

# Stepping Up Alabama

YEAR 1 EVALUATION REPORT  
2018-2019



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# INTRODUCTION

Stepping Up is a national initiative designed to **reduce the number of people who have mental illnesses in jails**. The initiative is sponsored by the National Association of Counties, the American Psychiatric Foundation and The Council of State Governments Justice Center, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance. Since its inception in May 2015, more than 500 counties in 43 states have passed resolutions or proclamations to join the Stepping Up Initiative.

## Stepping Up Alabama

As of December 2019, 21 of the 67 counties in Alabama have passed Stepping Up resolutions or proclamations. Mental health centers in **eleven of the 21 counties** were funded by the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to implement this initiative – six counties in Year One (Oct. 2018 – Sept. 2019) and five counties in Year Two (Oct. 2019 – Sept. 2020). ADMH Commissioner Lynn Beshear spearheaded a unique implementation of Stepping Up; to serve populations in both **jails and emergency rooms**. These settings are often ill equipped to appropriately address the needs of people with serious mental illness (SMI), substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders. These individuals are better served with appropriate mental health and support services.

“ Delivering coordinated services...in jails or emergency rooms is a vital need in every county in our state. This grant opportunity can assist local mental health centers to fill in the gap and become a connection for those in need.” ADMH Commissioner Lynn Beshear

To execute this vision, ADMH contracted with **The Dannon Project** to provide Training & Technical Assistance and Evaluation Support to ADMH and grantees beginning in May 2018. In June 2018, ADMH released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for community mental health centers to apply for a ONE-TIME award of up to \$50,000. This award supported intensive case management services to screen, assess, develop a case plan for and link clients to appropriate, necessary mental health (i.e., group/individual mental health counseling, crisis intervention, and court advocacy) and social services (i.e., housing, transportation, food); recruitment for and facilitation of a local planning committee to create supportive local policies; and community outreach to mobilize community support.

This evaluation report outlines the outcomes of the **six community mental health centers** funded for Year One of Stepping Up Alabama (October 2018 – September 2019):

1. Etowah-Dekalb-Cherokee (CED) Mental Health Board, Inc. – Cherokee County, AL
2. Mental Health Board of Chilton and Shelby Counties – Shelby County, AL
3. Mountain Lakes Behavioral Healthcare – Jackson County, AL
4. Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Morgan County, AL
5. Wellstone, Inc. – Cullman County, AL
6. Wellstone, Inc. – Madison County, AL

# YEAR ONE ACTIVITIES

In the first year of the Stepping Up Initiative in Alabama, each of the six counties made great strides in the implementation of the program and created impact on the communities they serve. Although some counties experienced more difficulties, including infrastructure and financial challenges, **every county was able to serve clients with Stepping Up Case Management Services**. Furthermore, **five of the six counties were able to reach clients in both the hospital and jail settings**.

The success of this program is predicated on the community mental health centers working on both the **policy and the individual level** to build collective impact, provide backbone agency coordination, and keep the issue in the forefront of communities by building awareness, and educating the community and key stakeholders.

## Policy-Level Change: Planning Committees

At the policy level, change is only achieved through buy-in from community leaders and policy makers. In their grant proposals, each of the mental health centers submitted letters of support from key stakeholders. In addition, during the first quarter of the grant year, mental health center sites were expected to have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in place with key partners such as law enforcement, hospital administration and judges. It was also vital for each county to convene and facilitate a strong planning committee that included membership from various sectors of the community. Each site was expected to hold regular **planning committee meetings**, where much of the policy change work occurred. Through these meetings, community champions and various stakeholders were brought together to discuss issues, as well as address the questions outlined in the “Six Questions Framework” of the Stepping Up Initiative:

### Stepping Up “Six Questions Framework”



The Six Questions call for making decisions and tracking progress along the **four key measures** that factor into prevalence on the individual level:

1. Number of people who have mental illnesses who are booked into jail
2. Average length of stay in jail
3. Percentage of people who have mental illnesses who are connected to treatment
4. Recidivism rates

## Individual-Level Services

On the individual level, the case managers were expected to work with the jails and hospital systems to develop a system that ensured all jail inmates and individuals at Emergency Room (ER) departments who appeared to be mentally ill were screened for serious mental illness (SMI), substance addiction, and co-occurring disorders. It was important to conduct consistent mental health screenings to ensure that individuals with SMI were identified and linked to treatment, *even if that treatment was not through Stepping Up*. Screenings were either conducted by the Stepping Up Case Manager or by staff at the jails or hospitals. If an individual screened positive for an SMI or substance addiction, he or she was linked to a mental health professional who could provide a comprehensive mental health and substance abuse assessment to confirm the existence of SMI or co-occurring disorders. Upon confirmation, individuals were referred to mental health treatment; and, if the individual consented to treatment, he or she became a client of the Stepping Up Case Manager and were connected to additional supportive services.

## Community Outreach: Crucial Conversations, Stepping Up Month of Action, and Media Efforts

In order to achieve change at both the individual and policy level, each county mobilized community support by conducting community education through a variety of outlets. First, sites conducted **Crucial Conversations**, a community engagement strategy designed by Markstein, a marketing communications agency. Crucial Conversations were conducted using slide decks designed to educate community stakeholders. These conversations sought to establish a common understanding of and a personal connection with mental illness, encourage ownership of the community issues at hand, and engage community stakeholders in identifying solutions. Most importantly, the Crucial Conversations tool communicated the importance of the Stepping Up Initiative. Once the individualized slide decks were created for each county, Markstein conducted group training with representatives from each site on how to present the slides in a user-friendly manner. Once trained, each site was asked to conduct at least one Crucial Conversation in their community. **Five of the six sites conducted at least one Crucial Conversation presentation, and two sites conducted two Crucial Conversations presentations.**

Additionally, all sites participated in the annual **Stepping Up Month of Action** that took place in May 2019. Counties were encouraged to host an event or participate in local activities to share with their community “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.”<sup>1</sup> The TA team worked with each site to ensure they conducted a Stepping Up activity to recognize this “Month of Action,” which took place during Mental Health Awareness Month. Many counties partnered with their local mental health advocacy organization. Examples of activities conducted included Mental Health First Aid Training, Mental Health Awareness fairs, and social media postings.

Finally, each site leveraged media to educate the general public about the Stepping Up Efforts; these efforts are outlined in the Site Summaries.

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of Counties. (2020, February 25). *Stepping Up Day of Action*. <<https://www.naco.org/events/stepping-up-day-of-action>>

# STEPPING UP TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Another factor that makes Stepping Up Alabama unique in its implementation is the utilization of an external training and technical assistance (T/TA) team to provide each site with structural support, training, and guidance as they implement the initiative. Stepping Up Alabama partnered with The Dannon Project T/TA team which is comprised of four individuals:



Kimberly  
Leslie-Patton, PhD



Katie  
Mitchell Clampton, LMSW



Kimberley  
Broomfield-Massey, PhD



Kerri  
Pruitt, MBA

Each grant site received an orientation packet that outlined the “menu of services” provided by the (T/TA) team. The tasks are listed in the table below.

## Training and Technical Assistance Menu of Services

1	Provide assistance with updating and finalizing the work plan with goals, objectives, and timelines. The work plan will be used for program implementation, monitoring, tracking and reporting progress to goals.
2	Provide assistance with coordinating and providing professional development, training, certification and compliance with ADMH expectations for the Stepping Up Case Manager to deliver targeted case management services and bill Medicaid for allowable services.
3	Provide assistance with identifying training needs of required community partners and develop a training plan to address developmental needs of the Stepping Up Program to support community engagement, awareness and implementation.
4	Provide assistance with implementing MOUs and Letters of Support/Agreement.
5	Provide assistance with planning and implementing Stepping Up County-Self-Assessment which incorporates the Six Questions County Leaders Need to Ask and can be found <a href="https://tool/stepuptogether.org/">https://tool/stepuptogether.org/</a>
6	Provide assistance with review of policies and procedures and cross walk to ensure compliance with national standards and specialty case management for serving persons in jails and emergency rooms.
7	Provide reminders of National Stepping Up training and webinar schedule.
8	Provide assistance to support planning and implementing planning committee meetings.
9	Provide assistance with planning Stepping Up Day of Action May 2019 with partners.
10	Provide assistance to develop the required data collection and evaluation processes and tools, informational documents and templates and monitor and track status to goals.
11	Host monthly Webinars and conference calls to provide a Learning Collaborative to support Stepping Up activities. Invite projects to share lessons learned, impacts, and other information.
12	Provide assistance with sustainability planning with Stepping Up team and community partners.
13	Assist Stepping Up team with the development of resources to support Stepping Up services; address questions, concerns and issues to ensure the team can focus on effectively and efficiently implementing the EIC contract.
14	Other needs as they arise.

## Ensuring Fidelity to the Stepping Up Model

In its role of providing technical assistance to each of the sites, The Dannon Project T/TA team wanted to ensure fidelity to the Stepping Up model. The national Stepping Up Initiative provides a plethora of valuable resources on its website, [www.stepuptogether.org](http://www.stepuptogether.org). One of the most useful tools is the “Stepping Up Six Questions: Project Coordinator’s Handbook.” The handbook aligns with the Six Questions framework and provides useful tools that can be used to engage with county level stakeholders to answer the questions that comprise the Stepping Up framework. The team quickly recognized, for this initiative to be successful, the tools from this document would have to be integrated into the day-to-day operations of each site.

**The Dannon Project team customized each of the tools in the handbook to align with Alabama’s unique implementation and created a submission timeline for each of the tools to ensure that the sites were making progress in answering the Six Questions with key stakeholders during their planning committee meetings.**

“Other counties are receiving technical assistance in other formats...where CSG Justice Center plays the lead role as technical assistance provider. However, I am not aware of any other state using the same model as Alabama, in which an outside agency is contracted to provide technical assistance.”

-Risë Haneberg, Deputy Division Director, Behavioral Health, Council of State Governments Justice Center

## Site-Specific Training and Support

The T/TA team maintained consistent contact with each site throughout implementation. Dr. Leslie-Patton called each site administrator monthly to determine progress made, ensure the program was being implemented with fidelity, and troubleshoot barriers to success. Mrs. Clampit conducted monthly calls with each of the case managers to discuss the progress they were making with clients, identify training needs, and provide support related to working with individuals within the correctional system. Dr. Broomfield-Massey called each site quarterly to review the types of data to be collected from the jails and hospitals (baseline and ongoing data), troubleshoot problems with accessing data, identify strengths and gaps in the data, and answer all questions related to data collection forms and evaluation tools that were disseminated. Mrs. Pruitt ensured that the project deliverables were implemented within the timeline and guidelines of the ADMH contract.

In addition to the scheduled monthly and quarterly calls, Stepping Up staff members at each site were able to contact any and all members of the T/TA team with questions, concerns, and comments as they arose and the team worked diligently to address all inquiries expeditiously.

Site visits were also conducted in the first quarter of the grant year. During the site visit, the T/TA team checked in with the sites about issues with contracts and payments, progress towards contract deliverables, implementation of the Kickoff Meeting, questions about the customized tools, and identify site-specific progress and issues. These site visits allowed the Stepping Up staff at each site face-to-face time with the T/TA team. It also provided The Dannon Project with an opportunity to gain greater understanding of the local contexts in which the program was being implemented. T/TA team also attended events within the counties including Planning Committee Meetings and Stepping Up Month of Action Events.



## Provide Group Level Training and Education

To ensure the program was off to a strong start, the T/TA team convened a Stepping Up Summit on January 22, 2019. In attendance were Commissioner Lynn Beshear, Chief of Staff Kimberly Boswell, Risé Haneberg from the Council of State Governments Justice Center, and two representatives from each of the six counties. Attendees discussed progress, presented on best practices, and identified areas for improvement.

The T/TA team also convened monthly calls with all sites. These calls were called “Learning Collaborative” and were held on the second Monday of each month at 3:30pm CST. The table below describes the topics discussed at each meeting.

Month	Topics Reviewed
October 2018	Reviewed Progress on Hiring Case Managers, Outlined Required Trainings; Reviewed Stepping Up Coordinator’s Handbook; Reviewed Stepping Up Orientation packet
November 2018	Reviewed Progress on Hiring Case Managers; Reviewed Submitted Proclamations; Provided MOU templates; Planned Kickoff Meeting
December 2018	Reviewed Progress on Hiring Case Managers; Reviewed Submitted Proclamations; Provided MOU templates; Reviewed deadlines in orientation packet; Presented validated screening tools; Requested Submission of Marketing materials
January 2019	Reviewed details for Stepping Up Summit; Provided Updates on Site Visits; Reviewed Guidance on Stepping Up Events and Logo Use
February 2019	Shared CNN article entitled “ERs ‘flooded’ with mentally ill patients with no place to turn ( <a href="https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/03/health/er-mental-health-patients-epprise/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/03/health/er-mental-health-patients-epprise/index.html</a> );” Reviewed qualifications to become an Innovator County; Reviewed Six Questions Case Studies;
March 2019	Reviewed Sustainability Options; Provided reminder about evaluation tools; Requested feedback on Markstein Slides; Scheduled Evaluation Calls; Scheduled Markstein ‘Crucial Conversations’; Reviewed Innovator County criteria
April 2019	Reviewed Quarterly Evaluation Calls; Reviewed Innovator County Criteria; Discussed Mid-Year Report; Reviewed Sustainability Report; Discussed Scheduled ‘Crucial Conversations’; Planned for Stepping Up Month Activities
May 2019	Provided updates on client caseload; Reviewed Stepping Up Month Activities; Planned ‘Crucial Conversations’; Discussed ADMH Public Information Office Request; Discussed usefulness of SOAR Training; Reviewed Innovator County criteria
June 2019	Provided updates on client caseload; Reviewed Stepping Up Month Activities; Planned and Discussed ‘Crucial Conversations’; Reviewed Innovator County criteria; Provided Media Updates; Reviewed Stepping Up Strategy Lab
July 2019	Provided updates on client caseload; Discussed ‘Crucial Conversations’; Reviewed Innovator County criteria; Reminded counties about ORAS training; Presentation from the Social Security Administration; Reviewed Oregon’s Behavioral Health Justice Reinvestment Initiative
August 2019	Provided updates on client caseload; Discussed ‘Crucial Conversations’; Reviewed Innovator County criteria; Received feedback on ORAS training; Prepared for closeout; Requested partner contact information to send Partner Survey; Presentation from Montgomery Area Mental Health Authority
September 2019	Provided updates on client caseload; Discussed ‘Crucial Conversations’; Reviewed Innovator County criteria; Followed up on usage of ORAS training; Media Update; Reviewed Partner Survey; Reviewed Sustainability Efforts; Final Report Template

Each case manager was required to attend several trainings. The T/TA team tracked the completion of predetermined trainings and identified and scheduled additional trainings. Over the course of Year One, the case managers completed the following trainings:

- JBS Mental Health Authority Adult Case Management Training
- Online SOAR Training
- Ohio Risk Assessment Screening (ORAS) Training
- Markstein 'Crucial Conversations' Training

The team also monitored each site to ensure they completed all tasks delineated in the implementation plan submitted with their grant proposal. Sites were expected to:

- Submit their Stepping Up Proclamations/Resolutions
- Ensure Case Managers Completed Required Trainings
- Submit signed MOUs with each of their key stakeholders
- Submit minutes and sign in sheets of all Planning Committee meetings
- Provide training on the Stepping Up model to jails and hospitals within 60 days of grant award
- Complete the County Self-Assessment on [www.stepuptogether.org](http://www.stepuptogether.org)

The T/TA team also provided each site with resources to aid in their success, such as:

- Sample MOUs for use with partners
- Project Coordinators Handbook
- Validated SMI and Substance Addiction tools for use in the jails (i.e., Brief Mental Health Screen, Correctional Mental Health Screen, UNCOPE)
- Semi-Annual Reporting Template
- Sustainability Plan Template
- Connections to relevant trainings (i.e., ORAS, Social Security Administration, Montgomery Mental Health Authority)
- Final Report Template

## Collecting Data

The T/TA team also provided guidance on collecting data for the Four Key Measures. The team created and provided each site with Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to collect data from the jails and hospitals. Each site was instructed to input data on all individuals served. Each spreadsheet contained multiple worksheets: minimal data was required for clients who were screened, additional data for clients that screened positive for an SMI and/or substance addiction and more comprehensive data on clients who received case management services. Identifying data (e.g. name, DOB) were redacted from hospital spreadsheets unless the client screened positive for SMI and was linked to Stepping Up services. All data were sent in encrypted files and the databases were password protected. Sites submitted data twice during the grant year.

**Collecting baseline data proved to be quite a challenge because many jails simply did not have the technological infrastructure to measure and provide information that was requested. Only two sites were able to collect some 2018 data and much of the data was incomplete. As such, it was not possible to create baseline estimates for any of the counties.**

## Collecting Data: Moving Forward

In efforts to address data collection issues that arose during Year One, The Dannon Project leveraged an existing relationship and contracted with *Juiced Technologies* to build out the Stepping Up QuickBase Data system.

The T/TA team worked for six months to create a system to house data for Stepping Up Alabama grantees. The Stepping Up QuickBase Data system is a secure, web-based database application designed to be a central repository for Stepping Up data from around the state. Because this is a web-based system, there is no software to install, update or maintain. This is a user-friendly system that is accessible using most computers, tablets, and smartphones. The security features allow for The Dannon Project T/TA team to grant users varied levels of access. Each site only has access to their own data, while the T/TA team can view and manage data from all sites.

All Year 2 grantees are expected to enter their data into the QuickBase system regularly and the T/TA team will encourage them to do so even after their pilot year data has ended. The database includes Stepping Up resources, templates, client specific data as well as agency level evaluation tools.

## STEPPING UP “INNOVATOR COUNTIES”

The Stepping Up Initiative encourages counties to gather “accurate, accessible data on the prevalence of people in their jails who have serious mental illness (SMI) to help them understand the scale of the problem in their jurisdictions” (Stepping Up, 2020). Counties that achieve this standard are recognized as “**Innovator Counties.**”

This status is conferred by the organizations that support the national Stepping Up Initiative: The American Psychiatric Association Foundation, The National Association of Counties, and The Council of State Governments Justice Center. To be awarded Innovator status, the county must adhere to a **three-step approach** in their data collection outlined below.

### Stepping Up Innovator County “Three Step Approach” for Data Collection:

1. Establish a **shared definition of SMI** for your Stepping Up efforts that is used throughout local criminal justice and behavioral health systems;
2. Use a **validated mental health screening tool** on every person booked into the jail and refer people who screen positive for symptoms of SMI to a follow-up clinical assessment by a licensed mental health professional; and,
3. Record **clinical assessment results and regularly report** on this population.

Of the 518 counties in 43 states that have passed Stepping Up Resolutions or Proclamations, *only 18 counties have achieved Innovator status.* **Notably, Shelby County achieved its designation as an Innovator County at the end of its *first* year of implementation in Alabama.** Additionally, **two other counties in Alabama** came close to receiving the designation as Innovator Counties, however, did not qualify due to sustainability issues and barriers to consistent screenings in the jails.

# 2018-2019 STEPPING UP ALABAMA – SITE SUMMARIES

## Etowah-Dekalb-Cherokee (CED) Mental Health Board, Inc. – Cherokee County, AL

### Organizational Collaboration

Six major stakeholders were involved in the implementation of Stepping Up in Cherokee County:

- CED Mental Health Center
- Cherokee Co. Detention System
- Cherokee Co. Sheriff Office
- Cherokee Co. Probate Office
- Cherokee Co. Commission
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Cherokee.

The Key Stakeholder was Cherokee County Commissioner, Marcie Foster, who held the first Stepping Up “Day of Action” in Cherokee County, at which CED staff presented on the progress of the program.

### Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Case Manager Sam Griggs was hired at the Cherokee County site. Cherokee had strong buy-in from the local jails and the court system. Mr. Griggs was given space to work at the jail and was invited to ride along with the officers in cases of suspected mental illness. As a result of this close relationship with the jail, Mr. Griggs was able to screen all people booked at the jail.

Mr. Griggs screened **603 inmates for serious mental illness (SMI) and substance addiction (SA); 222 (37%) screened positive** for SMI and/or SA, and 154 (69%) received a referral to CED for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **29 inmates (13%) consented** and received a mental health assessment, and **21 inmates (9%) consented** and received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI or SA, **88 inmates (40%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, and **21 inmates (9%) were confirmed as having substance addiction**, based on results of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate’s prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **22 inmates (10%) followed up and received Stepping Up case management services through CED**. It is important to note that of the 222 inmates that screened positive for SMI, **154 inmates (69%) were referred to mental health treatment** at CED. Of those referred to mental health treatment, **22 inmates (14%) consented to and received mental health treatment**. *This is important because providing consistent mental health screenings ensures that individuals with SMI and SA are identified and linked to treatment, even if that treatment is not through Stepping Up.*

It is important to note that **Cherokee County borders three counties in Georgia and is in close proximity to Tennessee**. Many of the inmates screened at the jail lived in Georgia or Tennessee, and therefore, **could not receive services in Cherokee County**. *CED had no way of knowing if those referred to other counties received services, and therefore the actual reach of inmates that ultimately received services may be higher than those reported.* Of the **222 inmates** that screened positive for SMI, **119 inmates (54%) were re-arrested**.

## Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

While Cherokee Co. enjoyed a close relationship with the jail, the team acknowledged that **getting the hospital involved was the program's greatest challenge**. They received **four referrals** from the hospital and Mr. Griggs screened all **four patients for SMI and SA**. **All (100%) of the patients screened positive** for SMI and/or SA and received a referral to CED for further treatment. **All patients (100%) consented** and received a mental health assessment, and **one patient (25%)** consented and received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **all (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, and **one patient (25%) was confirmed as having substance addiction**, based on results of the assessments conducted or information from the patient's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI or co-occurring disorders, **one patient (25%)** followed up and **received Stepping Up case management services through CED**. It is important to note that of the four patients screened positive for SMI, **all (100%) were referred to mental health treatment and consented to and received mental health treatment** at CED. However, of those who screened positive for SMI, only one patient received case management services.

## Building Community Awareness

Cherokee County educated several sectors of the community on the Stepping Up program by conducting two **Crucial Conversations**. Specifically, they conducted one Crucial Conversation with several County Commissioners in March 2019 and another for both County Commissioners and community leaders in April 2019.

CED also received media coverage from such outlets as local station ABC 3340 TV. The station conducted an interview with the Sheriff and the Stepping Up Case Manager.

## Other Significant Achievements

- The local courts made a procedure change to allow "checking in with the mental health center" a condition of release for individuals with SMI or co-occurring conditions.
- By building a great rapport with the Sherriff's office and court system, many inmates have gotten the help they needed, and it is projected that the recidivism rate for those with mental illness will decrease substantially.
- As of September 2019, the local hospital plans to allocate two beds for CED to hold inmates diagnosed with mental illness in the hospital, as opposed to the jail.

## Sustainability

Cherokee County's Stepping Up program was able to secure funding from October to December 2019. The program also met the criteria for becoming an Innovator County; however, because CED did not have funding to sustain the program after December 2019 it was unable to be recognized. Once the Stepping Up program is re-funded, the T/TA team will work with the site to re-apply for Innovator Status.

## Mental Health Board of Chilton and Shelby Counties – Shelby County, AL

### Organizational Collaboration

Shelby County experienced a high level of commitment from their county leadership, receiving support from over 40 organizations and individuals. These included Shelby County Commission, judges, DA's Office, Sheriff's Office, Probate Court, Shelby County Community Corrections, Shelby Baptist Medical Center, the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and COMPACT 2020. Notably, Shelby County had two strong champions that were considered influential leaders in the community:

- Alex Dudchock, County Manager and Chilton Shelby Board President
- Bill Bostick, Shelby County Presiding Judge.

### Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Case manager Heather Riojas was hired for the Shelby County site and proved to be integral in maintaining the strong relationship with the local jail.

Shelby Co. screened **4,235 inmates for SMI and SA; 1,096 (26%) of those screened positive** for SMI and/or SA and all (100%) received a referral to Chilton/Shelby County Mental Health for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **447 inmates (41%)** consented and received a mental health assessment, and **99 inmates (9%)** consented and received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **267 inmates (24%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, and **99 inmates (9%) were confirmed as having substance addiction**, based on results of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate's prior records.

Shelby County Stepping Up worked with the jail to implement **mandatory screenings for SMI and SA as a part of the booking process**. As a result of this policy-level change in the jails, officers did screenings for all arrests and **Shelby County was able to conduct the highest number of screenings of all funded sites**. During the grant year, the jail purchased a new electronic database to systematically track data on inmates served.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **46 inmates (4%)** followed up and **received Stepping Up case management services**. Importantly, of the 1,096 inmates that screened positive for SMI, **100% were referred to mental health treatment**. Of those referred to mental health treatment, **447 inmates (41%) consented to and received mental health treatment**.

Of the **1,096 inmates** who screened positive for SMI or SA, **14 inmates (1%) were re-arrested**, four of whom were in active case management.

### Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Shelby County Stepping Up cited their relationship with the hospital as an area of growth. The hospital agreed to provide faxed referrals to the outpatient offices upon discharge from the psychiatric unit; however, no Stepping Up referrals were sent. Regular hospital sub-committee meetings of the planning committee were held, and a flyer was developed to be distributed by hospital staff to

individuals with SMI or co-occurring issues. The team reported hospital corporate and legal barriers as one of the program's greatest challenges.

## **Building Community Awareness**

Shelby County educated several sectors of the community on the Stepping Up program by conducting two **Crucial Conversations**. Specifically, they conducted one Crucial Conversation with the local NAMI chapter at the Shelby Baptist Medical Center in April 2019 and another with law enforcement and first responders at Shelby County Sheriff's Training Center in May 2019. The goal of educating sheriffs and first responders on the Stepping Up program was to provide them with additional knowledge and resources pertaining to mental health awareness to better equip them as they receive emergency calls. It is hoped that with this information, sheriffs and first responders could screen individuals and refer them to the Stepping Up program to receive appropriate mental health support, instead of taking them to the hospital or jail. These Crucial Conversations further engaged the community in the work of Stepping Up and the team reported an increased collaboration between courts, jail, community agencies and community providers.

Media were invited to the NAMI Shelby Fun Fair in May 2019 where the Shelby County Probate Judge highlighted the Stepping Up Initiative. Media also attended the Shelby County Chambers of Commerce Luncheon in September 2019. As a result, the Stepping Up program was featured in two articles, one printed in the *Shelby County Reporter* and the other in *280 Living* (a local news source).

In January 2019, Shelby County was invited to present on the **National Stepping Up Initiative Webinar** because of their effective use of the Stepping Up Tools. Specifically, they were asked to speak to their use of the "Stepping Up Six Questions: Project Coordinator's Handbook," which The Dannon Project T/TA team had customized to guide the consistent implementation of the program.

## **Other Significant Achievements**

- Shelby County was recognized as a **Stepping Up Innovator County**. Shelby County became one of only 18 counties to be recognized as an Innovator County, of the over 500 counties that have passed Stepping Up Resolutions or Proclamations.
- Kathy Crouthers, retired Clinical Director of the Chilton Shelby Mental Health Center, provided a great deal of leadership for this site on a day-to-day basis, ensuring the success of this program.
- Shelby County developed an informational flyer identifying mental health and substance abuse treatment services for hospital distribution. A second resource flyer was created for first responders. A third flyer for law enforcement is in development.

## **Sustainability**

Shelby County was able to secure funding to continue the case manager position and the program.

## Mountain Lakes Behavioral Healthcare – Jackson County, AL

### Organizational Collaboration

At the start of the Jackson County Stepping Up implementation, all parties, including law enforcement, courts, and hospitals, were helpful with the initiative. However, the Stepping Up Case Manager encountered resistance from the jail when she began to screen inmates. After conducting screenings for four weeks, she was informed she could no longer conduct screenings because it was creating a strain on jail staff to facilitate the process of escorting inmates to receive the screenings. Although they could no longer screen in the jails, the judges remained open to working with Stepping Up as inmates were released from the jail. In addition, the hospital continued to be a strong ally.

### Stepping Up Services in the Jails

The Case Manager, Brittney Cheek, began the year with Mountain Lakes; however, she was unable to finish the project year due to health challenges. Because she departed late in the grant year, a replacement was not hired. This significantly impacted the number of individuals reached.

Brittany Cheek was only able to work in the jail for four weeks, due to limited resources at the jail. When she could no longer work in the jail, she began to work with the jail therapist to connect inmates with appropriate mental health treatment. Jackson County screened **42 inmates for SMI and SA; 27 (64%) inmates screened positive** for SMI and/or SA and all received a referral for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **all 42 inmates (100%)** consented and received a mental health assessment, and **no inmates** received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **27 inmates (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, based on the result of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI or SA, **one inmate (4%)** followed up and **received Stepping Up case management services**. Of the **27 inmates** referred to mental health treatment, **one inmate (4%) consented to and received mental health treatment**.

Jackson County was not able to collect re-arrest data.

### Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Jackson County had a positive relationship with the hospital. The ER nurse would call Mountain Lakes for a psychiatric consult and make referrals when SMI seemed to be the presenting problem. Mountain Lakes was able to screen **121 patients for SMI and SA; 120 (99%) of those screened positive** for SMI and/or SA, and all 120 received a referral to Mountain Lakes for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **120 (100%)** consented and received a mental health assessment, and **no patients** received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **120 patients (99%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, based on the result of the assessments conducted or information from the patient's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI in the hospital, **one patient (1%)** followed up and received case management services. It is important to note that of the 120 patients who screened positive for SMI, **120 (100%) were referred to mental health treatment and 28 patients (23%) consented to and received mental health treatment**.



## **Building Community Awareness**

Jackson County educated judges in the community on the Stepping Up program by conducting a **Crucial Conversation** event. Specifically, they conducted one Crucial Conversation with four Jackson County judges in June 2019.

## **Other Significant Achievements**

- The case manager helped to identify the client's needs and worked with clients to overcome obstacles that may have prevented them from receiving proper intervention sooner.

## **Sustainability**

There are currently no sustainability plans for Jackson County as they were unable to secure funding to continue the program.

## Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Morgan County, AL

### Organizational Collaboration

Engaging high-level stakeholders and securing robust media exposure were instrumental in Morgan County's successful implementation of Stepping Up. At the end of the grant year, over 25 organizations had assisted with the work of Stepping Up. Some of the key stakeholders included:

- Morgan County Probate Court
- Decatur-Morgan Hospital
- Morgan County Sheriff's Office
- Morgan County Jail Medical Unit
- Morgan County Commission
- North Alabama Regional Council of Governments
- Morgan County Circuit Court
- Morgan County District Court
- Decatur Municipal Court
- Morgan County Attorneys
- Another Chance SUD Detox
- Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama

### Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Case Manager Kathy Goodwin was hired at the Morgan County site. She received 93 referrals from the jail and screened **66 inmates for SMI and SA. 59 (89%) of those screened positive** for SMI and/or SA and 46 inmates received a referral for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **17 inmates (29%) consented and received a mental health assessment**, and **five inmates (8.5%) consented and received a substance addiction assessment**. Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **17 inmates (29%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, and **5 inmates (8.5%) were confirmed as having a SA**, based on results of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **59 inmates (100%) followed up and received Stepping Up case management services**. Of the 59 inmates that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **46 inmates (78%) were referred to mental health treatment and 16 inmates (27%) consented to and received mental health treatment**.

Of the **59 inmates** who received Stepping Up case management services, **7 inmates (12%) were re-arrested**.

Although they enjoy a strong relationship now, initially Ms. Goodwin encountered challenges due to a misperception by the contracted jail medical staff. Initially, there was concern that the mental health center would attempt to replace or reduce the current medical staff at the jail. Once Ms. Goodwin educated the nurse and other staff at the jail about Stepping Up, they understood the mental health center was there to work in collaboration with them to serve inmates and link them to needed mental health services.

### Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Morgan County received 35 referrals from the hospital and screened **15 patients for SMI and SA. All fifteen patients (100%) screened positive for SMI and/or SA** and all received a referral to North Central

for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **fifteen patients (100%)** consented and received a mental health assessment, and **no patients** received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **fifteen patients (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, based on either result of the assessments conducted or information from the patient's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA in the hospital, **thirteen patients (87%) followed up and received Stepping Up case management services**. In addition, **14 patients were referred to mental health treatment**. Of the 14 patients referred to mental health treatment, **13 patients (93%) consented to and received mental health treatment**.

In Morgan County, there were **two-thirds fewer hospital visits for individuals referred to the Stepping Up program**. More specifically, the 35 individuals referred had a total of 94 hospitalizations in 2018, but in 2019, they had a total of 34 hospitalizations.

### **Building Community Awareness**

Ms. Goodwin and the Morgan County team effectively leveraged press releases and social media to build awareness about the Stepping Up Initiative. As a result, their site received extensive coverage in local publications, including newspapers articles published in the *Decatur Daily*, *The News Courier*, and *Hartselle Enquirer*, as well as television broadcasts with *WAFF 48*, *WAYY 31 ABC*, and *WHNT 19*.

They also held one **Crucial Conversation** where they presented to 14 community partners including NARCOG, Community Action Partnership of North Alabama, Morgan County DHR, and Another Chance, about the importance of Stepping Up.

As a result of the relationships built, the county was able to successfully raise approximately \$17,000 in funds to support the Stepping Up program.

### **Other Significant Achievements**

- At the inmate's request, Morgan County Jail Medical Unit now provides a 30-day supply of psychotropic medication when inmates are released.
- Morgan County also cited increased open communication, improved working relationship with court systems, and enhanced knowledge of community resources, as their greatest accomplishments through the program.

### **Sustainability**

The Stepping Up program in Morgan County has been sustained. Ms. Goodwin remains in the position of Coordinator/Case Manager. The cornerstone of their sustainability plan is continued collaboration with new and existing partners. They also plan to seek in-kind contributions, identify and develop donors, and maximize fee-for-service billing.

The Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama received funding in Year Two (2019-2020) by the Alabama Department of Mental Health to implement the Stepping Up Initiative in neighboring Limestone County, where Ms. Goodwin serves as the Stepping Up Coordinator.

## Wellstone, Inc. – Cullman County, AL

### Organizational Collaboration

The Cullman site experienced a great deal of enthusiasm and energy for the Stepping Up goals at the beginning of the grant period.

- County Commissioner, Kerry Watson, initially facilitated the program until resigning mid-year.
- Other key players included the Sheriff, Jail Warden, County Attorney, local judges, Juvenile Probation office, and the local psychiatric hospital.
- Vice President for Patient Care at Cullman Regional Medical Center, Charna Brown, played an integral role in obtaining data and facilitating the program in the hospital.

As the year progressed, the site dealt with unforeseen challenges. First, they dealt with barriers to accessing the jail, but were able to receive referrals from the hospitals. Being unable to enter the jails significantly impacted the number of individuals they could reach. The team cited misperceptions about data sharing and HIPAA as one of the program's greatest challenges. When barriers arose with data sharing at the jail, county commission support dropped off. However, their relationship with the hospital remained strong. It is also important to note, that although it took several months, Wellstone eventually began to receive referrals from the jail.

### Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Cullman County hired Grace Compton as the Case Manager; however, she was unable to finish the project year. Because she departed late in the grant year, a replacement was not hired. This significantly impacted the number of individuals reached.

Of the **98 inmates** referred by the jail, **four inmates consented to be screened for SMI and SA and all four (100%) screened positive** for SMI and/or SA and received a referral for further treatment. Cullman noted that the others referred to the Stepping Up program refused to be screened.

Of those that screened positive for SMI, all **four inmates (100%) consented and received a mental health assessment and a substance addiction assessment**. Of those that screened positive for SMI or SA, **all inmates (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, and **zero inmates** were confirmed as having a substance addiction, based on either result of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **three inmates (75%) followed up and received Stepping Up case management services**. Of the inmates that screened positive for SMI, **all four inmates (100%) were referred to mental health treatment**, and all **four inmates (100%) consented to and received mental health treatment** through Wellstone Cullman.

### Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Cullman County screened **385 ER patients for SMI and SA; 145 (38%) of those screened positive for SMI and/or SA, and all received a referral to Wellstone – Cullman for further treatment**. Of those that were screened for SMI, **145 patients (38%)** consented and received a mental health assessment, and **292 patients** consented to receive a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive

for SMI or SA, **145 patients (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, and **199 patients were confirmed as having a SA**, based on either result of the assessments conducted or information from the patient’s prior records.

Because Cullman lost its case manager, this site was unable to accurately report the number of clients that received case management services. However, the site was able to report that of the total individuals screened for SMI and SA, **281 individuals were referred to mental health treatment**. This number is higher than the 145 individuals who were confirmed as having SMI because some of these 281 individuals may have been confirmed as having a SA with no SMI or may have had mental illness that required treatment but were not considered SMI. Because Stepping Up is for individuals who have an SMI diagnosis or a co-occurring disorder, individuals who were confirmed as having only substance addiction or mental illness were linked to appropriate services.

## **Building Community Awareness**

Cullman County successfully achieved media exposure which included several articles about the Stepping Up grant published in the *Cullman Tribune* and *Cullman Times*. In addition, Wellstone, Inc. featured the program on their webpage.

Cullman County educated several sectors of the community on the Stepping Up program by conducting a **Crucial Conversations** event. Specifically, they conducted one Crucial Conversation with representatives of the circuit and district courts, juvenile probation, the probate judges’ offices, the Department of Human Resources and the Link of Cullman County in May 2019.

## **Other Significant Achievements**

- Cullman County judges now have a documented referral and communication system. Prior to Stepping Up, the referrals were verbal and unofficial.
- The site reported that the Cullman County community is becoming increasingly aware of its collective mental health needs and is making improvements a priority.
- The local gas board has started a “round-up program,” which collects funds to provide a small amount of funding to mental health organizations.
- The schools are expanding “school-based” mental health and Wellstone-Cullman secured a contract with Wallace State Community College to provide services to their students.
- Cullman Regional Medical Center is working on plans to create a special behavioral health section of the ER which would better handle the increase in behavioral health cases and begin medication treatment while people are waiting on a psychiatric placement.
- A policy improvement includes a new process with the local court system that has the potential to encourage people to seek treatment to avoid jail.

## **Sustainability**

Because Cullman county did not have consistent buy-in from the community stakeholders, they could not secure funding to sustain the program.

## Wellstone, Inc. – Madison County, AL

### Organizational Collaboration

Five major stakeholders comprised the organizations that facilitated the work of Madison County Stepping Up, including the Huntsville City Police, Huntsville Hospital, Madison County Sheriff's Office, Madison City Police, and Alternative Sentencing. All parties played an equal role in ensuring the program's success.

### Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Madison Co. hired Angela Henderson as case manager after the initial case manager was transferred within the agency. Madison County screened **82 inmates for SMI and SA; 35 (43%) of those screened positive** for SMI and/or SA and all received a referral for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **35 inmates (100%) consented and received a mental health assessment**, and **no inmates** received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **35 inmates (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, based on results of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **35 inmates (100%) followed up and received Stepping Up case management services**. Of the 35 inmates that were confirmed as having SMI, **all inmates (100%) were referred to mental health treatment and all consented to and received mental health treatment** through Wellstone – Madison.

Of the **35 inmates** screened positive for SMI, **10 inmates (29%) were re-arrested**.

### Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Madison County was able to screen **five patients** referred from the hospital **for SMI and SA; all of those screened positive** for SMI and/or SA and received a referral for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **five patients (100%) consented and received a mental health assessment**, and **no patients** received a substance addiction assessment. **All five patients (100%) were confirmed as having SMI** based on either result of the assessments conducted or information from the patient's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA in the hospital, **five patients (100%) followed up and received Stepping Up case management services**. Of the **five patients** that were confirmed as having SMI, **all (100%) were referred to mental health treatment and all consented to and received mental health treatment**.

**Two individuals from the ER (40%) returned** to the ER during the reporting period.

## **Building Community Awareness**

Madison County reported that the county had historically been conducting Crucial Conversations regarding the issue of inmates with mental illness being incarcerated. In addition, Wellstone, Inc. featured the program on their webpage.

## **Other Significant Achievements**

- Assisting individuals with maintaining medications and treatment for mental illness.

## **Sustainability**

While there are no sustainability plans at this time, all stakeholders have remained committed throughout the process and will continue to support efforts relating to minimizing the jail population.

**Table Summary of Year One Stepping Up Site Outcomes: Jails**

<b>Stepping Up Alabama Sites</b>	<b>Etowah Dekalb Cherokee (CED)</b>	<b>Chilton &amp; Shelby</b>	<b>Mountain Lakes</b>	<b>North Central</b>	<b>Wellstone Cullman</b>	<b>Wellstone Madison</b>	<b>Total</b>
# of individuals referred by the jail	603	1,096	42	93	98	35	<b>1,925</b>
# of inmates screened for SMI & SA	603	4,235	42	66	4	82	<b>5,032</b>
# of inmates that screened positive for SMI and/or SA	222	1,096	27	59	4	35	<b>1,443</b>
# of inmates that received a Mental Illness Assessment	29	447	27	17	4	35	<b>559</b>
# of inmates confirmed as having SMI	88	267	27	17	4	35	<b>438</b>
# of inmates that received a Substance Addiction Assessment	21	99	0	5	4	0	<b>129</b>
# of inmates confirmed as having Substance Addiction	21	99	0	5	0	0	<b>125</b>
# of inmates referred to Stepping Up Services	222	58	3	59	4	35	<b>381</b>
# of inmates that received Stepping Up case management services	22	46	1	59	3	35	<b>166</b>
# of case managed clients that were employed	6	23	-	-	-	-	<b>29</b>
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	18	24	-	-	-	-	<b>42</b>
# of inmates referred to mental health treatment	154	1,096	27	46	4	35	<b>1,362</b>
# of inmates that received mental health treatment	22	447	1	16	4	35	<b>525</b>
# of inmates that were re-arrested	119	14	-	7	-	10	<b>150</b>
# of inmates that go to ER after original arrest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Average length of time in jail after re-arrest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-



**Table Summary of Year One Stepping Up Site Outcomes: Hospitals**

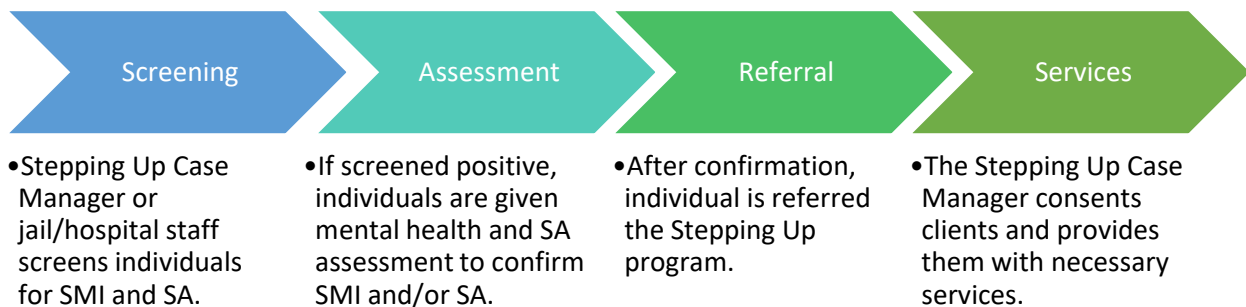
<b>Stepping Up Alabama Sites</b>	<b>Etowah Dekalb Cherokee (CED)</b>	<b>Chilton &amp; Shelby</b>	<b>Mountain Lakes</b>	<b>North Central</b>	<b>Wellstone Cullman</b>	<b>Wellstone Madison</b>	<b>Total</b>
# of individuals referred by the hospital	4	-	121	35	385	5	<b>550</b>
# of individuals in the ER screened for SMI & SA	4	-	121	15	385	5	<b>530</b>
# of individuals in the ER screened positive for SMI and/or SA	4	-	120	15	145	5	<b>289</b>
# of individuals in the ER that received a Mental Illness Assessment	4	-	120	15	145	5	<b>289</b>
# of individuals from the ER confirmed as having SMI	4	-	120	15	145	5	<b>289</b>
# of individuals from the ER that received a Substance Addiction Assessment	1	-	0	0	292	0	<b>293</b>
# of individuals from the ER confirmed as having Substance Addiction	1	-	0	0	199	0	<b>200</b>
# of individuals from the ER referred to Stepping Up Services	4	-	1	15	**	5	<b>25</b>
# of individuals from the ER that receive case management services	1	-	1	13	**	5	<b>20</b>
# of case managed clients that were employed	-	-	-	2	**	-	<b>2</b>
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	1	-	-	7	**	-	<b>8</b>
# of individuals from the ER referred to mental health treatment	4	-	120	14	281	5	<b>424</b>
# of individuals from the ER that receive mental health treatment	4	-	28	13	**	5	<b>50</b>
# of individuals from ER that returned to ER	-	-	-	-	**	2	<b>2</b>
# of individuals from ER that were arrested	-	-	-	-	**	-	<b>-</b>

\*\*Because Cullman lost its case manager, this site was unable to accurately report the number of clients that received case management services.

## SUMMARY OF YEAR ONE OUTCOMES

Data collection proved to be a challenge since many jails simply did not have the technological infrastructure to measure and provide information that was requested. Although jails and mental health centers worked diligently to attempt to collect this data, the range in technological infrastructure and database capacity within jails varied widely from county to county and impacted the availability and utilization of reliable databases. Mental health centers and hospitals, however, had more robust data collection systems.

Case managers worked to implement a system with the jails and the hospitals that ensured all inmates in the jail and mentally ill individuals that presented at the hospitals were screened for SMI and SA and could be linked to appropriate services based on their needs.



It is important to note, that in order to receive treatment with the Stepping Up program, individuals must present with SMI or a co-occurring disorder. Individuals who were confirmed as having *only* substance addiction were identified and linked to treatment, however that treatment was *not* through Stepping Up. Also, if an individual did not screen positive for SMI, but did have some level of mental illness, the case manager referred them to mental health treatment.

Below is a summary of the data collected by **all six** Stepping Up Alabama Counties in Year One. Please note that the sites did not begin seeing clients until January 2019. Therefore, the summary data presented represents the nine months case managers worked with clients.

## Screenings and Assessments Conducted in the Jail Systems by All Counties (January 2019 – September 2019)

5,032 inmates were screened for SMI and SA

SMI Assessments	SA Assessments	Services	Referrals	Rearrests*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•1,443 inmates (29%) screened positive for SMI and/or SA</li> <li>•559 (39%) received mental health assessments</li> <li>•438 (30%) were confirmed for SMI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•129 inmates received an SA assessment</li> <li>•125 (97%) inmates were confirmed for SA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•381 inmates were referred to Stepping Up</li> <li>•166 (44%) inmates received case management services</li> <li>•Upon release:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•29 former inmates were employed</li> <li>•42 former inmates had stable housing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•1,362 inmates were referred to mental health treatment</li> <li>•525 (39%) consented to and received mental health treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 (8.6%) of the 46 case managed former inmates in <b>Shelby County</b> were re-arrested</li> <li>• 10 (29%) of the 35 case managed former inmates in <b>Madison County</b> were re-arrested</li> <li>• 7 (12%) of the 59 inmates case managed former inmates in <b>Morgan County</b> were re-arrested</li> </ul>

## Screenings and Assessments Conducted in the Hospital Systems by All Counties (January 2019 – September 2019)

550 individuals were referred to Stepping Up by the hospitals to receive SMI and SA screenings

530 individuals were screened for SMI and SA

SMI Assessments	SA Assessments	Services	Referrals	Returns to ER*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•289 (55%) patients screened positive for SMI and/or SA</li> <li>•289 (100%) received a mental health assessment</li> <li>•289 (100%) were confirmed for SMI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•293 patients received an SA Assessment</li> <li>•200 (71%) were confirmed for SA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•25 patients were referred to Stepping Up</li> <li>•20 (80%) patients received case management services</li> <li>•Upon Release:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•2 patients were employed</li> <li>•8 patients had stable housing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•424 patients were referred to mental health treatment</li> <li>•50 (12%) received mental health treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•2 (40%) of the 5 case managed clients in <b>Madison County</b> returned to the ER during the reporting period</li> </ul>

\*We were unable to collect this data consistently across all counties.

## Total Individuals Served through Year One Stepping Up Alabama – Jails and Hospitals (January 2019 – September 2019)

5,562 individuals were screened for SMI and SA

SMI Assessments	SA Assessments	Services	Referrals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1,732</b> (31%) screened positive for SMI and/or SA</li><li>• <b>848</b> (49%) recieved a mental health assessment</li><li>• <b>727</b> (42%) were confirmed for SMI</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>422</b> recieved an SA Assessment</li><li>• <b>325</b> (77%) were confirmed for SA</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>406</b> were referred to Stepping Up</li><li>• <b>186</b> (46%) clients recieved case management services<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>31</b> were employed</li><li>• <b>50</b> had stable housing</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1,786</b> were referred to mental health treatment</li><li>• <b>575</b> (32%) received mental health treatment</li></ul>

# RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNED

## Education of Jail Systems, Sheriffs and Wardens, and Medical Contractors

Wellstone Cullman, Morgan County, and Jackson County encountered difficulty in either entering or remaining in the jail. Wellstone Cullman encountered misperceptions about data sharing and HIPAA. Morgan County encountered some resistance due to misperceptions about scope of work. Finally, Jackson County cited their greatest challenges as losing the ability to do screenings at the jail due to limited staff in the jail.

These and other experiences illustrate the need for training on the value and purpose of the Stepping Up program not just by the mental health centers, but by policymakers at the state and county level. Specifically, there is a need to provide training to sheriffs and wardens about the Stepping Up program. It is also important to provide training to medical staff, particularly in jails that contract out medical services. This will help build trust in the Stepping Up program and garner buy-in from the jails because they will understand the benefits of the program.

## Enhancing Data Systems in the Jail Systems

Data collection within the jails proved to be a challenge in Year One due to the wide variation in technological infrastructure and database capacity within the county jails. Even as the staff in the jails and mental health centers worked diligently to try to collect data, **gathering data from reliable databases on inmates proved to be very difficult to collect in all counties**. Only four sites were able to provide data on recidivism (Cherokee, Shelby, Morgan and Madison Counties), and no sites were able to provide data on average length of stay in jail. These limitations greatly impacted our ability to highlight the true impact of the program.

Jails need the capability to effectively and efficiently collect data on the four key measures of the Stepping Up Six Questions Framework: (1) unduplicated number of individuals booked into jails, (2) their average length of stay in jail, (3) the percentage that have mental illness, and (4) recidivism rates.

For Stepping Up Alabama to be a success, the jails must have the infrastructure necessary to ensure they can collect both baseline and real time data in order to track improvements made over time. Time must be taken to investigate ways in which the state can provide the jails with cost-effective, centralized data systems that will allow them to collect this data in a timely manner. Investments made in the collection and analysis of data across jails hold potential additional benefits to the jails as well, including better and more accurate reporting individuals coming in and out of jails, improved ability to educate the community on what crimes are taking place, and improved statistics to be able to apply for grants.

## Lessons Learned – Site Responses

When asked what lessons were learned, each of the counties responded with their unique perspectives. Broad themes included:

- Awareness of the severity of the local SMI issues
- Greater understanding of the local criminal justice system
- Importance of building key partnerships/collaborations
- Awareness of the need for increased community knowledge about SMI
- Awareness of the need for structural changes (i.e. crisis beds, immediate treatment)
- Difficulty collecting baseline data
- Importance of preliminary education, awareness and buy-in from sheriffs and wardens to ensure jails are on board to participate in the program via data sharing, space for screenings and staffing to support case managers presence in the jail
- Importance of media engagement to tell the Stepping Up story and increase community awareness on the issues
- Awareness of the time necessary to build relationships between stakeholders so they can identify gaps in the policies and practices and identify systems and policies that will decrease the number of persons in jail or the ER with serious mental illness

Specifically, counties described the following lessons learned:

### Cherokee

- “The number of mentally ill in the jail at any given time is astronomical.”

### Shelby

- “We gained knowledge in a variety of areas but the greatest of the lessons learned was the identification of key people throughout our community who are not only willing but eager to collaboratively work to help individuals with mental health and substance use issues.”

### Morgan:

- “Better understanding of the criminal justice system in our area”  
“Working relationship with key community partners”  
“Improved awareness of community resources and gaps in services/programs”

### Cullman:

- “After the crisis has passed, the motivation of the person who needs treatment reduces dramatically. When case managers follow up after an evaluation at the ER, the client is very difficult to contact and when contacted often refuses services. We need immediate crisis response resources such as crisis centers that can start treatment 24/7, detox beds that are state funded and available, and residential rehab that can be accessed without a 6 week wait.”

### Madison:

- “The program could have benefited from the baseline data upon program implementation from the hospital and the jail.”

# STEPPING UP ALABAMA: YEAR ONE SUCCESS STORIES

Each county shared success stories with the T/TA team, that highlight the impact that the Stepping Up program made at an *individual level*. We have shared some of these below:

## Success Story #1 – Shelby County

John Doe spent 28 years of his adult life incarcerated. In 1995, he was convicted of robbery and served a 22-year sentence. During his incarceration his mother, father, and sister passed away, leaving him with two brothers he hardly spoke to because they were exhausted from giving him multiple chances at reconciliation. While incarcerated in state prison, John witnessed another inmate die by suicide. Not long after this event, he began having trouble sleeping, nightmares, trouble concentrating, and was constantly feeling on edge. He was released in 2017. Almost immediately after his release, he was arrested for a DUI. After serving several months in the county jail for that offense, John was arrested for another DUI in October of 2018. He admitted to being homeless prior to his incarcerations and was drinking a 6 to 12 beers a day to avoid the realities of life. He complained of constant worries about his future. He began treatment with mental health professionals at the county jail. In February of 2019, John agreed to also begin working with the Stepping Up case manager to develop realistic and tangible goals in anticipation of his release. He was released in April 2019 and was allowed to live temporarily in an unused home owned by his brother instead of returning to a homeless shelter in Birmingham. This was directly due to his improvement while in jail. In the four months since his release, John has moved out of his brother's temporary home and into his very first home and has obtained employment. He has received assistance through benefits such as food stamps, food donations, and clothing donations. Through Chilton Shelby Mental Health Center's employment program, he was excited to have the opportunity to have a "makeover," which assisted him with job interviews. He has remained sober and has had no additional law enforcement contact. He remains optimistic about his future and the strides he has made toward his "second chance at life." He knows he has a "long road ahead" but has expressed appreciation for his treatment team and the support he has received in the community.

## Success Story #2 – Shelby County

In March of 2019, Jane Doe became involved with Stepping Up after routine post incarceration follow up contact. She had a history of multiple charges and incarcerations over many years. She had been a client with Chilton Shelby Mental Health Center on and off for the past 10 years but admitted to never complying with treatment due to a long history of opioid and methamphetamine addiction. At the time, Jane had been living at work release as a last effort made by her lawyer to keep her out of the prison system. She was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder and also received a diagnosis of Hepatitis C as a result of her drug use several years prior. She never stayed clean long enough to become

eligible for treatment at the methadone clinic. Jane had also damaged both of her eyes after acid exploded in her face as she was trying to manufacture her own meth. Over the next six months, Jane worked with the Stepping Up Case Manager to receive mental health services on a consistent basis as well as substance abuse treatment. With the help of her treatment support, she was able to complete all three phases of outpatient substance abuse treatment with Chilton Shelby Mental Health Center. As a result of linkage to services, she was able to receive surgery on her eyes and it was discovered that her Hepatitis C was going to respond well to treatment. Jane cried when she received this news. She reports she is able to spend more time with her family. Jane became an active member of her church and began volunteering with the local humane society. She credits the Stepping Up program with keeping her committed to treatment and sobriety long enough for her to finally see there is more to life and more to her than her diagnosis and drug addiction.

### **Success Story #3 – Morgan County**

Morgan County linked a 28-year-old male client with an extensive history of incarcerations to adult education resources so he could learn to read. He was also connected with mental health and SA treatment resources. He has not been re-arrested since receiving Stepping Up services.

### **Success Story #4 – Morgan County**

Morgan County worked with a 48-year-old male client who is employed and was not re-arrested in 7+ months working with Stepping Up. He is connected to mental health treatment services.

### **Success Story #5 – Morgan County**

Morgan County worked with 55-year-old male referred by ER who had a 32-year history of prison incarceration. After receiving Stepping Up services he was linked with mental health treatment resources. He is currently active and engaged in mental health treatment and receiving prescription psychotropics for his psychotic disorder.

### **Success Story #5 – Morgan County**

Another Morgan County client was 30-year-old male referred by Drug Court. After being linked to mental health treatment through Stepping Up, he is now engaged in ongoing treatment and receiving medication-assisted opiate replacement therapy

### **Success Story #6 – Cullman County**

We had a young male client who was presenting repeatedly at the ER with paranoia, complaining of having microchips implanted, sometimes suicidal. He also was drinking



heavily to self-medicate. He had been hospitalized five times in 6 months. The Stepping Up case manager was able to educate him about his illness. She also talked with his family and learned of the complicated family dynamics at home that made the client uncomfortable there. She was able to locate a group home placement for him and he has not returned to the hospital.

### **Success Story #7 – Cherokee County**

A homeless sex offender with SMI could not find any places to live or treatment that would accept him. The Stepping Up case manager worked with sheriff's office and the local hospital to secure a psychiatric bed for him. Until his treatment at psychiatric unit, he would leave jail and reoffend so he could come back to a warm bed and meals. Since treatment, he has become stable.

### **Success Story #8 – Cherokee County**

60-year-old male who was once on SSI and lost his SSI benefits because of his incarceration. He had no resources and no family to take him in. The case manager worked with the client, SSI, and a halfway home to ensure placement and financial funds were in place when he was released.

### **Success Story #9 – Jackson County**

One person deeply impacted by the case manager had both multiple hospitalizations and incarcerations. He was dismissed by the community as a drug addict. During the many admissions, he often tested positive for drugs. When the case manager did a consult, he was negative for drugs. However, because of his history, he was dismissed as only a drug addict. It became clear to the case manager that he was a quiet psychotic and in desperate need of help. He was without insurance or a home. He was not allowed to live with his mother because during one of his psychotic episodes he held a knife on her, which led to one of his incarcerations. The case manager was able to work with all parties that had been involved. She quickly got him mental health services and worked hard to get him benefits. When he came into the office to see the case manager, after being started on psychiatric medication, he was barely recognizable. It was clear that if he could maintain that stability, he would not only stay out of jail and the hospital, but he could live a more normal life. The biggest struggle was finding him proper housing. The only other relative he could live with was a drug dealer. While in case management, he had his ups and downs between relapsing and diabetic issues, but the case manager remained a steady presence no matter what was going on. We believe it made it easier for him to take steps forward rather than continuing a downward spiral.

## STEPPING UP YEAR ONE CONCLUSIONS

At the conclusion of its first year of implementation, the Stepping Up Alabama Initiative demonstrated tremendous results and extraordinary progress towards its goal to **reduce the number of people with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders in both jails and emergency rooms.**

By serving populations in both **jails and emergency rooms**, Stepping Up Alabama demonstrates the unique way in which Alabama is utilizing the National Stepping Up initiative framework to meet the specific needs of its counties and communities. More specifically, by redirecting care of mentally ill individuals to appropriate mental health professionals, the Stepping Up Initiative reduces the *burden* placed on jails and hospitals to receive individuals who are not appropriate for those facilities. The diversion of these individuals allows jails and hospitals to direct their financial and staff resources to more appropriate individuals.

According to Risë Haneberg, with the Council of State Governments, the State of Alabama “demonstrated that a **coordinated, statewide approach to Stepping Up implementation is one of the most effective strategies to scale the work to the larger state level**, rather than a county-by-county piecemeal approach.” Haneberg added that, with support of Commissioner Beshear, she believes “other forms of support can be identified to assist counties and jails serving this population while developing alternatives for individuals who need not enter the justice system.

- Risë Haneberg, Deputy Division Director, Behavioral Health, Council of State Governments Justice Center

### Individuals Served through Stepping Up Alabama Year One

The results of Year One highlight the great strides made towards reducing the number of people with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders in both jails and emergency rooms in Alabama. From January to September 2019, across six counties, the **Alabama sites administered validated SMI and SA screenings to over 5,500 individuals in jails or in hospital emergency rooms and 1,732 individuals (31%) screened positive for SMI and/or SA.** Of those who screened positive for SMI, these sites administered a **mental illness assessment to 848 individuals (49%) in the jails or hospitals**, and a substance addiction assessment to **422 individuals in the jails or hospitals.** **Over 700 individuals were confirmed as having an SMI, and 325 individuals were confirmed as having a substance addiction or co-occurring disorder.**

A total of **406 individuals were referred to Stepping Up Services**, and **186 individuals received Stepping Up case management services.** Additionally, a total of **1,786 individuals were referred to mental health treatment after receiving mental health screenings**, and **568 individuals received mental health treatment.**

By providing these consistent mental health screenings, the Stepping Up program ensures that individuals with SMI and SA are identified and linked to treatment, even if that treatment is not through Stepping Up.

## Challenges with Data Collection

Collecting data from the jails on the number of inmates that were re-arrested, as well as the average length of time in jail after re-arrest, presented unforeseen challenges because jails often did not have infrastructure for tracking these data consistently. However, four sites – Cherokee, Shelby, Morgan and Madison Counties tracked the number of inmates that were re-arrested to the best of their ability. In Shelby County, of the **46 inmates that received case management services, 4 were re-arrested, resulting in an 8.6% recidivism rate.** In Morgan County, of the **59 inmates** that received case management services, **7 were re-arrested**, resulting in an **11.9% recidivism rate.** In Madison County, of the **40 individuals that received case management services, 12 were re-arrested or returned to the ER, resulting in a 30% recidivism rate.** Recidivism rates were provided by Cherokee County; however, they did not differentiate between recidivism between those screened and those case managed.

These statistics represent positive preliminary findings. According to a study published in the *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 54% of individuals with SMI are re-incarcerated and 68% of those with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse are re-arrested<sup>2</sup>. Thus, these preliminary numbers are a good indication of the potential impact of Stepping Up.

It will be important for Stepping Up Alabama to enhance its capacity to collect data on recidivism rates and length of stay, and this will be an important consideration for counties who have achieved sustainability, including Shelby and Morgan County. It is the expectation of the T/TA team that, with the use of the QuickBase system and the improvement of data collection capabilities within the jails, the program will consistently **demonstrate a reduction of the number of people with serious mental illnesses in jails and hospitals across Alabama.**

## Policy Changes

Change took place at the policy level across all sites in the Year One as a result of the efforts of the Stepping Up Initiatives. One significant example is that the **Cherokee County local courts made a policy change to add “checking in with the Mental Health Center” to the sentences of the individuals who were released.** Secondly, Shelby County **worked with the jail to implement mandatory screenings for SMI and SA, as a part of the booking processes in the jail.** As a result of this change, officers were trained and conducted screenings for all individuals booked into the jail. Cullman County reported a new process with the local court system that has the potential to encourage people to seek treatment to avoid jail.

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<sup>2</sup> Wilson, A.B., Draine, J., Hadley, T., Metraux, S., and Evans, A. (2011). Examining the impact of mental illness and substance use on recidivism in a county jail. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 34(4), 264-268.

## Sustainability

Two counties, Morgan County and Shelby County, received funding to sustain their program after the end of the grant year. Additionally, Cherokee County was also sustained for three months after the end of the grant period.

Of significance was the leveraging of various sources of media by the Morgan County team and Case Manager, Ms. Goodwin, to build awareness in Morgan County of the Stepping Up Initiative. Their site received extensive coverage in local publications, including newspapers articles published in the *Decatur Daily*, *The News Courier*, and *Hartselle Enquirer*, as well as television broadcasts with *WAFF 48*, *WAYY 31 ABC coverage*, and two features with *WHNT 19*. **As a result of the relationships built through these media efforts, the county was able to successfully raise \$17,000 in unrestricted funds to support the program.**

## Significance of Innovator County Designation

The Stepping Up initiative encourages counties to gather “accurate, accessible data on the prevalence of people in their jails who have serious mental illness (SMI) to help them understand the scale of the problem in their jurisdictions” (Stepping Up, 2020). SU recognizes counties from around the country that are able to achieve this through their excellent practices as “**Innovator Counties.**”

That Shelby County achieved Innovator County designation, and two other counties came close to achieving this status, demonstrates a significant achievement in Year One of the Stepping Up Alabama Initiative. According to Risë Haneberg, with the Council of State Governments, this is a “**noteworthy accomplishment, and a clear indicator of the significant progress Shelby County has made towards its goal of reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.**” Ms. Haneberg went on to say that “many jails across the country struggle to implement screening and assessment—which are the foundational cornerstones of identifying the people in jail with a serious mental illness, as well as one of the three criteria that must be met to be named a Stepping Up Innovator site (Haneberg, personal communication, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020).”

## Utilization of Technical Assistance Support and the Success of SU Alabama

The utilization of a technical assistance team in conjunction with the implementation of the Stepping Up Initiative is rare for counties. The Council of State Governments is not aware of any other state using the same model as Alabama, in which an outside agency has been contracted to provide technical assistance. However, Commissioner Beshear wanted the Stepping Up implementation to be conducted with intention and sought to provide each county with the support they needed to be successful. **We believe that the use of a technical assistance team created an infrastructure which uniquely contributed to the extraordinary success of the Stepping Up Initiative in Alabama.** Ms. Haneberg stated that “The Dannon Project’s support for on-the-ground training and technical assistance has proven to be critical for counties to successfully implement the Stepping Up framework (Haneberg 2020).”

Ms. Haneberg added that the support provided by Commissioner Beshear “has been the driving force to bring counties across Alabama on board with Stepping Up (2020).” Expanding the infrastructure of the Stepping Up Initiative, consequently, could have great potential to put Alabama on the map as an exemplar of successful implementation and social change.