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# STEPPING UP INITIATIVE

*Alabama's Programs and Progress*

**Montgomery, Ala. –** Approximately two million times each year, people who have serious mental illnesses are admitted to jails across the nation. Almost three-quarters of these adults have drug and alcohol use problems. The Stepping Up Initiative is a national program with the goal to reduce the numbers of individuals in jails with mental illness. It is managed at the county level to establish effective partnerships across individuals in law enforcement, local governmental entities, elected officials, mental health and healthcare providers, courts and any others needed to meet the goal.

More than 450 counties nationwide have passed resolutions on the Stepping Up Initiative. Currently fifteen counties in Alabama have passed the Stepping Up resolution to work with local law enforcement, mental health providers and advocates.

"Today our local jails and hospitals - neither of which have it as their mission - are serving as mental health providers, which is creating a dire situation that is both dangerous and unsustainable. It is incumbent upon communities and regions to work together in partnership to reduce the number of individuals with mental illness in jails and ERs and to direct these individuals to the appropriate care. It will be a win for those individuals, a win for the community and indeed for the entire state and prison system," said Commissioner Lynn Beshear, Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH).

ADMH recently requested community mental health centers to provide a plan for case management services to establish an ongoing program in their county in order to reduce the numbers of people with mental illness and substance abuse disorders in local jails and emergency rooms. The awardees will receive a $50,000 grant each. Their work will provide a customized, focused program in their county to work directly with individuals identified in local jails and hospitals.

The awardees for fiscal year 2019 are:

- Wellstone Behavioral Health: Huntsville and Cullman locations
- Mental Health Board of Chilton and Shelby Counties, Inc.
- Cherokee-Etowah-Dekalb Mental Health Center
- Marshall-Jackson Mental Health Board. Inc.
- Mental Health Center of North Alabama Inc.