Stepping Up Alabama
YEAR 2 EVALUATION REPORT
2019-2020

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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 February 2021, 21 of the 67 counties in Alabama have passed Stepping Up resolutions or proclamations. Between October 2018 and September 2020, mental health centers in **eleven of the 21 counties** received one year of grant funding 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).

Retired 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." Retired ADMH Retired Commissioner Lynn Beshear

To execute this vision, in May 2018, ADMH contracted with **The Dannon Project** to provide Training, Technical Assistance, and Evaluation Support to ADMH and grantees. In June 2018, ADMH released a Request for Proposals (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 engagement efforts to mobilize community support. In June 2019, the same RFP was released to replicate these services in **new** counties.

This evaluation report outlines the outcomes of the **five community mental health centers** funded for Year Two of Stepping Up Alabama (October 2019 – September 2020):

1. AltaPointe Health – Mobile County, AL
2. East Alabama Mental Health Center – Chambers County, AL
3. Indian Rivers Behavioral Health – Tuscaloosa County, AL
4. Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Limestone County, AL
5. West Alabama Mental Health Center – Marengo County, AL

YEAR TWO ACTIVITIES

During the second year of the Stepping Up Initiative in Alabama, each of the five counties made great strides in the implementation of the program and created impact on the communities they serve. Although these counties experienced unexpected challenges due to the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, **every county was able to serve clients with Stepping Up Case Management Services**. Furthermore, **four of the five 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 individual level* to build collective impact by providing backbone agency coordination and keeping 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. During the first quarter of the grant year, each site was expected to have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in place with key partners such as law enforcement, hospital administration and judges. A key component to the program was that **each county would convene and facilitate a planning committee** that included membership from various sectors of the community, specifically those engaged in county-level criminal justice and mental health planning. It was during those planning committee meetings where much of the policy change work occurred. Through these meetings, community champions and various stakeholders were brought together to discuss strengths and gaps in services available to seriously mentally ill individuals in the community, as well as address the questions outlined in the "Six Questions Framework" of the Stepping Up Initiative:

Stepping Up "Six Questions Framework"

| Is our leadership committed? | Do we conduct timely screening and assessments? | Do we have baseline data? | Have we conducted a comprehensive process analysis and inventory of services? | Have we prioritized policy, practice, and funding improvements? | Do we track progress? |

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, and
4. Recidivism rates

Individual-Level Services

On the individual level, the case managers were expected to work with the jails and hospitals to develop a system that ensured *all* jail inmates as well as individuals at Emergency Departments (EDs) who appeared to be mentally ill were screened for serious mental illness (SMI) and substance addiction. It was important to conduct consistent mental health screenings to ensure that individuals with SMI and co-occurring disorders were identified and linked to treatment, *even if that treatment was not through Stepping Up services*. 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, that person 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 and referred to the Stepping Up case manager. 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 provided through the community mental health center.

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 in Year One 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. This year, The Dannon Project T/TA team worked with the Public Information Officer at the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to create individualized slide decks for each new county. Once the decks were disseminated, Kathy Goodwin, of North Central 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. Despite the pandemic, **all five sites conducted at least one Crucial Conversation presentation,** and **three sites conducted three Crucial Conversations**. In total, the sites hosted **twelve** Crucial Conversations **reaching 193 people** from various sectors including: local law enforcement, individuals with mental illness and their families, hospital administration, attorneys, local faith-based leaders, Chamber of Commerce members, judges and court staff.

Additionally, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, all sites participated in the annual **Stepping Up Month of Action** that took place in May 2020. 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."[1] 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. Examples of activities conducted

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

included hosting an outdoor Zumba-Thon streamed on Facebook Live, promoting an article about Stepping Up written by ADMH, publicizing Stepping Up success stories in the media, and developing multiple promotions on social media.

Finally, each site leveraged media to educate the general public about the Stepping Up Efforts. These included stories broadcast on the local news, press releases picked up by various media outlets, articles published in the local papers and creating a presence on social media. Additional information on these efforts are outlined in the Site Summaries.

Impacts of the Unforeseen COVID-19 Pandemic

During this year, Stepping Up faced a significant, unforeseen challenge in implementation: responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 was a major threat to programmatic success because the primary Stepping Up referral sources were Ground Zero for COVID risk: hospitals and jails. Due to COVID-19 safety protocols, in four of the five sites, no case managers were allowed in the jails for a period of time. Even more so than the jails, entry into the hospitals were extremely difficult. Several hospitals were inundated and overwhelmed by the volume of COVID-19 cases in their emergency departments and during intermittent periods several had no time to provide referrals. The fact that Stepping Up sites were able to get *anyone* from the hospital was a testament to the relationships these organizations had built.

However, despite the pandemic, each of our sites found innovative ways to work around the roadblocks created and positively impact the communities served by Stepping Up. For example, when the case managers were not allowed in the jails, several sites began to monitor the daily arrest records from the jails, and cross reference them with their own databases, to identify individuals with a history of serious mental illness (SMI) or co-occurring disorders. Once identified, the case managers reached out to these individuals once they were released from jail and, in some cases, conducted home visits to introduce Stepping Up (SU), complete SU Program enrollments, and connect these individuals with mental health services. Sites also increased their social media campaigns to increase public awareness of Stepping Up and began to receive referrals from members of the community.

Despite the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and barriers to accessing clients, each site was able to serve clients in their respective communities. The Dannon Project T/TA team felt it was important to highlight the diligent work, dedication, and creative problem solving demonstrated by the staff at each of the Year Two Stepping Up sites. The SU team members went above and beyond the call of duty to make a difference in the communities they served, often putting their own lives at risk to serve our population.

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 Clampit, 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 https://tool/stepuptogether.org/
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. 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 of serving both jails and hospitals. A submission timeline was also developed to ensure that the sites were incrementally working through the tools to answer the Six Questions *in collaboration* with key stakeholders during their planning committee meetings. These forms provided opportunities for key stakeholders to take a critical look at the county's entire system of care to identify strengths and gaps and create opportunity for necessary policy-level change.

> "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 communication with each site throughout the program year. 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, provide training and support on the QuickBase online data system, and answer all questions related to data collection forms and evaluation tools disseminated. Mrs. Pruitt ensured that the project deliverables were implemented within the timeline and guidelines of the ADMH contract. The Dannon Project IT Coordinator also supported Quickbase IT requests.

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.

In addition to conducting monthly administrative and case management meetings, quarterly evaluation meetings, and individualized technical assistance, the T/TA team attended site level events including Planning Committee Meetings and Stepping Up Month of Action Events. It provided the team with an opportunity to gain greater understanding of the local contexts in which each program was

implemented. This year, the increase in virtual events allowed team members to attend significantly more events than during Year One.

Provide Group Level Training and Education

The cornerstone of the technical assistance provided by The Dannon Project were the monthly calls convened with all sites called the "Learning Collaborative" Each month during these calls, facilitated by the T/TA team, sites were reminded of grant requirements, reported on site progress, discussed issues they encountered, engaged in group problem-solving and received training on a specific topic. Due to the volume of information shared during each meeting, the meeting time expanded from one hour in October and November, to one and a half hours in December through February, then two hours from March through September. The table below describes the topics discussed at each meeting.

Month	Topics Reviewed
October 2019	Reviewed Progress on Hiring Case Managers, Outlined Required Trainings; Outlined Grant Requirements (Stepping Up Proclamations, Submit MOUs, Kick Off Meetings, Self-Assessment); Reviewed Stepping Up Orientation packet
November 2019	Reviewed Progress on Hiring Case Managers; Reviewed Submitted Proclamations; Reviewed Progress on Program Implementation
December 2019	Reviewed Progress on Hiring Case Managers; Reviewed Submitted Proclamations; Discussed Kickoff Meeting Planning; Reviewed Progress on Program Implementation
January 2020	Reviewed Details of QuickBase Training; Reviewed Details of Case Management Training; Discussed Completed Kick Off Meetings and Next Steps; Reviewed Deadlines for Evaluation Tools
February 2020	Discussed Kick Off Meeting Next Steps; Reviewed Innovator County criteria; Discussed Progress on Client Referrals; Reviewed Strategy Lab on stepuptogether.org
March 2020	Discussed Impacts of COVID-19; Community Support of Stepping Up; Review of the Evaluation Tools; Discussed Scheduling of 'Crucial Conversations'; Discussed Upcoming Quarterly Evaluation Calls; Provided Resources to Keep Planning Team Members Informed and Engaged due to pending moves to Virtual Meetings
April 2020	Discussed Impacts of COVID-19; Conducted Training on Providing Services in the Face of a Pandemic; Planned for Stepping Up Month Activities; Scheduled Quarterly Evaluation Calls
May 2020	Reviewed Stepping Up Month of Action Activities; Discussed Scheduled and Conducted 'Crucial Conversations'; Provided Video Links about the 4 Key Measures; Reviewed Topics that Arose from Evaluation calls; Discussed Mid-Year Report
June 2020	Reviewed Stepping Up Month Activities; Discussed Scheduled and Completed 'Crucial Conversations'; Provided Video Links about the 6 Questions County Leaders Need to Ask; Discussed Opportunities Educate Stakeholders on the Importance of Stepping Up in the Whirlwind of the COVID-19 Pandemic
July 2020	Offered Assistance to complete Alabama Crisis RFI; Provided updates on client caseload; Discussed 'Crucial Conversations'; Reviewed Innovator County criteria; Provided Tips on Facilitating a Stakeholder Discussion about the Planning and Prioritization of Local Policy Impacting the Efficacy of Stepping Up
August 2020	Discussed Year 3 Opportunities; Provided Updates on Client Caseload; Reviewed Innovator County criteria; Preparing for Closeout; Reviewed Final Report Template; Reviewed Partner Survey Template
September 2020	Discussed Continuation Funding; Discussed Funding Opportunities for New Sites; Discussed Client Caseload; Reviewed Innovator County criteria; Reviewed Partner Survey; Reviewed Sustainability Efforts; Final Report Template

To ensure the program was off to a strong start, the T/TA team convened the *Administrative Kick Off Orientation.* This meeting, held on October 2, 2019, included program managers from each of the mental health centers. These managers were also encouraged to bring one key stakeholder or champion from their county. The T/TA team used this as an opportunity to introduce the program to each grantee and energize their stakeholders resulting in greater understanding of the program model and sustained partner engagement. Also, in attendance were Former Commissioner Lynn Beshear and Former Chief of Staff Kimberly Boswell. The T/TA team also hosted a two-day in-person training for the case managers from each site on December 16th and 17th. Day One was the *Case Management Kick Off Orientation*, where the case managers received in-depth information on the Stepping Up Alabama Model, evaluation screening tools and deadlines, reference materials and case management training. Day Two in-depth training was provided on the QuickBase data system. At the end of the two days, the case managers were not only informed, but had developed relationships with their peers from other sites which served them well during the entire grant year. Because of the bond between the case managers, they felt comfortable sharing during the Learning Collaborative Meetings and also contacted each other to solicit and provide advice related to working with this unique population.

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 Two, the case managers completed the following trainings:
- JBS Mental Health Authority Adult Case Management Training
- Online SOAR Training
- Ohio Risk Assessment Screening (ORAS) Training
- 'Crucial Conversations' Training (conducted by Kathy Goodwin, North Central)

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
- Identify and Use a Validated SMI and SA Screening Tool
- Submit minutes and sign in sheets of all Planning Committee meetings
- Complete the County Self-Assessment on www.stepuptogether.org
- Collect Baseline and Year End Data
- Submit a Sustainability Plan
- Submit a Mid-Year and Final Report

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)
- Mid-Year Reporting Template
- Sustainability Plan Template
- Connections to Relevant Trainings (i.e., ORAS)
- Final Report Template

Collecting Data

This year, the T/TA made great strides in data collection efficiency through the expansion of the Dannon Management Information System (DMIS) called QuickBase. QuickBase is a database created and supported by Juiced Technologies.

For the purposes of supporting Stepping Up, Dr. Broomfield-Massey worked closely with QuickBase developers to create a new QuickBase application to serve as the **central repository** for Stepping Up data from around the state. The database application was designed to streamline the process used by grantees to securely submit program and client level data to the Alabama Department of Mental Health. The Stepping Up QuickBase application launched in December 2019 and the T/TA team conducted its initial training on December 17, 2019.

During this program year, each grantee was required to use QuickBase. It is a secure, web-based database application. Because QuickBase is a web-based system, there was no software to install, update or maintain. This user-friendly system is accessible using most computers, tablets, and mobile phones. Each Stepping Up site only has access to their own data, while the T/TA team can view and manage data from all sites. The Program Manager and Case Manager from each site was assigned a secure login and password that allowed them access to the system. The security features allow for the QuickBase Administrator to grant user varied level of access as requested by each site. For example, the Case Manager may have access to all the data fields and client level reports, while the Program Manager may have access to the data fields as well as additional reports.

Each site was required to enter both client level data and the Stepping Up evaluation tools. With jail inmates, minimal demographic data was required for inmates who were screened only (e.g., name, date of birth, screening outcome). Additional data was required for clients that screened positive for an SMI and/or substance addiction (e.g., previous diagnosis, result of SMI or SA assessment), and more comprehensive data was required for clients that consented to receive case management services. Identifying data (e.g., name, DOB) were redacted from hospital patients unless the client screened positive for SMI *and* consented to Stepping Up services.

Each of the customized evaluation tools are also loaded in QuickBase for grantees to complete at the time indicated in the timeline they received. QuickBase also has the capability of collecting multiple versions of each form so each site was able update their forms as information changed.

In addition to QuickBase, each site was provided with Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to collect baseline and year end aggregate and individualized data from the jails and hospitals. The baseline Excel spreadsheet had multiple tabs for the hospital or jail to provide aggregate, individualized, and in-depth data (redacted for hospitals) on individuals touched and/or screened for SMI and/or SA in CY2019. The year-end Excel Spreadsheet requested the same data for January through September 2020 each. All data sites were able to collect were returned to the T/TA team using encrypted emails and password protected spreadsheets. Sites submitted this data twice during the grant year.

Unfortunately, all sites were not able to collect baseline data. Collecting baseline data was a challenge, particularly from the jails, because some jails simply did not have the technological infrastructure to measure and provide the information that was requested. Also, many jails were not screening inmates consistently for SMI or SA. Two sites were able to collect both raw and aggregate

baseline data: one site from both the jail and hospital and the other site was from the jail only. Two other sites were able to collect aggregate data only: one from the both the jail and the hospital and the other from the jail only. One site was unable to acquire any baseline data from either the jail or the hospital. Using the data from Year One and Year Two, the T/TA team plans to work with some specific sites to create case study reports analyzing change over time. However, we must be careful to be mindful of the impacts of COVID-19 on the data.

Collecting Data: Moving Forward

The 2019-2020 year was the inaugural year for the Stepping Up QuickBase application. The T/TA team used this year to train the grantees and respond to suggestions and critiques of the system provided by our users. During the upcoming 2020-2021 grant year, the T/TA team will continue to work with Juiced Technologies to build out reports in the system using input from grantees and the T/TA team to ensure data quality and report on program outputs and impacts.

Currently, using the QuickBase application requires double data entry on the part of the Case Manager, however, during the upcoming year, The Dannon Project T/TA team and Juiced Technologies will work with each site to develop exporting functions that allow additional streamlining of the process.

STEPPING UP "INNOVATOR COUNTIES"

The Stepping Up Initiative encourages counties to continuously 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 527 counties in 43 states that have passed Stepping Up Resolutions or Proclamations, *only 27 counties have achieved Innovator Status*. **Last year, Shelby County achieved its designation as an Innovator County at the end of its *first* year of implementation in Alabama. This year AltaPointe Health, Inc. in Mobile County was also able to achieve this designation at the end of its *first* year.** Additionally, **Chambers County is working towards their designation.**

2019-2020 STEPPING UP ALABAMA – SITE SUMMARIES

AltaPointe Health – Mobile County, AL

Organizational Collaboration

While AltaPointe reported that all partners played a part in assisting the program, notable stakeholders included:

- Merceria Ludgood, County Commissioner;
- Christy Miller from Naphcare (jail mental health contractor);
- Warden Noah Trey Oliver of Mobile County Metro Jail;
- Jennifer Sussman of the City Prosecutor's Officer
- Mobile Infirmary Psych Intake/Social Work Departments; and,
- Ida Lockett of NAMI of Mobile.

The AltaPointe Stepping Up team cited Christy Miller from Naphcare as the key stakeholder for their program. They noted that she was vital to the program, ensuring the SU team had information needed from the jail and jail mental health department to successfully complete their tasks.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Case Manager Tavaris Goldsmith and Stepping Up and Jail Diversion Coordinator Danielle King, and other members of the AltaPointe Mobile County team had a close relationship with the Mobile County Metro Jail. Prior to COVID-19 protocols, the jail provided the team with a dedicated space in the booking area where they could conduct screenings as part of the booking process and refer clients to Stepping Up. Every individual who was booked in the jail received a mental illness screening, and referrals were provided to Tavaris if the inmate screened positive for serious mental illness during the booking process.

After the COVID-19 protocol changes, AltaPointe staff was not allowed to enter the jails, however, they came up with various work arounds. The Stepping Up staff received referrals from Christy Miller of Naphcare and from Metro Jail staff through emails and phone calls. The jail allowed SU staff to work as contractors under the Mental Health department (Naphcare) and provided them with access to their programs, information and jail records needed to identify inmates that met program criteria. In addition, Metro Jail setup telecommunications equipment through which the Stepping Up staff was able to meet inmates virtually.

In addition to the information provided by Naphcare and the jail, Tavaris and the AltaPointe team were able to compare their internal database with the daily arrest records to identify individuals with a history of SMI or co-occurring disorders, review the lists for jail releases, and travel to each individual's home to make contact. Naphcare also notified Tavaris and Danielle when they were aware of the pending release of an inmate that screened positive for SMI or co-occurring disorders. During this key face-to-face contact, the team could educate consumers on the SU program and the benefit of receiving mental health services, as well as complete the SU Program enrollments.

The jail screened **6,829 inmates for serious mental illness (SMI)**, and **873 (13%) screened positive** for SMI. Of those that screened positive, all **873 inmates (100%)** consented and received a mental health

assessment, and all **873 (100%) were confirmed as having SMI.** The jail also screened **6,345 inmates** for SA; **2,716 inmates** (43%) screened positive for SA. Of those that screened positive, **22 inmates (1%)** consented and received a substance addiction assessment, and **all 22 inmates were confirmed as having substance addiction**.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **71 inmates** followed up and **received Stepping Up case management services through AltaPointe**. Of the 873 inmates that screened positive for SMI, **71 inmates (8%) were referred to mental health treatment** at AltaPointe; and, of those referred to mental health treatment, **all 71 inmates (100%) consented to and received mental health treatment.**

Of the **71 inmates** that received case management services, **three inmates (4%) were re-arrested and one inmate (1%) went to the ER after their original arrest.**

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

AltaPointe had a positive relationship with the local hospitals. Both the Mobile Infirmary Social Work and/or the Psychiatric Intake Department would contact Tavaris and Danielle with possible referrals, and Tavaris would go to the hospital to complete evaluations. Tavaris and Danielle maintained good communication with hospital staff and psychiatric intake nurse practitioners to collect information for the program, and to ensure referrals were made by hospital staff. The team also collaborated with nurse practitioners on potential cases before completing evaluations, to gather additional background mental health information for individuals. AltaPointe was able to screen **63 patients for SMI and SA**; **63 (100%) of those screened positive** for SMI, and all **63 (100%)** consented and received a mental health assessment. As well, all **63** patients (100%) were confirmed as having SMI. Of those screened, **10 patients (16%)** screened positive for SA, consented to receive a SA assessment, and, all **10 patients (100%)** were confirmed as having SA.

It is significant to note that all **63 (100%)** patients who screened positive for SMI in the hospital were referred to SU services and **followed up and received case management services**. In addition, of the 63 patients who screened positive for SMI, all **63 (100%) were referred to mental health treatment and all 63 patients (100%) consented to and received mental health treatment.**

Of the **63 patients** that received case management services, **zero (0%) were arrested and five (8%) returned to the ER after their original visit.**

Building Community Awareness

Mobile County SU staff were able to effectively utilize Crucial Conversations to not only expand community awarness, but also to reach consumers that the staff do not commonly encounter and educate them on the SU program. The staff also used the Crucial Conversations slide deck to provide family members of individuals dealing with mental health issues additional resources. During the grant year, they conducted **three Crucial Conversations reaching a total of 51 individuals**.

In addition to Crucial Conversations, Altapointe Director of Public Relations, April Douglas, arranged and setup all media exposure for the Stepping Up Initiative. The team received coverage through news outlets in Alabama as well as other states. AltaPointe's SU events also received exposure through social media reach, via Facebook videos and posts.There were two activities that stood out.

The first was the news media interview regarding the Stepping Up Program conducted by the The City of Mobile Chief of Police. The second was coverage of the Stepping Up Zumba-Thon conducted by Case Manager and Zumba Instructor Tavaris Goldsmith. These and other activities provided AtlaPointe Stepping Up with positive media attention.

Other Significant Achievements

- Mobile County was recognized as a Stepping Up Innovator County at the end of its first year, becoming one of only 27 counties to be recognized as an Innovator County, of the 527 counties that have passed Stepping Up Resolutions or Proclamations.

- Because of the AltaPointe team, the City of Mobile Police Chief now instructs his police officers to divert individuals with mental health challenges to mental health services, rather than arresting them while in a mental health crisis.

- The AltaPointe team gathered key data on participants to overcome barriers to access in the jails and to meet with them directly in the community.

Sustainability

The AltaPointe Stepping Up program implemented an aggressive sustainability plan for securing funding, including applications to 1) a Justice and Mental Health Collaborative Grant, through the Bureau of Justice Assistance; 2) a Justice and Mental Health Collaborative Grant, through the Sidney Bayer Foundation; and 3) the engagement of the County Commission to receive annual funding through a developed proposal. They collaborated with key community partners, including City of Mobile officials and Mobile County Officials, to submit these grant applications. **As a result, they received the Justice and Mental Health Collaborative grant through the Bureau of Justice Assistance as well as continuation funding for 2020-2021 through the Alabama Department of Mental Health**. Finally, AltaPointe SU is planning to mentor three new Stepping Up Program sites in the 2020-2021 grant year. AltatPointe Health locations in Talladega, Clay and Baldwin counties were awarded a Year One SU grant for the 2020-2021 grant year.

East Alabama Mental Health Center – Chambers County, AL

Organizational Collaboration

The East Alabama Mental Health Center (EAMHC) received support from multiple organizations in the community, including the Chambers County jail, the Sheriff's Office, the County Commission, and the OD Alsobrook Center of the East Alabama Mental Health Center. Representatives from these organizations, including the probate court judge, the hospital, "Circle of Cares," County Commission, and EAMHC staff regularly attended quarterly planning team meetings.

The team cited that District Six Chambers County Commissioner, Debra Riley, was the key stakeholder for their program, and was most influential in the success of the Stepping Up program. The significance of the degree of impact made by Ms. Riley was echoed by the SU Case Manager, Jessica Driggers, in an interview with local publication *The Times News.* Ms. Driggers stated: "Without the help of Ms. Riley, this all wouldn't have been possible. She really has been the one who got the ball rolling on this entire program, and we are so grateful to have her, as well as the support of the local community and the other members of the board.[2]" That the County Commissioner was the key stakeholder is significant, given the level of influence she represents within the community.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Jessica Driggers came to Chambers County to serve as the SU Case Manager for EAMHC, and successfully developed key relationships with the jail as evidenced by their existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The jail provided Ms. Driggers with an office in the jail, in which she could screen every willing individual who was booked in the jail. Additionally, Ms. Driggers worked to create a process for telehealth services at the jail, rather than having to transport inmates, and increased the number of inmates actually receiving services through mental health. Furthermore, Ms. Driggers received access to the jail database for release/follow up information. Within the database, jail staff created a 'sick call' for mental health, which the case manager was able to access and review 'sick calls' mental health only. This access has allowed the case manager to have immediate access to the information needed to open inmate files in the QuickBase data system and obtain contact information after release This was helpful when an inmate was released during a weekend or bond is posted.

Jessica received **134 referrals** (as of 09/29/2020) and screened **all 134 inmates for SMI and SA**; **82 (61%) of those screened positive for SMI and 93 (69%) screened positive for SA**. Of those that screened positive for SMI, **36 inmates (44%) consented and received a mental health assessment**, and **all 134 inmates (100%)** received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI, **27 inmates (75%) were confirmed as having a SMI**; of those that were screened for SA, **95 inmates (71%)** were confirmed as having SA, based on results of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate's prior records.

Of those that screened positive for SA, 21 inmates (23%) were referred to SU Services, followed up and received Stepping Up case management services. Of the 27 inmates that were confirmed as having SMI, **21 inmates (78%) were referred to mental health treatment and all consented to and received mental health treatment**.

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[2] Duncan, D. (2019, December 3). *Stepping Up Gets New Case Manager.* The Times-News. https://m.valleytimes-news.com/2019/12/stepping-up-gets-new-case-manager/.

Of the **21 inmates** that received case management services, **zero inmates (0%) were re-arrested or went to the ER after their original arrest.**

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Chambers County had a positive relationship with the hospital and had a signed MOU in place. Ms. Driggers provided all hospital staff her phone number, and Ms. Cindy Daniel or staff would call Ms. Driggers directly with referrals. However, because of constraints presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospital did not have the capacity to refer individuals to the SU program.

Chambers County was able to screen **two patients** referred by the hospital **for SMI and SA; both of those screened positive (100%)** for SMI and/or SA and received a referral for further treatment**.** Of those that screened positive, **both patients (100%) consented and received a mental health assessment, and no patients** received a substance addiction assessment**. Both patients (100%) were confirmed as having SMI** based on results of the assessments conducted.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA in the hospital, **neither patient (100%)** followed up to receive Stepping Up case management services or mental health treatment.

Building Community Awareness

Chambers County held **one Crucial Conversation reaching 30 people** during the grant year and cited that it was a key part of building community awareness. This meeting was held at the Sheriff's Office with 30 individuals in attendance. Ms. Driggers reported that this conversation "allowed the sheriff's deputies to really understand the need for Stepping Up;" and, that "once they saw what we were trying to change, they were more apt to want to support the program, even if that only meant referrals or giving me information on the people they thought we might be able to help."

Additionally, the site received media exposure through multiple newspaper articles written about the program in local publication, *The Times News,* from Dec 2019-July 2020. *The Times News* not only covered the hiring of Ms. Driggers to the program and the program itself, but also published an editorial entitled "Our View: Stepping Up Positive for Chambers County," in which the editorial board wrote about an op-ed on the need for and importance of the Stepping Up Initiative in Chambers County. The staff wrote about the "huge need in today's world, where mental health funding always seems to be the first budget cut made." The article also spoke to the issues addressed by Stepping Up and concluded by sharing their belief that the program would be a "big positive for Chambers County.[3]

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[3] The Times-News. (2019, December 12). *"Our View: Stepping Up Positive for Chambers County.* https://www.valleytimes-news.com/2019/12/our-view-stepping-up-positive-for-chambers-county/

Other Significant Achievements

- EAMHC has applied for **Innovator County status**, and the application is currently in review.
- The team cited one of their program's greatest accomplishments as the **relationships that have been built through the program**. The team writes: "People are talking that have never talked before. People are sharing information about their programs, their organizations and services that are provided."
- Prior to SU, the individuals in the jail that were not psychotic or disruptive were not receiving medications. However, the case manager was able to cultivate a relationship with the jail physician, to ensure that individuals assessed as SMI, who required medication received a script from the mental health agency that is filled at the jail. This new policy ensured that inmates that need psychotropic medications receive them in a timely manner.
- The SU team plans to continue telemedicine services at the jail to assist with transportation issues, and the team is tracking individuals who have transportation issues for future consideration of a county-level transportation system.

Sustainability

The EAMHC currently has a plan in place to sustain the program, and they have been funded for another year by ADMH. Additionally, the County Commission has allocated $10,000 to East Alabama Mental Health for the second grant year, which is double the amount of $5,000 that was allotted to the center last year. The Stepping Up staff plans to continue to disseminate information about Stepping Up to the planning team and to provide training on the Stepping Up process to clarify the process and ensure appropriate referrals. EAMCH is also exploring opportunities to collaborate in grant writing with "Circle of Care," and has expressed interest in mentoring new Stepping Up programs.

Indian Rivers Behavioral Health – Tuscaloosa County, AL

Organizational Collaboration

Six major stakeholders comprised the organizations and individuals that facilitated the work of Indian Rivers Stepping Up, including the following:

- o Probate Court Judge Rob Robertson
- o Sheriff Rob Abernathy
- o Lauren Simpson LMSW - Jail social worker
- o Sgt. Craig Parker, Supervisor for Tuscaloosa Police Department Behavioral Health Unit
- o Kineta Williams, Supervisory social worker for the Northport Emergency Department
- o Valerie Alford, Director for North Harbor (Inpatient Psych Unit at the Local Hospital)

The site reported that Probate Court Judge Rob Robertson was the key stakeholder, and that the team worked closely with Judge Robertson in the past because of the commitment process. According to the team, Judge Robertson "brought a new vision to the process," and was instrumental in linking mentally ill individuals in the jail systems to assessments for possible involuntary commitment.

Representatives from the Sheriff's department, the University of Alabama, the court system, local law enforcement and the hospital psychiatric unit all regularly attended the monthly planning team meetings until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; then bi-monthly and virtually thereafter.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Tuscaloosa County hired Kathryn McCurnin, LMSW as the Case Manager, who is a social worker with her master's degree. Hiring a masters-level social worker was a key part of the program's success, because it allowed the case manager to seamlessly provide care for many aspects of her client's treatment, rather than referring them to various providers. However, Ms. McCurnin was only able to gain access to the jail in January and February 2020. Because of COVID-19 protocol changes Indian Rivers staff was not allowed to enter the jail for the remainder of the grant year and had to devise various work arounds. Notably, when COVID cases began to rise in the jail, only essential staff were allowed to enter. Because of that change, referrals began to slow. The case manager remained in contact with the jail social worker who sent referrals once allowed to re-enter the jail. In addition, the case manager began to compare the jail arrest website to the Indian Rivers internal database to identify individuals with a history of SMI or co-occurring disorders and work to contact them once they were released from jail.

According to reports from their partners at Tuscaloosa County Jail, **over 2,581 inmates were screened for serious mental illness (SMI)**. However, the jail did not share records with Indian Rivers and the case manager was only able to enter the jail for two months pre-COVID, so the site was not able to gather concrete data on how many received a screening and screened positive. The team was only able to report on the work done with the inmates referred to them. A total of **17 inmates were referred to Stepping Up and screened positive for SMI, 7 (41%) consented and received a mental health assessment and a substance addiction assessment**. Of these, **all seven inmates (100%) were confirmed as having SMI and five inmates were confirmed as having Substance Addiction**.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **8 (47%) inmates were referred to Stepping Up case management services, and seven inmates (41%)** followed up and **received Stepping Up case management services through Indian Rivers**. Of the 17 inmates that screened positive for SMI, **four (23%) inmates were referred to mental health treatment**; and, of those referred to mental health treatment, **all four inmates (100%) consented to and received mental health treatment.**

Of the **seven inmates** that received case management services, **zero inmates (0%) were re-arrested or went to the ER after their original arrest.**

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

COVID-19 presented a huge challenge for Tuscaloosa's Stepping Up. The site reported that when the pandemic hit and the state shut down, Tuscaloosa was "greatly impacted by the loss of students, the loss of businesses, the stress of uncertainty, and the need to rise to the occasion." As a result, many resources the team utilized were devastated by the pandemic and this left little room for anything else. Despite this, the team was able to maintain the attention of the assembled planning team and worked to make changes to impact those with mental illness in jails. One of the biggest challenges caused by COVID-19 was losing the ability to meet potential clients and the planning team in person due to lockdown restrictions and necessary safety measures.

This greatly impacted the Tuscaloosa site's ability to receive referrals from the hospitals, and the team only received one referral and screened this individual for SMI and SA. Although this person screened positive for SA, it was not confirmed in the assessment, so no further follow up was needed.

Building Community Awareness

Tuscaloosa County successfully achieved media exposure which included several articles about the Stepping Up grant published in local newspapers, as well as televised new stories. The team was interviewed by various media outlets for their involvement in Stepping Up, including coverage by WVUA23 (two stories) and WBRC 6. The team also attended public forums to introduce Stepping Up to the County Commission and reached their community via their "Stepping Up Initiative Tuscaloosa" Facebook page.

Tuscaloosa County also held **two Crucial Conversations reaching 21 people** during the grant year, to which they invited stakeholders from Tuscaloosa Probate Court and DCH Medical Center to attend and participate. The team stated that through these meetings, they were able to "educate the community about the past, present, and future of Tuscaloosa's treatment of the mentally ill."

Other Significant Achievements

- IRBH reported that their greatest accomplishment was being "able to work with cases and clients that supported future policy changes." The fact that the team worked with a judge to create an opportunity for those with SMI to benefit from treatment through SU; this highlighted the importance of relationship building and the potential of the program to serve and help others with SMI in the future.
- The team facilitated improved communication between Indian Rivers Behavioral Health, the jail, the hospital and other community stakeholders, which the site believed was both necessary and held great potential for leading to more impactful positive changes in serving the community going forward.

Sustainability

IRBH plans to sustain the program, by working with the police department to facilitate the training of all officers and collaborate in improving the treatment of those with mental illness. The scenario-based training covered topics including types of mental health and mood disorders, working with veterans, policies and procedures, post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as anxiety and homelessness. IRBH recently completed a collaborative grant in collaboration with the University of Alabama. The site is currently working on applying for grants to improve the services they can provide, as well as to collaborate with other programs in Tuscaloosa and Alabama at large. Furthermore, the staff at IRBH communicated that they are passionate about serving those in the community and would be eager and interested in mentoring a new Stepping Up program.

Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Limestone County, AL

Organizational Collaboration

The Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama experienced great success in their implementation of the Stepping Up Initiative. One significant contribution to their success was the fact that the neighboring Morgan County site had implemented the SU initiative in Year One and was able to offer resources, support, and lessons learned to the Limestone site in various ways.

A primary benefit of the relationship with Morgan County Y1 site, was that the Morgan County SU case manager, Ms. Kathy Goodwin, supervised and supported the Limestone case manager, Mary Pachol, in her role. Ms. Goodwin conducted a "Stepping Up Kick Off Meeting" on October 2nd, 2019, in which she integrated the Limestone site in the existent Morgan County planning team (Alliance). During this meeting, she talked to the new members about Stepping Up and shared her wisdom from her work with Morgan County the previous year.

One of the ways Limestone benefitted from lessons learned included the stakeholder group. Rather than create a separate planning team for Limestone, the team invited stakeholders from Limestone County to the existing Morgan County planning team of over 20 members and created the "Stepping Up Alliance of North Central Alabama," for which they created a clearly defined mission, vision, and set of goals and principles; a set of shared definitions (e.g., for "Serious Mental Illness" and "Substance Addiction"); PowerPoint presentations; and a Stepping Up Brochure.

At the end of the grant year, the Limestone County stakeholder group had grown to **over 45 members** who demonstrated a high commitment to the work of Stepping Up and the stakeholders in Morgan County grew to over 67 members. When asked to identify a key stakeholder, Limestone explained that they could not, because they were all equally important. Their stakeholders ranged from key members at the Probate Court, court systems, hospitals, County Commission, Sheriff's Office, AL Dept of Public Health; Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama; Iron Sharpens Iron; Right Choice SUD Detox program; Athens Limestone Tourism Bureau; local churches and the Limestone Ministerial Coalition of African American Pastors.

Many of these key stakeholders regularly attended monthly or bi-monthly planning meetings, and the SU staff engaged partners through regular and prompt communication, meetings in shared locations and requesting assistance when needed.

Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Limestone County SU site realized that the immediate needs of the individuals they served had shifted as a result of the crisis. The team recognized that there was a need among community members for food and worked with organizations in their Stepping Up Alliance to coordinate a massive food delivery to the Limestone and Morgan county clients. This act not only responded to community needs but also assisted in building goodwill with their local community partners. This effort helped to facilitate ongoing communication and coordination of resources for the SU clients.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Case Manager Mary Pachol was key in developing relationships with the jail and overcoming barriers to gain entry into the jail, even when the jails were closed temporarily due to COVID-19.

While individuals were screened by the booking officers and medical unit staff for medical needs, including mental health issues, they were not screened with a standardized instrument required for a Stepping Up referral. While the jail continues to support the use of a standardized tool, the implementation process has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Limestone County received 150 referrals from the jail medial unit, attorneys, courts, and community corrections. Mary screened **120 inmates for SMI and SA.** Of these, **113 (94%) of those screened positive** for SMI and/or SA and **10 inmates received a referral for further treatment**. Of those that screened positive, **11 inmates (9%) consented and received a mental health assessment.** Of those that received MI assessment, all **11 inmates (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**. A total of **three (3%) inmates consented and received a substance addiction assessment**; of those that received as SA assessment, all **three inmates (100%) were confirmed as having a SA.**

Based on results of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate's prior records, a total of **150 inmates were referred to Stepping Up Services; of these, 118 (79%) inmates followed up and received Stepping Up case management services.** Of the 120 inmates that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **10 inmates (8%) were referred to mental health treatment and 8 inmates (7%) consented to and received mental health treatment.**

Of the **118 inmates** who received Stepping Up case management services, **2 inmates (2%) were re-arrested**, and **2 inmates (2%)** went to the ER after the original arrest.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

As with most sites, Limestone County experienced barriers to access to the hospitals due to the demands placed on the hospitals from the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, Limestone County received 15 referrals from the hospital and screened **all 15 patients for SMI and SA**. **Of these, six patients (40%) screened positive for SMI and/or SA,** and all received a referral to North Central for further treatment. Of those that screened positive, **all six patients (100%) consented and received a mental health assessment, and all six patients (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**.

Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA in the hospital, **two patients (33.3%) followed up and received Stepping Up case management services**. In addition, **six patients were referred to mental health treatment**. Of the six patients referred to mental health treatment, **all six patients (100%) consented to and received mental health treatment.**

In Limestone County, of the **2 individuals** who received Stepping Up case management services, both **(100%) were arrested, but neither returned to the ER.**

Building Community Awareness

The Limestone County team successfully built community awareness about SU through their use of press releases and social media. The site received extensive coverage in local publications, including newspapers articles published in **the *Decatur Daily,* and *The Athens News Courier, as* well as television broadcasts and online articles through local stations *WZDX Fox News, WAFF 48, WAYY 31 ABC*, and *WHNT 19*.**

Limestone County also held **three Crucial Conversations reaching 79 people,** through which they engaged community partners such as, the Limestone County Bar Association and members of the faith-based community, in discussions about mental health issues, and increased opportunities to network with essential community advocates. The site reported that Crucial Conversations helped to motivate individuals to take action related to improving resources for community members in need.

Other Significant Achievements

- Limestone County established relationships with attorneys and the criminal justice/court system to assist with participant accountability in the court system.
- The site linked clients to money management skills training; legal assistance and consultation with law advocates; mental health and substance use disorders treatment; halfway houses to help with a client's immediate transition from jail to a monitored sober living environment; employment opportunities; and peer support specialists.
- Limestone provided assistance to individuals with applications for benefits, housing, jobs, and GED classes; accessing affordable medications & prescription discounts when available; social support and activities; and provided limited transportation.

Sustainability

The Stepping Up program in Limestone County has been funded at $50,000 for another year by ADMH. Ms. Pachol will remain in the position of case manager. The cornerstone of their sustainability plan is continued collaboration through quarterly Alliance meetings with new and existing partners, including frequent communication and face-to-face meetings. The Limestone site also plans to seek in-kind contributions, identify and develop donors, maximize fee-for-service billing, and conduct fundraising activities such as grants and special events. In addition, Limestone has expressed interest in expanding their Stepping Up program to additional counties within the North Central catchment area and mentoring new Stepping Up sites.

West Alabama Mental Health Center – Marengo County, AL

Organizational Collaboration

The county leadership in Marengo County demonstrated a high level of commitment, including support from key local judges, Sheriff's office, Probate Court, fire department and hospitals.

The site reported they had several strong champions they considered influential leaders in the community. Judge Laurie Shoultz-Hall, Probate Judge, was described as the key stakeholder who "championed the Stepping Up program," helped distribute information about the program in the community, directly connected persons with SMI and MI issues to resources for support, and highlighted the need for more resources to be allocated to those with SMI and SA diagnoses in the jails and hospitals. The West Alabama team worked closely with Judge Hall with respect to the Stepping Up resolution and court hearings.

In addition, the site named Chief Keith Murray and Battalion Chief Greg Russell as advocates of the program. These first responders were on the front line and helped assess what services community members with SMI and/or co-occurring disorders might need. Finally, Commissioner Freddie Armstead assisted the program in receiving key data points for ongoing assessment of the Stepping Up Program.

West Alabama reported that their stakeholder group grew significantly. They stated that stakeholders were in regular communication with the Stepping Up Team. These informative discussions lead to increased understanding about the importance of data sharing across the county and the fundamentals of the Stepping Up program.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

West Alabama has some turnover in the Case Manager position, but in March 2020, they hired case manager, Shantina Miller. Ms. Miller worked to create enhanced relationships with the jail and the hospital. However, because she was hired as the pandemic was beginning to gain ground, she was unable to gain access to either the jail or the hospital.

According to reports from their partners at Marengo County Jail, at booking, inmates were screened using the Brief Jail Mental Health Screen to assess the need for further mental health evaluation. Based on screening results, individuals were referred to West Alabama services. However, the jail did not share screening records with West Alabama and the case manager was unable to enter the jail, so the site was not able to gather verifiable data on how many inmates received a screening and screened positive. The team was only able to report on the work done with the inmates referred to them. In addition to receiving referrals from the jail, Ms. Miller compared the West Alabama internal database to daily arrest records to identify individuals with a history of SMI or co-occurring disorders and work to contact them once they were released from jail.

Once Ms. Miller was able to contact the released inmates, if they were former clients, they were linked to a therapeutic treatment program with a therapist. Individuals referred by the jail who were not in the West Alabama system, were re-evaluated using the Brief Jail Mental Health Screening. If they screened positive, they were scheduled for an intake appointment with a therapist to receive an

assessment, through the Access to Care Coordinator. Once they were confirmed as having SMI and they consented, they were enrolled in Stepping Up as new consumer.

A total of 197 individuals were referred by the jail. Of these individuals, Marengo Co. screened **37 inmates for SMI and SA**, of which **23 (62%) screened positive** for SMI and/or SA. Of those that screened positive, **23 inmates (62%)** consented and received a mental health assessment, and **26 inmates (70%)** consented and received a substance addiction assessment. Of those that screened positive for SMI and/or SA, **37 inmates (100%) were confirmed as having a SMI**, and **26 inmates (70%) were confirmed as having substance addiction**, based on results of the assessments conducted or information from the inmate's prior records.

In addition to referrals from the jail, West Alabama received referrals from residents whose family members were justice involved. These individuals also received MI screenings and assessments and were enrolled in the program as appropriate and once consent was received. As such, **46 justice involved individuals** were both referred to, and **received Stepping Up case management services. All 46 (100%) were referred to and consented to and received mental health treatment**.

Of the **46 justice involved individuals who received case management, 5 (11%) were re-arrested and 25 (54%) presented at the ER** after the original arrest.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Marengo County had a positive relationship with the Bryan Whitfield Memorial Hospital and worked with the hospital staff by emailing them information on the Stepping Up Program, calling them, and holding Crucial Conversations with the staff. The hospital determined whether or not individuals who are in crisis need to be admitted to the psychiatric unit or can be cleared to go home. If the individual was cleared to be released from the hospital, the hospital then called the West Alabama Access to Care line to set up an outpatient appointment for an assessment. If the individual was confirmed as having SMI, he or she was referred to Stepping Up program.

The hospital referred **25 individuals,** and **all were screened for SMI and SA**; **16 (64%) of those screened positive** for SMI and/or SA. Because the patients were referred by the hospital or had a history of treatment with West Alabama mental health assessments were offered. **Twenty-five (100%) patients consented and received a mental health assessment, and 8 patients received a substance addiction assessment.** Of those that assessed, **16 patients (64%) were confirmed as having a SMI**.

All 25 patients were offered Stepping Up services because of their SMI confirmation or having a treatment history with West Alabama. All **25 patients (100%)** followed up and received case management services. It is important to note that all case managed patients **(100%) were referred to, consented to, and received mental health treatment.**

Of the **25 patients** who received Stepping Up case management services, **none (0%) were arrested and four (16%) returned to the ER.**

Building Community Awareness

West Alabama also held **three Crucial Conversations reaching 12 people** during the grant year. They found that Crucial Conversations led to expanded awareness of the SU program by giving the Stepping Up staff an opportunity to express challenges and issues that consumers with SA and SMI face. These conversations helped to share information with key stakeholders about the SU program and the individuals served and how stakeholders can support the program.

West Alabama utilized multiple media outlets to increase awareness of the SU program, including the WAMHC Instagram page, where they introduced the Stepping Up program and staff members to the public. Secondly, WAMHC published a press release to the *Demopolis Times* newspaper on April 17th, 2020, about the implementation of the SU program. Through these efforts, the Marengo SU site reported receiving community referrals for SU services, feedback from consumers and community stakeholders, and an increased awareness of SU services offered in the community.

Other Significant Achievements

- Despite challenges entering the jail and the hospital, West Alabama was able to develop a robust caseload from community referrals, reviewing daily arrest logs, and contacting former West Alabama consumers that were presenting at ERs and jails.
- The case manager was able to help several consumers receive needed resources, including food vouchers and clothing, through the Stepping Up Services.

Sustainability

Marengo County prepared a detailed 2020-2021 sustainability plan, in which they outline three specific goals: 1) **strengthening partnerships with stakeholders**; 2) **conducting training models** to educate and support the resilience and re-acclimation of consumers into society; and 3) **community mobilization** to help provide professional intervention services, mental health screenings, face-to face advocacy, and referrals to SU program. In order to achieve these goals, Marengo county outlined methods they will implement. In order to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders, they will utilize shared decision making "to foster support and advocacy of renewed commitment to maintain the SU program dialogue." The plan also includes at least one training model to include stakeholders during monthly meetings. Trainings will be provided by staff, and stakeholders, on ways to utilize local resources to help educate Marengo County on Stepping Up, mental illness, and treatment services. Stakeholders including The Ministerial Alliance, clinicians, therapists, staff at Bryan Whitfield Memorial Hospital, and members of the police department will be invited to monthly meetings to engage, participate, and present in these workshops.

Finally, the team aims to implement a "Mobile Crisis Team at WAMH," to support enhancing recovery through peer support, with the understanding that personal experience shared with SU consumers can help to offer coping strategies and community relationships to navigate the program more successfully.

Table Summary of Year Two Stepping Up Site Outcomes: Jails

Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe	East Alabama	Indian Rivers	North Central	West Alabama	Total
# of individuals referred by the jail	873	134	17	150	197	**1371**
# of inmates screened for SMI	6,829	134	*2,581***	120	37	**9,701**
# of inmates that screened positive for SMI	873	82	17	113	23	**1108**
# of inmates that received a Mental Illness Assessment	873	36	7	11	23	**950**
# of inmates confirmed as having SMI	873	27	7	11	37	**955**
# of inmates screened for SA	6,345	134	17	120	37	**6653**
# of inmates that screened positive for SA	2,716	93	17	113	26	**2965**
# of inmates that received a SA Assessment	22	134	7	3	26	**192**
# of inmates confirmed as having a Substance Addiction	22	95	5	3	26	**151**
# of inmates referred to Stepping Up (SU) Services	873	21	8	150	46	**1098**
# of inmates that received SU case management services	71	21	7	118	46	**263**
# of case managed clients that were employed	0	1	1	40	15	**57**
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	71	6	3	70	38	**188**
# of inmates referred to mental health treatment	71	21	4	10	46	**152**
# of inmates that received mental health treatment	71	21	4	8	46	**150**
# of case managed that were re-arrested	3	0	0	2	5	**10**
# of inmates that go to ER after original arrest	1	0	0	2	25	**28**
Average length of time in jail after re-arrest (Days)	14 days	-	-	-	7 days	**N/A**

**Approximation based on number of individuals booked into jail between March 15th-Aug 31st , 2020

Table Summary of Year Two Stepping Up Site Outcomes: Hospitals

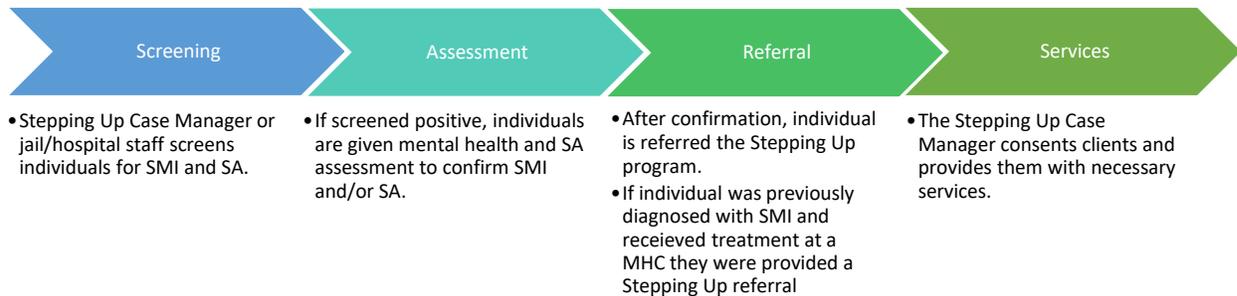| Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe	East Alabama	Indian Rivers	North Central	West Alabama	Total
# of patients referred by the hospital	63	2	1	15	25	**28**
# of patients screened for SMI	63	2	1	15	25	**106**
# of patients screened positive for SMI	63	2	1	6	16	**88**
# of patients that received a Mental Illness Assessment	63	2	0	6	25	**96**
# of patients confirmed as having SMI	63	2	0	6	16	**87**
# of patients screened for a SA	63	0	1	15	25	**63**
# of patients that screened positive for SA	10	0	1	Unk	10	**10**
# of patients that received a SA Assessment	10	0	1	Unk	8	**19**
# of patients confirmed as having SA	10	0	0	Unk	8	**18**
# of patients referred to Stepping Up Services	63	0	0	15	25	**103**
# of patients that received case management services	63	0	0	2	25	**90**
# of case managed clients that were employed	0	0	0	Not measured	9	**9**
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	63	0	0	Not measured	25	**88**
# of patients referred to mental health treatment	63	0	0	6	25	**94**
# of patients that received mental health treatment	63	0	0	6	25	**94**
# of patients from ER that returned to ER	5	0	0	0	4	**9**
# of patients from ER that were arrested	0	0	0	2	0	**2**

**Data is pending from site.

SUMMARY OF YEAR TWO OUTCOMES

As with the previous year, data collection proved to be a challenge since many jails simply did not have the technological infrastructure to measure and provide the data 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. This issue was compounded by the COVID-19 epidemic because the jail staff had less time and ability to focus on data collection while dealing with such unprecedented circumstances and changes in policies. Although mental health centers and hospitals had more robust data collection systems, the pandemic created additional barriers to data collection due to competing priorities.

Despite these challenges, 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. SMI screenings were only *verifiably* implemented in two jails and because hospitals were Ground Zero for COVID-19 treatment, it is difficult to assess how consistently screenings were conducted.

Although implementation may vary from county to county, the figure below maps out the process at the foundation of the Stepping Up program

Screening	Assessment	Referral	Services
• Stepping Up Case Manager or jail/hospital staff screens individuals for SMI and SA.	• If screened positive, individuals are given mental health and SA assessment to confirm SMI and/or SA.	• After confirmation, individual is referred the Stepping Up program. • If individual was previously diagnosed with SMI and receieved treatment at a MHC they were provided a Stepping Up referral	• The Stepping Up Case Manager consents clients and provides them with necessary services.

It is important to note, that 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 mental illness, the case manager referred them to mental health treatment.

Below is a summary of the data collected by **all five** Stepping Up Alabama Counties in Year Two. Please note that the sites did not begin seeing clients until January 2020. 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 2020 – September 2020)

9,701 inmates were screened for SMI; **6,653** inmates were screened for SA

SMI Assessments	SA Assessments	Services	Referrals	Rearrests
•**1,108** (11%) inmates screened positive for SMI •**950** (86%) of those that screened positive recieved a MH assessment •**955**(86%) were confirmed for SMI*	•**2,965** (45%) inmates screened positive for SA •**192** (7%) of those that screened positive received an SA assessment •**151** (79%) inmates were confirmed for SA	•**1,098** inmates were referred to Stepping Up •**263** (24%) inmates received case management services •**Upon release:** •**57** (22%) former inmates were employed •**188** (71%) former inmates had stable housing	•**152** inmates were referred to mental health treatment •**150** (99%) consented to and received mental health treatment	•**10** (4%) of the 263 case managed former inmates were re-arrested •**28** (11%) of the 263 case managed former inmates presented at the ER after original arrest

* Some former clients were confirmed as SMI based on MHC records.

Screenings and Assessments Conducted in the Hospital Systems by All Counties (January 2020 – September 2020)

106 individuals were screened for SMI; **104** individuals were screened for SA

SMI Assessments	SA Assessments	Services	Referrals	Returns to ER
•**88** (83%) patients screened positive for SMI •**96** (109%) of those that screened positive recieved a MH assessment[+] •**87** (99%) were confirmed for SMI	•**21** (20%) patients screened positive for SA •**19** (90%) of those that screened positive recieved an SA assessment •**18** (86%) were confirmed for SA	•**103** patients were referred to Stepping Up •**90** (87%) patients recieved case management services •**Upon Release*:** •**9** (10%) patients were employed •**88** (98%) patients had stable housing	•**94** patients were referred to mental health treatment •**94** (100%) received mental health treatment	•**2** (2%) of the 90 case managed patients were re-arrested •**9** (10%) of the 90 case managed patients returned to the ER

[+] Some former MHC clients received an assessment although they did not screen positive.
*We were unable to collect this data consistently across all counties.

Total Individuals Served through Year One Stepping Up Alabama – Jails and Hospitals (January 2020 – September 2020)

9,807 individuals were screened for SMI; 6757 individuals were screened for SA

SMI Assessments	SA Assessments	Services	Referrals

• **1,196** (12%) screened positive for SMI
• **1,046** (87%) of those that screened positive recieved a mental health assessment
• **1,042** (87%) of those screened positive were confirmed for SMI
	• **2,986** (44%) screened positive for SA
	• **211** (7%) of those that screened positive recieved an substance abuse assessment
	• **169** (80%) of those screened positive were confirmed for SA
		• **1,201** were referred to Stepping Up
		• **353** (29%) clients recieved case management services
		• **Upon Release*:**
		  • **66** (19%) were employed
		  • **276** (78%) had stable housing
			• **246** were referred to mental health treatment
			• **244** (99%) received mental health treatment

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

RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNED

Education of Jail Systems, Law Enforcement, Courts and Hospitals

The greatest lesson learned across sites has been the importance of trust and collaboration. To successfully implement the Stepping Up model, the systems that directly impact individuals who are seriously mentally ill must be committed to working together. This will require an unprecedented level of trust. Trust that each entity will live up to their commitments and trust that shared resources will be used for the client's best interest. The most salient way to build trust is through education, follow up and follow through on commitments and consistency.

To that end, it has been important for each Stepping Up site to be intentional about providing stakeholders with 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 jail staff and law enforcement about the Stepping Up program. It is also important to provide training to medical staff, particularly in jails that contract out medical services. It is critical that Stepping Up staff share relevant data and information and follows up and through on commitments made with stakeholders. This will help build trust in the Stepping Up program and garner buy-in from the jails because they will understand the program's benefits.

This year, some counties were shining examples of how providing education, building trust, and leveraging relationships have resulted in positive outcomes. Both AltaPointe Health and East Alabama Mental Health were able to develop such deep relationships with jail administration that they were granted space in the jails. AltaPointe, by relying on existing relationships and East Alabama, by having the staunch support of the County Commissioner. Staff at North Central was also able to leverage relationships to maintain a presence in the local jail in spite of COVID-19. Much of this was due to the positive work of Stepping Up in Morgan County and the time spent providing resources to the community outside the scope of mental health. Although Indian Rivers was unable to consistently remain in the jails, the crisis trainings they conducted throughout the county helped them gain the trust necessary to foster collaborative efforts that resulted in conditional releases for several clients.

Enhancing Data Systems in the Jail Systems

Collecting current and historical data from the jails proved to be a challenge this year due to the wide variation in technological infrastructure and database capacity within the county jails. Another issue was that several data points were not in the purview of the jail. In order to measure progress related to Stepping Up we ask jails to collect on the following *four variables:*
- % of individuals with SMI booked in jails,
- length of stay in jail for people with SMI,
- connection to assessment and treatment for people with SMI, and
- Recidivism for people with SMI

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 most counties**. Only one jail was collecting consistent, electronic data on mental health screenings. Only three sites were able to provide data on length of stay. Not all sites were able to provide data on recidivism, and none of the jails were able to report on connections to treatment. These limitations greatly impacted our ability to highlight the true impact of the program.

Jails will need to be made aware of the importance of capturing this data. They also need the *capacity* to collect this data effectively and efficiently. 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 to track improvements made over time. Time must be taken to investigate ways in which the state can provide the jails with cost-effective, user-friendly, 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.

Necessity of Increased Social Service Programming

Many people are experiencing new or worsening issues regarding their mental health due to the stress of the pandemic and the challenges the pandemic has brought along with it, leading to an even greater need for mental health services and a change in how those services are provided. In addition to that, COVID-19 has made connecting already established clients to resources more arduous, and this increase in clients requesting new services and reenrolling in services is pushing Alabama's mental health system to the brink.

Individuals with serious mental illness require supports to remain out of our jails and ERs. In addition to appropriate therapies and medication management, these client's basic needs must be met. Therefore, our case managers must first ensure that all clients have consistent housing, food, and clothing. One major barrier encountered by all case managers was linking their clients to needed basic services. Most case managed clients were not gainfully employed and lacked a source of stable income. Therefore, most case managers provided their clients with assistance with application for benefits, housing, jobs and GED classes. They also assisted clients in accessing affordable medications and prescription discounts, social support and activities, and transportation. All sites cited a dearth of resources to assist in keeping their client's stable. One site highlighted two major issues in the system:
- The current food stamp assistance policy should be updated so individuals with a mental illness and a pending disability case are allowed to receive food stamps until their case is ruled upon.
- The length of time it takes an individual with mental illness to obtain disability benefits must be decreased because currently the process can take up to two years for the disability determination.

Addressing these two issues alone could decrease criminal behaviors among individuals with a mental illness who are trying to gain access to needed resources.

Another site highlighted the need for:
- Additional affordable supportive housing resources
- Flexible, affordable transportation resources
- Educational programming
- Linkages to pro-social activities
- Funding to support mental health treatment for those without 3rd party payer sources

Having these and other resources in place will assist clients in remaining compliant and focused on managing their mental health.

Lessons Learned – Site Responses

When asked what lessons were learned, each of the counties responded with their unique perspectives. Broad themes included:
- Importance of communication and creating protocols and to enhance data collection
- Need for documenting information
- Necessity and cost effectiveness of linking individuals with serious mental illness to appropriate care in lieu of long jail sentences
- Lack of available social service resources needed to keep clients stable, such as housing, employment and education opportunities, and transportation
- The importance of cross sector communication and collaboration (e.g., between courts, hospitals, jails, and mental health)
- Need for case managers to assist clients with compliance related to court dates and mandates
- Educating jails on the importance of documenting and sharing information.

Specifically, counties described the following lessons learned:

AltaPointe

- "That for the mental health population, being in jail can do them more harm than good. Instead of incarceration, we really need to intervene to get these individuals the proper help needed through treatment in order for them to be able to think rationally and make rational decisions that will result in them staying out of the criminal justice system."

East Alabama

- "There are very little resources in Chambers County. For example, there are no facilities for homeless people and some of the inmates we are serving are homeless."

Indian Rivers - Tuscaloosa

- "The biggest lesson in Tuscaloosa is how much each department can stand to gain from communicating and collaborating with one another. Before Stepping Up, there was not much communication between the hospital, the jail, and Indian Rivers regarding mental health care. The necessity for that communication and how much the community can benefit from better transitions of care is a huge lesson we learned from this program.

North Central/Limestone

- "The importance of creating networks with valuable resources including organizations like Recovery Organization of Support Specialists
- The need to continually communicate with community partners and establish/recruit new partners
- The importance of establishing system protocls and gathering data as the program proceeds
- Only about 4% of clients screened for Stepping Up services have a bachelor's degree or higher. About half of clients screened do not have their high school diploma or GED equivalent. Education creates opportunities.
- It is more cost effective and efficient for clients to access mental health treatment in the community versus during incarceration
- Essential to assist clients with compliance with court date and mandates

West Alabama

- "The programs greatest lesson learned was the importance of communication to collect needed data between jails and hospitals, and the importance of learning how to document information. "

STEPPING UP ALABAMA: YEAR TWO 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 – AltaPointe

A 38-year-old AA male consumer, who lives with his mother and wife, was experiencing severe paranoia, anxiety, and depression from December 2019 to July 2020. He was arrested for 3rd Degree Domestic Violence. Prior to the arrest he was a Peer Specialist with AltaPointe but lost his position in 2019 due to increased symptoms and causing a hostile work environment. He also went to Mobile Infirmary ER in the beginning of February 2020 due to his increased symptoms. The Case Manager met the consumer while he was detained at Mobile County Metro Jail. The consumer was referred to AltaPointe through Naphcare (Psychiatric Department) and the consumer's mother also reached out to AltaPointe staff for assistance. The case manager coordinated individual therapy and psychiatric services/medication monitoring and also provided case management services.

The consumer is currently receiving individual therapy and robust clinical services. He has regained compliance with his medications and is adjusting well to his new medications. He has been attending all treatment appointments and has been in consistent contact with his case manager. When the Stepping Up Team first started working with him while in Metro, he was told he could not come home. Fortunately, because the Stepping Up team intervened, he was able to return home with his mother and wife and has been working on improving those relationships in therapy. He is looking forward to regaining employment and moving into his own home with his wife.

Success Story #2 – AltaPointe

Case Manager met 46-year-old African American male while working down at Mobile County Metro Jail promoting the Stepping Up Initiative program. This consumer had been arrested for domestic violence on March 4, 2020. Prior to enrolling in Stepping Up, the consumer had not been engaged in services since 2019 and his chart had been closed at Altapointe. He was also homeless and had a history of substance abuse (cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamines), and his primary diagnosis was Major Depressive Disorder, recurrent, moderate.

The case manager enrolled the consumer in the Stepping Up program and worked to ensure services were in place upon the consumer's release. The consumer was released from jail on Thursday, March 26, 2020 and the case manager connected him to mental health services by Friday, March 27. The consumer receives family therapy psychiatric/medication management services and is actively engaging in individual

therapy every two weeks. Through family therapy, his family members have educated themselves on how to better assist the consumer and cope with his mental illness.

This man was also homeless prior to going to jail, but the case manager was able to link him to housing assistance by placing him in a local boarding home that partners with AltaPointe Health. He was also connected to disability benefits and is insured by Medicaid/Medicare. The consumer reports that he has decreased his use of substances since June 2020 and has a positive outlook on his future now that he has stable housing and is psychiatrically stable. Consumer is hoping that his relationship with his mother will improve in the future and is working hard during individual and family sessions to address problem areas that negatively impacted their relationship. Consumer is also working to obtain sobriety and independent living arrangements.

Success Story #3 – East Alabama

One specific consumer was helped with alleviating barriers to admittance to BIT, including having her felony reduced to a misdemeanor. She was ultimately admitted to BIT and stabilized. She is currently living independently and employed.

Success Story #4 – Indian Rivers

One client's story began on June 10, 2020, when a potential client was referred by the Tuscaloosa County Jail to Indian River's Stepping Up social worker. The jail social worker referred the individual to Stepping Up, reporting that they had diagnosed the patient with a serious mental illness as well as a substance use disorder. The individual had a history of multiple arrests, hospitalizations, and admittances to the local hospital's inpatient psychiatric facility as well as a persistent inability to continuously engage in treatment for their mental illnesses. Their disability had even led to ties with their family becoming strained and severed. Through a collaborative effort between Indian Rivers and the Sheriff's department, a warm hand-off of the patient was arranged for June 15, 2020, where officers drove the client directly to Indian Rivers after being released from jail. Once they arrived, the client was assessed, assigned to the Stepping Up social worker, and an appointment was scheduled with a CRNP for prescription management.

On June 23, 2020, when the client came back for their first clinical appointment, the Stepping Up social worker noted the client exhibited symptoms such as paranoia, flight of ideas, and delusions and overall presented an agitated affect. However, the IRBH nursing staff was able to administer the patient's medicine and the Stepping Up social worker was able to get to know the client and create an individualized treatment plan matching their personal needs. We learned that the client had become homeless after their stay in jail, lost their disability benefits, and had no transportation. The Stepping Up social worker met with the client weekly, driving them to Indian Rivers for various treatments, interviews, and working to recover the benefits they needed.

As the client's court date drew nearer on July 9, 2020, their circumstances had drastically improved. The client was actively participating in treatment, was once again receiving disability benefits, and had been reenrolled in Medicaid. The Stepping Up social worker joined the client in court to report the client's situation to the judge and advocate for what the client needed to avoid future rearrests and hospitalizations as well as live a healthier life. The judge decided the client was appropriate for a court diversion program that would mandate the client to participate in treatment for mental illness.

Currently, this client is living in a supervised, treatment-based living arrangement awaiting the court to set a date that will allow them to enter the diversion program. The Stepping Up social worker was able to reinstate the client's income and insurance, manage medication, help to feed the client, and secure housing for them. Stepping Up was able to fill a gap in services that put this client in a much better place to receive treatment and improve their life. Through Stepping Up, Indian Rivers provided this client an opportunity they had not had before and has given them the chance to live a safer and more fulfilling life.

Success Story #5 – Indian Rivers

For another client, communication and collaboration between Indian Rivers Behavioral Health, the Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Department, and the Tuscaloosa County Court System not only improved this client's outcome, but also shows the level of priority these political appointees feel towards the issues Stepping Up seeks to alleviate and sets a precedent for how Stepping Up can influence policy change.

On the week of July 13, 2020, Indian Rivers was working with a local judge and the Sheriff's Department to create a conditional release for an Indian River's patient who had recently been arrested. The client had a long history of serious mental illness and substance use but had been sober nearly a year before a relapse led to another arrest. They had a history of convictions, hospitalizations, commitment, and inpatient psychiatric treatment. The family of this client was involved in their treatment and helped to provide a support network for the individual.

On July 16, 2020, this client was released from jail on a newly created conditional release for Stepping Up clients and placed in an emergency stabilization unit. The Stepping Up social worker met the client the same day to assess the client's mental illness and substance use, explain the conditions of their release, and create their individualized treatment plan. She spoke with the client about why they had relapsed and their response was that the stress of the pandemic had led them to feel that their sobriety no longer mattered. While the client was in crisis stabilization, the social worker scheduled appointments for continued treatment post-discharge and communicated with the client's family to learn more about the network of support the individual had available. The social worker also reached out to the substance abuse therapist the client was previously receiving treatment from, reenrolling the patient in group therapy, and collaborating with the clinician to provide comprehensive. Since the client's discharge

from the stabilization unit, the Stepping Up social worker has managed to keep them engaged in weekly treatment, active in group therapy, up to date on medications, and maintaining sobriety.

Success Story #6 – Limestone County

BH – BH was charged with Violation of Probation because she violated her Order of Protection against her husband. BH was released on the condition that she would be in Stepping Up. The case manager submitted a Case Plan and, with client consent, shared with the judge so the judge would be aware of the case management services that would be provided. BH has made positive progress including avoidance of any accidental contact with the alleged victim and beginning full time employment.

Success Story #7 – Limestone County

CT – CT was charged with Domestic Violence against his wife. The case manager learned that CT had a substance misuse problem that contributed to his anger issues. Upon CT's release from jail the case manager worked with the client and his family to link to needed services including job opportunities. Today, CT and his wife are doing well. CT is working and family hopes to move to better housing soon.

Success Story #8 – Limestone County

SS – SS felt like she hit rock bottom when she was in jail this last time. She had lost her son and her dad due to a car accident. She used drugs to cope with the pain of her loss. Upon release from jail, SS had no resources, however she was informed that if she were to get a photo identification, she would be allowed in a SUD halfway house where she could begin her recovery and start her life. The case manager worked with a local organization to get the resources for her identification. The case manager assisted SS with transportation to the SUD halfway house where the client was able to begin her new life.

Success Story #9 – WAMHC Marengo County

One of Stepping Up's success story consists of a young consumer that was in need of clothing due to financial distress. After the case manager explained the services Stepping Up could offer, the consumer expressed how services would be beneficial to his life. The consumer came to the facility to be enrolled as a new consumer in the program, where he was linked to mental health services and received clothing and food vouchers. He expressed to the case manager how the program provided a great resource for him. The consumer expressed that WAMH was there during his time of need and showed gratitude towards the case manager.

STEPPING UP YEAR TWO CONCLUSIONS

In spite of dealing with an unexpected and unprecedented pandemic, 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 working to serve 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 Two

The results of Year Two 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 2020, across five counties, the **Alabama sites administered validated SMI and SA screenings to almost 10,000 individuals in jails or in hospital emergency rooms and 1,196 individuals (12%) screened positive for SMI**. Of those who screened positive for SMI, these sites administered **a mental illness assessment to 1,046 individuals (87%) in the jails or hospitals. Over 1,000 individuals were confirmed as having an SMI, and 169 individuals were confirmed as having a substance addiction or co-occurring disorder.**

A total of **1,201 individuals were referred to Stepping Up Services**, and **353 individuals received Stepping Up case management services**. **Additionally, a total of 246 individuals were referred to mental health treatment after receiving mental health screenings**, and **244 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.

Challenges with Data Collection

Collecting baseline (previous year) and intervention (current year) data from the jails on the four key measures (% of individuals with SMI booked, length of stay, connections to treatment, number of inmates that were re-arrested) presented challenges because jails often did not have infrastructure for tracking these data consistently. However, because of the experience from Year One and the development of the QuickBase data system, each site was able to more consistently collect data on linkages to assessment and treatment and recidivism rates.

Overall, 87% of individuals who screened positive for SMI received a mental health assessment. This is an important finding as clients must consent to receiving an assessment. However, only 29% of individuals referred to Stepping Up services received services. This identifies an opportunity for the program model. Currently, clients must consent to receive case management services. It will be incumbent upon each site to identify additional methods to enroll clients into case management services. Capacity may also be an issue. During the inaugural Stepping Up year, there is only one case manager who has to be mindful of their caseload to ensure the provision of quality services. Therefore, in the subsequent years it will be important to monitor linkages to services and assist sites in seeking additional funding so they can increase caseload capacity.

During Year Two, of the ***353 consumers that received case management services, 12 were re-arrested, resulting in a 3.3% jail recidivism rate and 37 presented at the ER, resulting in a 10.5% hospital recidivism rate.*** These outcomes should be interpreted with caution because 2020 was such an abnormal year related to arrests, incarceration and hospital stays. However, 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[4]. Thus, these preliminary numbers are a good indication of the potential impact of Stepping Up.

As we continue to implement this program, the Training and Technical Assistance Team will continue to work with each site to ensure we enhance capacity to collect data on the four key measures.

Policy Changes

Change took place at the policy level across all sites in this year as a result of the efforts of the Stepping Up Initiatives. One significant example is in **Tuscaloosa County where Stepping Up has helped to establish a connection between Indian Rivers Mental Health Center, the Tuscaloosa County Jail, and the Tuscaloosa County Court System to test the benefit of conditional releases that mandate mental health treatment and enrollment in the Stepping Up Program**.

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[4] Wilson, A.B., Draineb, 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.

A second significant example is the **use of telecommunication equipment in Mobile and Chambers Counties to allow case managers to meet with inmates virtually,** allowing for safer interactions in a COVID environment, reducing the time officers have to spend transporting inmates, and increasing the number of inmates that can be screened and receive services.

A third significant example of policy change was in **Chambers County, where the case manager was able to cultivate a relationship with the jail physician, to ensure that individuals assessed as SMI, who required medication received a script from the mental health agency that is filled at the jail.** This new policy ensured that inmates that need psychotropic medications receive them in a timely manner.

These and other policy changes emphasize the importance of this program to ensure individuals with SMI or co-occurring disorders can be identified and gain access to the treatment and services they need.

Sustainability

Due to an expansion model supported by ADMH, all five counties received funding to sustain their program for another grant year. This decision indicates the deep level of support from ADMH to ensure these programs become part of the fabric of these communities. In addition to continued funding from the state, AltaPointe received a grant from the Justice and Mental Health Collaborative through the Bureau of Justice Assistance. This will enable them to hire a second case manager for their Stepping Up site. East Alabama was also able to secure funding from their County Commission, double the amount allocated the previous year. Indian Rivers is also seeking funding by writing grants in collaboration with the University of Alabama.

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 can achieve this through their excellent practices as "**Innovator Counties.**" Currently there are 537 Stepping Up Counties nationwide and 33 are Innovator Counties. Two of those Innovator Counties were funded through ADMH, Shelby and Mobile.

That Mobile County achieved Innovator County designation, and Chambers came close to achieving this status, demonstrates a significant achievement in their initial implementation year, particularly in the face of a pandemic. The fact that two jails were able to implement a screening and assessment protocol is a noteworthy accomplishment.

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, ADMH 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)."

Moving forward to Year Three, ADMH is expanding the infrastructure to support the creation of additional Stepping Up sites and the continuation of existing sites. This expansion will allow for more robust data collection efforts and consequently is beginning to put Alabama on the map as an exemplar of successful Stepping Up implementation and social change.