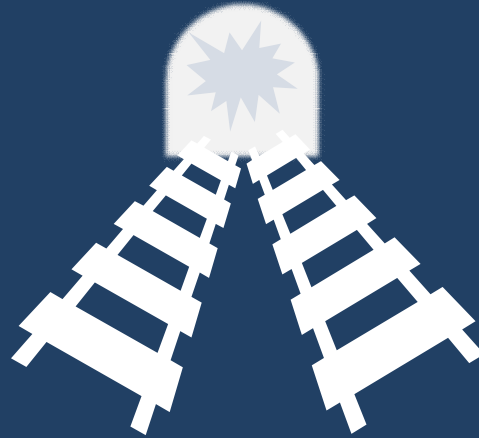
Innovators

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PA Counties Are Doing a Lot—at the Same Time!



- Stepping Up, crisis response, reentry, and other initiatives are expanding across PA.

- These efforts often operate in parallel tracks, not coordinated systems.

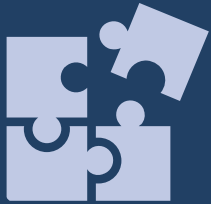
- This results in silos, duplication, resource strain, and missed opportunities for impact.

A Shift in Approach: From parallel initiatives to a unified strategy

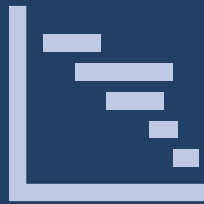
- Counties don't need more initiatives.
- They need a way to connect and braid existing work.
- Stepping Up focuses on how to align—NOT replace—local efforts.



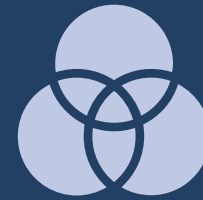
What We Mean by “Braiding” Initiatives



Aligning goals
and outcomes



Coordinating
planning and
timelines



Sharing
governance and
accountability



Leveraging
resources across
initiatives



Who Is at the Table?

Core Members

Jail administration

Probation/parole

Courts (judges, administrators)

Prosecutors and public defenders

Community mental health providers

Substance use treatment providers

Expanded Partners

Public health departments

Hospitals and medical providers

Housing agencies

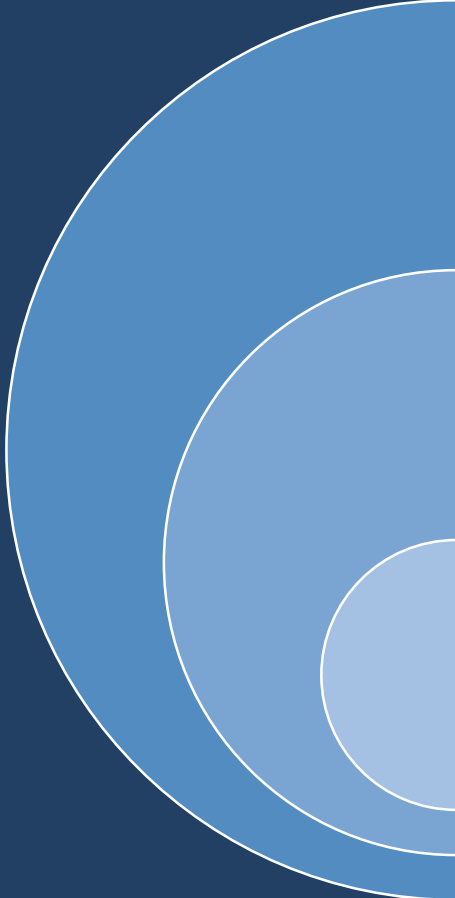
Social services

Community-based organizations

County leadership (commissioners,
administrators)

Benjamin J. Mackey, et al., "The Who, What, and How of Interagency Criminal Justice–Behavioral Health Teams: Developing and Sustaining Collaborations," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548231222635>.

What Do Interagency Teams Do?



1. Coordinate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share information about people with BH needs• Align eligibility criteria• Cross-train staff• Pool funding or staffing where possible
2. Deliver Integrated Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint case staffing or consultations• Shared policies and protocols• Modified programs to meet partner needs• Embedded BH staff in jails or courts
3. Build Data Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data-sharing agreements (HIPAA, 42 CFR Part 2)• Linked CJ–BH datasets• Identify frequent utilizers• Cross-agency data analysis training

Benjamin J. Mackey, et al., “The Who, What, and How of Interagency Criminal Justice–Behavioral Health Teams: Developing and Sustaining Collaborations,” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548231222635>.

How Teams Are Built and Sustained

Step 1: Start with Learning (Low Cost, High Impact)

- Learn what other agencies do
- Identify champions in multiple systems
- Conduct site visits or peer learning

Step 2: Integrate Systems

- Improve referrals and “hand-offs”
- Share screening and assessment information
- Develop data-sharing protocols

Step 3: Let Consensus Emerge

- Use real work (cases, pilots, data reviews) to surface differences
- Build trust through repeated interaction
- Develop shared goals *after* collaboration begins

Step 4: Sustain Through Structure and Communication

- Regular meetings (e.g., weekly, monthly, etc.)
- Flexible, respectful communication norms
- Clear roles and subcommittees
- Visible leadership support (e.g., sheriff, judges, etc.)

Benjamin J. Mackey, et al., “The Who, What, and How of Interagency Criminal Justice–Behavioral Health Teams: Developing and Sustaining Collaborations,” *Criminal Justice and Behavior* (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548231222635>.

Step 1 – Map Your Initiative Landscape

Ask key questions:

- Which initiatives are active in your county?
- What populations do they target?
- Where do goals, data, or activities overlap?



Step 2 – Use Existing Governance Structures

Strong governance structures can:

- Set shared priorities
 - Coordinate decision-making
 - Track accountability across initiatives
 - Reduce stakeholder fatigue
-
- Criminal Justice Advisory Boards (CJABs)
 - Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils (CJCCs)
 - Existing subcommittees and steering groups



Step 3 – Avoid Duplication

Strategies counties are using:

- Shared data definitions
- Joint planning calendars
- Cross-reporting between initiatives
- Coordinated funding conversations

Aligning with national frameworks:

- Stepping Up's Six Questions
- Stepping Up's Four Key Measures



What This Looks Like in Practice

Counties that succeed:

- Speak a shared language across initiatives
- Use data intentionally—not redundantly
- Make collective decisions tied to local priorities



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Q & A



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Getting Started in Your County

Coordination is a **process**, not a one-time fix

- Leadership roles matter more than structures alone
- Using existing boards reduces burden and increases buy-in

Try this in the next 90 days:

- Inventory active initiatives
- Identify one clear overlap to address
- Use an existing body (CJAB/CJCC) to convene the conversation



PA Stepping Up TA Center: How to Get Involved

- Email the PA TA Center at pasu@csg.org, to be added to the TA Center distribution list.
- You will receive notifications of TA opportunities (e.g., upcoming webinars, peer-to-peer connection hours) and other resources.
- Visit the TA Center website using the QR code here:



Thank You!

Join our distribution list to receive updates and announcements:

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

For more information, please contact:

The PA TA Center at pasu@csg.org

Lahiz Tavárez, ltavarez@csg.org

The presentation was developed by members of The Council of State Governments Justice Center staff. The statements made reflect the views of the authors and should not be considered the official position of The Council of State Governments Justice Center, the members of The Council of State Governments, or the funding agency supporting the work.

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