



STEPPING UP ALABAMA

YEAR THREE EVALUATION REPORT

2020-2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH). We thank Retired Commissioner Lynn Beshear, Current Commissioner Kim Boswell, and Associate Commissioner Dr. Tammie McCurry, and ADMH staff members Samantha Lawrence, Kimberly Malissa Valdes-Hubert, Leola Rogers, and Bernice Artis for their guidance, contributions, and collegiality.

We also thank other significant contributors including Cindy Gipson, Ph.D., LPC-S, Danielle Knight, MA, MSW, and Tavaris Goldsmith, MS from AltaPointe Health Systems Mobile County; Jamie Herren, Jimmie Dickey, Minnie Harrell, LPC-S, Jessica Driggers, MPA from East Alabama Mental Health Center; Karen Jones, Kathryn (Katie) McCurnin, LMSW, Samantha Burt, MA from Indian Rivers Behavioral Health; Lisa S. Coleman, William “Bill” Giguere, MA, Kathy Goodwin, MA, CM, Mary Pachol, BSW, CM, Jasmine Rebuck, LICSW, Eddie Hubbard, LICSW, Amanda Hawkins, LPC, NCC, Milla Wetzberger, LPC, NCC, Whitney Wilcutt, BS, and Ashlyn Vandiver, MSW from Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama; Patricia Moore, MS, Kitsy Dixon, Ph.D., MA, Jacqueline Reid, Shantina Miller, BSW, and Tanner-Lindsey Lyons, BS, from West Alabama Mental Health Center; Richard Fallin, LPCS, Rachel Newman, Regina Mims, RN, Sarah Sudd, from Central Alabama Wellness; Chris VanDyke, MA, Melodie Parsons, LICSW, and Mandy Stewart, BS from Wellstone Cullman.

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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 550 counties in 43 states have passed resolutions or proclamations to join the Stepping Up Initiative.

Stepping Up Alabama

As of May 2022, 26 of the 67 counties in Alabama have passed Stepping Up resolutions or proclamations. Between October 2018 and September 2021, mental health centers in **nineteen of the 26 counties** received grant funding by the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to implement this initiative – six counties in Year One (Oct. 2018 – Sept. 2019), five counties in Year Two (Oct. 2019 – Sept. 2020) and Year Three (Oct. 2020 - Sept. 2021) was opened to those eleven counties to receive one year contracts for up to \$50,000 award to support the continuation or re-establishment of the Stepping Up program.

County	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03
Etowah-Dekalb-Cherokee (CED) Mental Health Board, Inc. – Cherokee County, AL	✓		
Mental Health Board of Chilton and Shelby Counties – Shelby County, AL	✓		✓
Mountain Lakes Behavioral Healthcare – Jackson County, AL	✓		
Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Morgan County	✓		✓
Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Limestone County.		✓	✓
Wellstone, Inc. – Cullman County, AL	✓		✓
Wellstone, Inc. – Madison County, AL	✓		✓
AltaPointe Health – Mobile County, AL		✓	✓
East Alabama Mental Health Center – Chambers County, AL		✓	✓
Indian Rivers Behavioral Health – Tuscaloosa County, AL		✓	✓
West Alabama Mental Health Center –		✓	✓

County	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03
Marengo County, AL			

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.

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, training, and employment); recruitment for and facilitation of a local planning committee to create supportive local policies; and community engagement efforts to mobilize community support. In August 2020, the same RFP was released to replicate these services in new counties. Data on the counties funded by that RFP will be released in subsequent reports. In addition to the RFP released for new counties, an RFP was released to the previously funded eleven counties to provide continuation support for the project and re-establishment support to some mental health centers whose programs were impacted by COVID-19 and other circumstances within their community.

This evaluation report outlines the outcomes of nine community health centers funded for Year Three of Stepping Up Alabama (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021):

AltaPointe – Mobile	Central Alabama Wellness - Shelby
North Central – Morgan	North Central - Limestone
Wellstone - Cullman	Indian Rivers - Tuscaloosa
West Alabama - Marengo	Wellstone - Madison
East Alabama-Chambers	

YEAR THREE ACTIVITIES

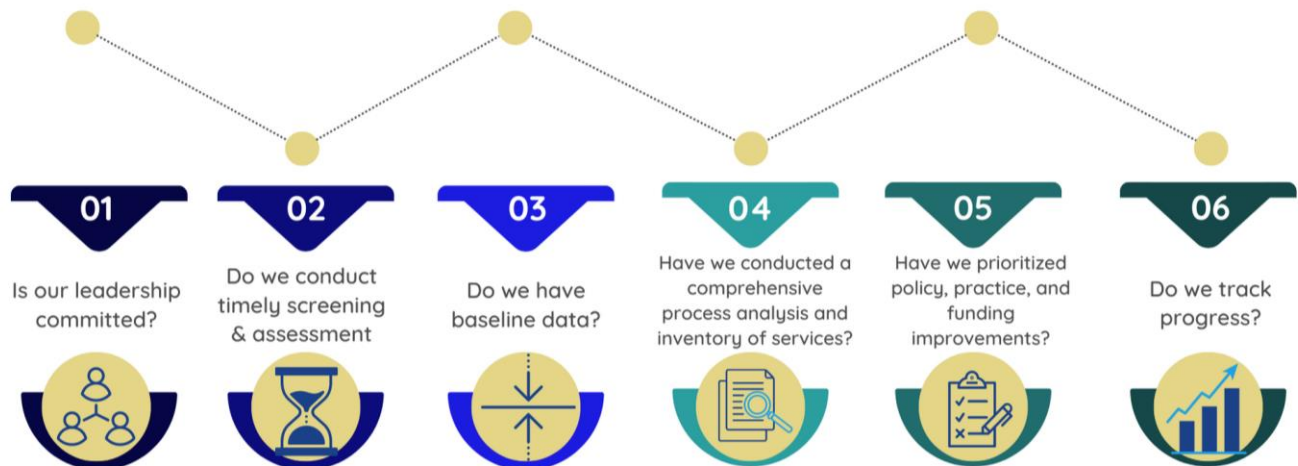
During the third year of the Stepping Up Initiative in Alabama, each of the nine counties made great strides in the implementation of the program and created impact on the communities they serve. Although these counties experienced unexpected challenges due to the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, **every county was able to serve clients with Stepping Up Case Management Services. Four of the nine counties were able to reach clients in *both* the hospital and jail settings.** Furthermore, **two counties were able to reach clients in the court setting.**

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. Over the years they have worked with these agencies, most sites 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 continue to 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 that 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”



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, hospitals and courts 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. Due to varying circumstances two counties also established a relationship with the local court system to receive referrals and conduct screenings. 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 conducted by the Stepping Up Case Manager or staff at the jails, hospitals, or courts. 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 linked to Stepping Up case management services. Upon confirmation, individuals were referred to mental health treatment; *if the individual consented to treatment*, he or she became a client of the Stepping Up Case Manager and was connected to additional supportive services provided through the community mental health center. This was the general flow, however, it is important to note that this process varied from county to county. However, what was identical across counties were the screenings, provisions of mental health assessments and the linkages to Stepping Up services to individuals with SMI and/or co-occurring substance addiction.

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. These sites had been trained in Year One on how to conduct Crucial Conversations and each site was asked to conduct at least three Crucial Conversations in their community. In addition, Kathy Goodwin, of North Central conducted group training on March 19, 2021 on Crucial Conversations to serve as a refresher for these. Despite the pandemic, **all sites conducted at least three Crucial Conversation presentations**, reaching 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, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, all sites conducted activities to promote the **Stepping Up Month of Action** in May 2021. 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 takes place during Mental Health Awareness Month. Examples of activities conducted 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 promotions on social media and on the organization’s website, as well as conducting training seminars

Finally, each site leveraged media to educate the public, about the Stepping Up efforts. These included 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 is outlined in the Site Summaries.

Continued Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

During this year, Stepping Up faced continued challenges in implementation and service delivery. 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. Intermittently, due to COVID-19 safety protocols, case managers were not allowed in the jails for a period of time. Even more so than in the jails, entry into the hospitals was 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 case managers were not allowed in the jails, several sites monitored the daily arrest records from the jails and cross-referenced 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. Other sites were able to utilize technology to conduct telehealth screenings and assessments when they were unable to physically go into the jail.

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 Three Stepping Up sites. The SU team members went above and beyond the

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

call of duty to make a difference in the communities they served, often putting their own lives at risk to serve our population.

DRAFT

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 five individuals: Kerri Pruitt, MBA, Kimberly Leslie-Patton, PhD, Kimberley Broomfield-Massey, PhD, Katie Clampit, LMSW, and Kelsey Hixson (not pictured)



Kimberly
Leslie-Patton, PhD



Katie
Mitchell Clampit, LMSW



Kimberley
Broomfield-Massey, PhD



Kerri
Pruitt, MBA

Each grant site received an orientation packet outlining 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 2021 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 jails, hospitals, and courts. 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.

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. Clampitt supported 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. Ms. Hixon provided support to Drs. Leslie-Patton and Broomfield-Massey, as well as to the sites as needed.

In addition to the scheduled monthly and quarterly calls, Stepping Up staff members at each site were able to contact any 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. The increase in virtual events allowed T/A team members to attend several events and provide support.

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. The table below describes the topics discussed at each meeting.

2020 Oct	Preparing for the Kick-Off Meeting; Assessments; Preparing Community Partners for Stepping Up	2020 Nov	Preparing Community Partners for Stepping Up	2020 Dec	Preparing for the Kick-Off Meeting; How to collect Baseline Data
2021 Jan	Preparing your Partners for Success	2021 Feb	Evaluation Tools Training & Review; Preparing for Semi Annual Report	2021 Mar	Sustainability; Semi-Annual Report Support

2021
Apr

Evaluation Tools
& Other
Deliverables

2021
May

Training Your
Stakeholders &
Community at
Large

2021
Jun

Getting Your
County on
Board for
Innovator
Status

2021
July

How to be
Successful in
Stepping Up:
Peer to Peer
Support

2021
Aug

Case Manager
Scenarios:
What you may
see in the field
and how to
address it?

2021
Sep

Innovator
Status &
Sustainability

To ensure the program was off to a strong start, the T/TA team convened the *Administrative Kick Off Orientation*. This meeting, held on January 22, 2021, included program managers from each of the mental health centers. These managers were also encouraged to bring at least 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. Due to case manager turnover at several sites and the onboarding of new sites, the T/TA team also hosted a three-day virtual training session for the case managers from each site on June 18th, 24th, and 25th. Day One was an overall introduction and overview to the Stepping Up project and objectives. Day Two 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 Three, in-depth training was provided on the QuickBase data system. At the end of the three 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 training sessions. The T/TA team tracked the completion of predetermined trainings and identified and scheduled additional trainings. Over the course of Year Three, the case managers completed the following trainings:

- JBS Mental Health Authority Adult Case Management Training
- Online SOAR Training
- 'Crucial Conversations' Training (conducted by Kathy Goodwin, North Central on March 19, 2021)

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
- Conduct survey year end survey

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 team continued to utilize 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 **secured 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 Mdata to the Alabama Department of Mental Health. Beginning March 24th QuickBase check-in meetings were conducted every Wednesday from 11am to 12pm. The purpose of the check-ins was to give the sites an opportunity to have access to the T/TA team regarding any QuickBase issues.

During the 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 and the Alabama Department of Mental Health can view and manage data from all sites. The Program Manager and Case Manager from each site were assigned a secure login and password that allowed them access to the system. The security features allow for the QuickBase Administrator to grant users varied levels 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. Minimal demographic data was required for inmates who were screened only (e.g., name, date of birth, screening outcome). Additional data was required for individuals that screened positive for an SMI

and/or substance addiction (e.g., previous diagnosis, the 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) was redacted from hospital patients unless the client screened positive for SMI **and** consented to Stepping Up services.

Each customized evaluation tool is also loaded in QuickBase for grantees to complete at the time indicated in the timeline they received. QuickBase also can collect multiple versions of each form so each site can update their forms as information changes.

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, hospitals, and courts. The baseline Excel spreadsheet had multiple tabs for the hospital, jail, or courts 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. In the rare case when sites were able to collect baseline data, they were returned to the T/TA team using encrypted emails and password-protected spreadsheets. Sites submitted this data twice during the grant year.

Unfortunately, only one site was able to collect baseline data. Collecting baseline data was an overall challenge for jails, hospitals and courts due to the lack of time to generate the data. In addition, some jails simply did not have the technological infrastructure to measure and provide the information that was requested. Also, many jails and courts were not screening inmates consistently for SMI or SA. Using the data from Their initial years and ongoing, the T/TA team plans to work with some specific sites to create case study reports analyzing change over time. However, we must 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, respond to suggestions and critiques of the system provided by our users, and build out reports to assist in data collection and analysis. During this grant year, the T/TA team worked 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. During the upcoming year we will continue to work with sites to refine and enhance reporting.

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 a 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 553 counties in 43 states that have passed Stepping Up Resolutions or Proclamations, *only 37 counties have achieved Innovator Status. In 2019, Shelby County achieved its designation as an Innovator County. In 2020, Mobile County received its designation, both counties earning this at the end of their first year of implementation in Alabama.*

2020-2021 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:

- Christy Miller from Naphcare (jail mental health contractor);
- Jennifer Sussman of the City Prosecutor's Office
- Mobile Infirmary Psych Intake/Social Work Departments; and,
- Deborah McGown (Mobile Director of Courts).

The AltaPointe Stepping Up team cited Jennifer Sussman, City Attorney, 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 pandemic altered everything, Stepping Up staff began receiving the referrals from Christy Miller at Naphcare, Metro Jail staff, City Attorney Jennifer Susman and other Attorneys through emails and phone calls. The jail allowed Stepping Up staff to come in and work as contractors under the Mental Health Department (Naphcare). The jail also provided the Stepping Up staff with access to all of their technology/medical records programs for the staff to access the information needed to complete job responsibilities. Metro Jail also set up equipment so the Stepping Up staff was able to meet with the inmates through telecommunications when they were not allowed in the jail due to COVID-19. The Mental Health Department (Naphcare) also started informing AltaPointe Stepping Up staff when certain inmates were released to their knowledge so that the case managers could follow-up with the individuals in the community.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

AltaPointe was able to work with Mobile Infirmary who submitted electronic referrals to Stepping Up. The Stepping Up Case Manager was able to follow-up with the individual once they were back in the community. This required intentional case management to follow-up with individuals to ensure they received the treatment and care they need before having to return to the local infirmary.

Building Community Awareness

Mobile County SU staff were able to effectively utilize Crucial Conversations to not only expand community awareness, 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**.

In addition to Crucial Conversations, AltaPointe Director of Public Relations, April Douglas, arranged and set up 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 and Mayor Stimpson. The second was coverage of the Stepping Up Zumba-Thon conducted by Case Manager and Zumba Instructor Tavaris Goldsmith. These and other activities provided AltaPointe Stepping Up with positive media attention.

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 which secures funding through 2023.** Finally, AltaPointe received additional funding through ADMH to open a crisis center in Mobile County which will provide a place for individuals to receive short-term stabilization services and be linked to the mental health center rather than being arrested or taken to the emergency room.

Success Stories

Client A is a 35-year-old, single, African-American male who has been diagnosed with Schizoaffective disorder, bipolar type. Consumer is disabled and receives \$850.00 monthly along with Medicaid. Consumer was living independently, but due to consistent decline in mental health stability, he had to leave his apartment. Consumer was arrested three times in 2020 before being enrolled in the Stepping Up program. During the last arrest, the consumer was arrested for Domestic Violence 3rd and Robbery 3rd. Consumer was admitted to Metro Jail displaying mental health symptoms and screened positive at booking. Metro Jail and Naphcare then contacted the Stepping Up program and sent the referral for the consumer to be further screened and assessed. The Case Manager first met the consumer at Metro Jail for the Stepping Up Initiative screening process. Consumer then was followed up on at his home once released from jail and at the boarding home where he resides currently. Stepping Up was able to get the consumer re-engaged back into mental health treatment, encouraged the consumer to take an injection to increase his medication compliance, found him appropriate housing, and connected him to intensive services under the Assisted Outpatient Commitment Program (AOT). This department provides the consumer with weekly case management services, weekly individual therapy, medications

monitoring, and monthly psychiatric appointments. Stepping Up Case Manager also completed additional follow-up with the consumer for treatment compliance.

DRAFT

Central Alabama Wellness – Shelby County, AL

Organizational Collaboration

Central Alabama Wellness partnered with a vast number of organizations to continue the Stepping Up program. Notable stakeholders include:

- Judge William Bostick
- Judge Corey Moore
- Judge Patrick Kennedy
- Judge Allison Boyd
- Shelby County District Attorney's Office
- Shelby County Public Defender's Office
- Shelby County Sheriff's Office
- Alabama Board of Pardons and Parole
- NAMI Shelby County
- Shelby County Community Corrections

Judge William Bostick serves as the Vice Chairman of the Stepping Up Planning Committee and is noted as a vital stakeholder to the overall success of the program in Shelby County.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Central Alabama Wellness receives referrals from Shelby County Jail once the initial screener has been completed on the individual and the results indicate signs of SMI and/or substance use. Each person who is booked in the Shelby County Jail is screened by intake staff. If they screen positive, they are referred to the Stepping Up Case Manager for further assessment.

Once an individual has been accepted into the Stepping Up Program, there is a “hold” the jail places on them so that they are not released without the case manager first being informed. This allows the case manager to facilitate services for the individual and ensure they are connected to the proper care prior to being released.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Due to COVID-19, Central Alabama Wellness was unable to partner with local hospitals for this grant period.

Building Community Awareness

Central Alabama Wellness attended several community events throughout the grant period to educate community members on the Stepping Up Program and the referral process. Crucial Conversations were also used as a tool to educate community members and key community partners. One significant accomplishment was meeting with Shelby County Bar Association to educate and encourage them to refer their clients to the program.

Significant Achievements

During this grant cycle, Central Alabama Wellness was able to fully integrate back into the jail system since COVID-19. This was a big accomplishment due to the jail restricting the program since 2020. This integration allowed the Stepping Up Case Manager to be part of the process from the beginning to ensure continuity of care and implementation of robust services. Since the case manager is involved in the whole process, they can schedule mental health appointments, apply for benefits, find housing, and arrange other important treatment services for the individual to reduce stress upon release.

Sustainability

Central Alabama Wellness has partnered with the Shelby County Health Foundation as a potential funding source for the Stepping Up program. They will also continue to seek funding through the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

Success Stories

Central Alabama stated that their success story for this year has been the change in the release protocol in the jail. The change in the release protocol now places a hold on Stepping Up clients. This means the CM will know when they are being released and can help facilitate their return to the community

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:

- Probate Court Judge Rob Robertson
- Sheriff Rob Abernathy
- Lauren Simpson LMSW - Jail social worker
- Chief Eric Bailey, Supervisor - Tuscaloosa County Sheriff/ Tuscaloosa County Jail
- Valerie Alford, Director - North Harbor (Inpatient Psych Unit at the Local Hospital)
- Jennifer Singleton - North Harbor - Northport Medical Center (DCH)

The site reported that Lauren Simpson, LMSW was the key stakeholder. According to the team, Ms. Simpson was an important part of continuing the relationship with the jail during COVID-19 and helping to find solutions for the program to continue despite closures and restrictions. The Stepping Up Program was able to continue to receive referrals and work with the jail to establish processes and protocols within the new guidelines.

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 was able to work collaboratively with the jail and court system. Everyone who is booked at the jail receives the mental health screener and if they show signs of SMI, they are referred to the Stepping Up Social Worker. The social worker can assess the individual in the jail and conduct the mental health assessment to determine eligibility for the program. Once the assessment is complete and SMI and/or substance use has been determined, the social worker is able to coordinate immediate services for care.

During this grant cycle, Indian Rivers also began receiving referrals from the court system. This included different Judges referring to the program. Any referrals received from the courts were able to be screened and assessed at the Tuscaloosa County Jail.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

A notable accomplishment during this grant cycle was the site's ability to re-establish a referral process from both the emergency department and the inpatient psychiatric unit. In addition, the Stepping Up social worker has been given approval and space to be present at the hospital 20+ hours per week to facilitate assessments and referrals in real-time. Our Stepping Up social worker is a master's level clinician who has been trained and/or certified to complete mental illness assessments and the ASAM substance use placement assessment to facilitate timely referrals to the most appropriate and needed services, resulting in real-time, immediate access to services. The Stepping Up Social Worker also receives direct referrals from the hospital staff in the inpatient psychiatric unit and the emergency

department. The Social Worker has established solid relationships with community partners to overcome initial barriers and gaps that were identified over the previous program year.

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 news stories. The team was interviewed by various media outlets for their involvement in Stepping Up, including coverage by ABC 33/40. 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.

The Stepping Up Planning team hosted a Behavioral Health Summit held at the University of Alabama Bryant Conference center and the media was invited to attend. There were approximately 80 attendees plus the presenters and the individuals on the guest panel.

Tuscaloosa County also held **Crucial Conversations** 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.”

Significant Achievements

The team reported a significant accomplishment being their ability to develop a very inclusive Planning Team and develop relationships with community partners who have helped to further actions towards goals. These relationships have helped begin bridging services and resources throughout the community and maintain momentum towards our goals even during the COVID pandemic and truly bringing awareness and teamwork to the process.

Sustainability

IRBH is working in collaboration with the University of Alabama to search and apply for grant funding from multiple sources. 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.

The site is also working to analyze and report their program outcomes to Tuscaloosa County Commission and the City of Tuscaloosa City Council to obtain funding.

Success Stories

Client A began Stepping Up in 2020. He was homeless, living in an abandoned home for a while, then on the street. He had a history of treatment for schizophrenia but had not received services or taken medications in years. He was also using illicit drugs to include marijuana and cocaine and drinking alcohol. He had experienced numerous encounters with law enforcement, many of those resulting in incarceration in the county jail. A Stepping Up referral was received from the District Court Judge presiding over his case. Through Stepping Up services, we were able to assist John with getting his benefits reinstated, a new state ID, and he was accepted into a semi-independent, apartment living

residential program with Indian Rivers. We were also able to assist with him being referred to and accepted into our Mental Health Program as an alternative to more jail time. He is scheduled to graduate from mental health court in February 2022 (it's a 12-month program) and is doing very well both in the mental health court program but also in his residential program. Through the residential program, we were also able to link him with very much needed medical services, dental health services, and eye care.

Client B was referred to Stepping Up from the hospital emergency department. She experienced multiple trips to the emergency department as well as inpatient psychiatric admissions, probate court commitments, and involvements with law enforcement. She is 20 years old and has received mental health treatment since she was a child. At the time of the referral, she was living at the Salvation Army homeless shelter after her mother put her out of the home due to repeated conflicts between the client and her stepfather. Through Stepping Up, she has been temporarily reunited with her mother while we work on securing housing. She is currently being considered for a semi-independent apartment-living placement in our residential continuum. Also, at the time of the referral, she was on an outpatient commitment order but not taking her medications as prescribed, having symptoms to include suicidal and homicidal ideation, paranoia, and delusions. Our Stepping Up social worker was able to secure an admission to our crisis residential unit to prevent another hospitalization and prevent a revocation of her outpatient commitment order. The outpatient order expired while she was residing in the crisis residential unit, which she successfully completed and is now staying at home with her mother until placement is secured. The Stepping Up social worker visited the client 2-3 times per week to encourage her and continue identifying needs and resources to meet those needs. If not for the Stepping Up social worker's additional support and encouragement, the client would have likely left the crisis residential unit against the staff's advice as she repeatedly voiced wanting to leave. She would, however, reach out to the Stepping Up social worker for advice, who would then go to visit her and provide guidance and encouragement to continue with the 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.

One improvement at the Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama is that they have strengthened their relationships with the jail, probation office, and community corrections office. As a result of this they were able to work in collaboration to provide more monitoring, more tailored effective services.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

With strengthened relationships with the community corrections office, they have implemented a prescreening process. This process includes meeting with the potential clients a week prior to utilizing the UNCOPE and Correctional Mental Health- Screening Tool and presenting the potential clients with information on the services that they can and cannot provide. It also includes an honest conversation on how committed the clients are to improving their situation. This has allowed Limestone County to focus on the clients that they can help and are committed to receiving the help that they need.

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.

Building Community Resources/ Overcoming Barriers

Limestone County has identified barriers within community resources including housing, substance abuse treatment and transportation.

Housing – Due to the housing shortage and the population in Athens growing exponentially, Limestone County was able to combat this by working with local churches that resulted in the allocation of 4 apartments which were leased out to tenants who would not be able to have housing. They were also able to outsource to social media to link clients to housing.

Substance Abuse Treatment – There is no inpatient substance abuse treatment facility in Athens. On the two occasions where there were clients that did return to jail, it was in result of using illegal substances. Limestone County provides outpatient treatment services but most of them have cost associated with them. The only free resources for Substance Abuse Treatment are ROSS (peer support) and Alcoholics Anonymous (12 Step Group). These organizations provide clients with peer support. To combat this, the therapist worked with clients that had/have problems with Substance Abuse focusing on why they often self-medicate that led to their initial use of Substance Abuse.

Transportation – There is no public transportation in Limestone County. To combat this, they have provided our clients with transportation for their basic needs. They also linked our clients to Social Skills teaching them how to acquire transportation from coworkers and other social environments.

Resources for Mental Health Treatment – Limestone County has learned that there is a definite need for Mental Health Services especially for persons who do not have resources or have limited resources. Due to the grant that pays for the Case Manager, they were able to provide many services to people in the community that had little or no resources

Significant Achievements

In Year Three, Limestone County set up a procedure to link clients to treatment utilizing the donated resources by the county commission. They were able to link several of the Stepping Up clients to therapy who did not have any resources.

They were able to provide services to the clients immediately after they were incarcerated. By becoming a liaison to the jail, they were able to link jail medical staff to medication information on our current patients who were recently incarcerated. This allowed our patients to immediately receive their prescribed medications. They were able to expedite the process, by getting authorization for the release of information signed immediately and assisting the process at the Mental Health Center. Also acting as the Liaison, they were able to assist the process for clients to be seen by the doctors and therapists while they are in jail.

Limestone expanded relationships within the community. They established relationships with the Department of Human Services and other charitable organizations.

Limestone reduced their recidivism rate from last year. They have been able to link their clients more effectively to the needed services.

Success stories

Client A: Client A was sentenced to receive Substance Abuse Treatment instead of prison time for multiple counts of Attempted Murder along with several other felonies. Limestone County coordinated and provided Client A with a Mental Health evaluation that followed the Substance Abuse Treatment facility protocol.

Client B: Client B was released from jail with no place to go. They met with him at his homeless camp and linked him to supplies that would make him more comfortable. These supplies included winter clothing, and other important items until they were able to assist him in receiving housing. Client B is now living in affordable housing.

Client C: Client C was incarcerated for use of illegal drugs. Client C was honest and open about their addiction to methamphetamines. Upon completion of an Inpatient Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, the CM provided Client C with transportation, emotional support, linkage to Mental Health Treatment, and assistance with housing. Client C has successfully completed her drug court requirements, and more importantly, has been clean and sober for over a year.

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.

- Mayor Woody Collins of Demopolis has been an advocate for Stepping Up. He is interested in ensuring that he is engaged and involved in promoting the program within the community.
- Judge Laura Shoultz-Hall was an advocate for the program by helping persons with SMI/MI issues understand the struggles they face. Her work advocated the need for stronger resources for those with MI/SA diagnoses in jails and ERs.
- Chief Keith Murray and Battalion Chief Greg Russell have also been advocates of the program as first responders to consumers that suffer from SMI/SA. They serve on the front line and make the evaluation call as to what services the consumers may need at that time.
- Commissioner Freddie Armstead has made sure we have received the information needed to help with collecting information that helps assess the 4 key measures of the Stepping Up Program.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

At Marengo County Jail, all individuals are screened using the Brief Jail Mental Health Screen, which is initiated upon booking, to confirm the need for further mental health evaluation. Based on the results of the screening, individuals that are known consumers of WAMH are referred to our organization for re-admittance into a therapeutic treatment program with a therapist. For individuals not in the WAMH system, the individual responses are evaluated from the Brief Jail Mental Health Screening to determine if individuals are suffering a mental health crisis and if so; individuals are referred as new consumers to the WAMHC and are scheduled for an intake appointment with a therapist, through our Access to Care Coordinator Access to Care Line 800-239-2901.

The Marengo County jail staff supports Stepping Up by emailing information on the program and by contacting Sheriff Richard Bates to help solidify data collection and reporting. Due to Covid-19, the number of referrals from the jail has been minimal, however during 2022, we anticipate strengthening our relationship with the jail, resulting in an increase in referrals to Stepping Up for persons with SMI/SA.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Marengo County has a positive relationship with Bryan Whitfield Memorial Hospital. Bryan Whitfield Memorial Hospital uses behavior observation to determine if an individual in crisis can be cleared to go home or be admitted into their psychiatric unit. If no crisis is determined by hospital staff, individuals are referred to WAMHC for an evaluation. Once inmates, or individuals, are stabilized by the hospital, or released from jail, they are referred for services at WAMHC, where an assigned therapist helps to form a treatment plan and referral for Case Management services with our Stepping Up Case Manager.

Once enrolled in the Case Management Program at WAMHC, the SUN-R is used to assess social, training, and vocational needs.

Referral Process

The process of receiving referrals from the hospitals is that once a person is cleared to be released from the hospital, the hospital calls our Access to Care Line to set up an outpatient appointment. Once the individual has been evaluated, if qualified they are referred to our Stepping Up program for case management. From October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021, 24 persons were referred to the Crisis Team and 12 Stepping Up from the Access to Care Line.

We have worked with the hospital staff to support Stepping Up by emailing them information on the program, calling them over the phone, and holding Crucial Conversations with the staff. This effort gained more support from the hospital staff which is why they attended the Planning Team Meetings regularly.

Building Community Awareness

West Alabama also held **three Crucial Conversations reaching 12 people** during the grant year. They found that Crucial Conversations led to an 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 in 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 increased awareness of SU services offered in the community.

Significant Achievements

The program's greatest accomplishments were being able to develop a caseload from their consumers that were already entered into the database here at WAMH. With that caseload, the case manager was able to help several consumers receive needed resources such as: food, clothing, housing, utility assistance and any other resources they needed. COVID-19 was a barrier in many areas throughout this fiscal year, but tremendous progress was made towards the end. The program looks forward to seeing many more accomplishments soon. Thanks to our TA team for the well-put effort.

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. 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 maintaining the SU program dialogue.” The plan also includes at least one training model to include stakeholders during monthly meetings. Training 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 quarterly 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.

Success Stories

One of Stepping Up’s success stories consists of a young consumer that needed 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 of WAMH and was opened as a new consumer. He received clothing and food vouchers. He expressed to the case manager how the program provided a great resource for him during his time of need and showed gratitude toward the case manager.

Another Stepping Up success story consists of a middle-aged consumer that was having a rough time shifting back into the community after being incarcerated from May 2018 to November 2020 due to a car accident. After getting back into the community and receiving Stepping Up services, she was able to get her life back, watch her children play sports (something she never got to do), and continue to watch all 4 grow. She still has flashbacks and nightmares about her past, but she is continuing to improve daily. Persistent contact with the case manager has allowed her to accept the challenges she faces. The consumer was very grateful for the SU program, and it helped her become the person she is today.

Every person that is referred is a potential success story, which makes WAMH want to strive to help this consumer in a positive manner through the consumer’s difficult times

Wellstone Inc. – Cullman County, AL

Organizational Collaboration

The Cullman County leadership was an important part of the continuation of the Stepping Up Program. Key stakeholders included:

- Judge Greg Nicholas
- Judge Wells Turner
- Judge Chad Floyd
- Circuit Clerk Lisa McSwain
- District Attorney Wilson Blalock

In the beginning of the year, it was Judge Turner who facilitated the meetings and expressed the most interest in the development of a Mental Health Court. It is his dockets that our case manager attends for referrals. Mid-Year Judge Nicholas took more interest and facilitated visits to Jefferson County and Madison County as well as acting as our contact for developing the paperwork and process. The DA's office is now involved. They came on the field trip to Madison County Mental Health Court and an assistant DA has been assigned as our contact.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Currently, the jail completes their own mental health screening and refers individuals to the Stepping Up Program. The program has received a few referrals from the Judge whose screenings were completed at the jail. The Assistant Warden Susan Black attended a Crucial Conversation presentation and planning meeting in February. Once there is a final plan for the start of Mental Health Court the site will need to make sure the related jail staff are educated.

Wellstone Cullman reports a strong working relationship with the court system. The Stepping Up Case Manager attends Judge Turner dockets. The Judge refers people to Stepping Up as they appear before him, and attorneys are also able to refer at that time or between dockets. The other judges are continuing a process established in 2020 of sending an email referral and ordering people to come to WellStone and follow-up on recommendations. These referrals are assessed by outpatient therapists and referred out for appropriate services if needed.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Wellstone has a masters level staff who evaluate people in the emergency room as ordered by the Probate Judge or requested by the hospital. Requests for evaluation are received by phone. The Wellstone staff can make referrals to the Mobile Crisis Team, WellStone Emergency Services, Case Management, or traditional outpatient services. This year the Program Manager has educated ER staff on the abilities and benefits of the Mobile Crisis Team and the new Wellstone Emergency Services Crisis Diversion Center.

Building Community Awareness

Wellstone utilized local media sources to raise awareness about the Stepping Up program and mental health month in May. There was a picture in the paper with the Mayor of Cullman declaring Mental

Health Month in May and Wellstone was able to collaborate to hold a festival called De-Stress fest to promote mental health awareness.

Significant Achievements

The site reports their most notable achievement being the established relationship between the site, the judges, and the District Attorney. Stepping Up is working with both entities to establish a Mental Health Court in Cullman County which will help connect people to mental health services and/or substance use treatment as needed.

Sustainability

The site did not provide sustainability plans.

Success Stories

The client came to Stepping Up with 3 different charges. At least one of the charges have been dropped due to the client participating in the Stepping Up program. The client was referred by the mental health center to the Stepping Up program due to multiple court cases. The Stepping Up program began providing case management services and facilitating discussions with judges and attorneys regarding the client and their service needs. After working with the Stepping Up program the client is now able to hold a job, has stable housing and provides her own transportation. The client has not received any new charges since beginning the program.

North Central - Morgan County, AL

Organizational Collaboration

The Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama experienced great success in their implementation of the Stepping Up Initiative. The Morgan County Alliance Committee meets once a quarter over Zoom. The committee consists of our champions/stakeholders from the hospital, jail, court, and various organizations that provide resources in the community.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Morgan County hired a new Case Manager who has reestablished relationships with jail staff and Psych team, and as of June 2020 have resumed routine screenings in the jail.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

Morgan County was still facing challenges with the hospital due to COVID numbers spiking in the area, but they did conduct a Crucial Conversation with hospital leadership to engage and educate on the value and benefits of the Stepping Up program. They did not receive referrals from the hospital during this grant year but are hopeful that their engagement efforts will help promote referrals during the next grant year.

Building Community Resources/Overcoming Barriers

Morgan County has identified barriers within community resources including housing, substance abuse treatment and transportation.

Housing - As of October 11, 2021, the most economical apartment available is \$415 a month. Many of these lower income housing areas have higher crime rates, poor leasing management practices, and tend to have higher levels of substance abuse. Apartments that are in “safer” locations can range from \$650-\$1000 a month. The Housing Authority currently has a 2-year waiting list. Clients who have received vouchers have had to receive 2-3 extensions due the housing shortage in the area.

Substance Abuse Treatment – There is no inpatient substance abuse treatment facility in Decatur. Morgan County does have outpatient treatment services, but most of them have cost associated with them. Their only free resource is Alcoholics Anonymous (12 Step Group). To combat this barrier, our therapist often provides supplement substance abuse treatment alongside their mental health treatment.

Transportation – Morgan County does have a public transportation system, but due to COVID the vans have run very limited routes with only 1 or 2 passengers at a time. Clients must call NARCOG in advance and pay a small fee to and from. This can be challenging for some clients.

Significant Achievements

Despite the many challenges faced due to COVID-19, Morgan County managed to continue to serve active Stepping Up clients in the community and screened an additional 36 new clients. Through donated resources by the county commission and community fundraising efforts, they were able to

link several of the Stepping Up clients to Outpatient Therapy and Medication Management services. These clients did not have insurance or financial resources to cover such services.

Morgan County were able to provide services to the clients immediately after they were incarcerated, and by remaining engaged with clients throughout their jail sentence they saw an increased success rate of maintaining engagement with clients once released. They also assisted to shorten jail time for clients by engaging defense attorneys and judges involved in the client's case and educating on the services the client would receive at the Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama upon release.

They maintained relationships within the community and met with our stakeholders regularly to ensure they were up to date on our progress and needs.

Sustainability

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They maintained relationships within the community and met with stakeholders regularly to ensure they were up-to-date on our progress and needs.

They have strengthened our relationships with the jail, probation office, and community corrections office. As a result of this they were able to work in collaboration to provide more monitoring, more tailored effective services. their clients know they have a team that is supportive and works together.

They have implemented a prescreening process. This process includes meeting with the potential clients a week prior to utilizing the UNCOPE and Correctional Mental Health- Screening Tool and presenting the potential clients with information on the services they can and cannot provide. It also includes an honest conversation on how committed the clients are to improving their situation. This has allowed us to focus on the clients that they can help and are committed to receiving the help that they need.

The team has become more efficient with processing Stepping Up paperwork. This has allowed them to put new clients in our system in less than twenty-four hours. As a result of this improvement, they can link clients to Mental Health Treatment and other services faster and more efficiently.

Success Stories

Client A: Client A was incarcerated for using illegal drugs which violated her probation. Client A was honest and open about addictions to methamphetamines. CM linked the client to a stepping up financial aid slot with the MHCNCA and was able to assist with scheduling an intake appointment a

week before the client was released from jail. Upon the client's release from jail, she came to her intake appointment for mental health treatment. CM has been monitoring the client's participation with Community Corrections, which monitors the client's sobriety, and the client has been cooperative since being released from jail three months ago. CM is assisting the client with finding activities to help build and strengthen interpersonal relationships. CM has also been providing emotional support to the client. Client A is working a full-time job and attends all mental health appointments on time. Most importantly, the client has been clean and sober for three months.

DRAFT

It is important to note that site summaries were not completed for Wellstone – Madison County and East Alabama – Chambers County. The summaries were not completed because due to staff turnover, and inconsistent data. At the end of the grant year, each of the two sites were focused on their searches for a new case manager. During the 2021-2022 grant year, the T/TA team will work with these sites to clarify, update and finalize their data.

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Table Summary of Year Three Stepping Up Site Outcomes: Jails

Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe - Mobile	Wellstone – Cullman	Indian Rivers	North Central- Limestone*	West Alabama	North Central- Morgan	Central Alabama	East Alabama – Chambers*	Wellstone – Madison*	Total
# of individuals referred by the jail	11,975	11	12	24	117	36	2997	76	63	15,311
# of inmates screened for SMI	11,975	6	12	23	56	36	2997	76	63	15,244
# of inmates that screened positive for SMI	901	4	12	23	23	35	114	53	61	1,226
# of inmates that received a Mental Illness Assessment	901	--	12	1	23	9	888	5	56	1,895
# of inmates confirmed as having SMI	901	3	7	11	37	9	88	9	57	1,122
# of inmates screened for SA	3,378	--	0	23	5	36	109	74	63	3,688
# of inmates that screened positive for SA	3,378	--	0	11	5	28	109	61	37	3,629
# of inmates that received a SA Assessment	3,378	--	0	0	17	25	109	2	19	3,550
# of inmates confirmed as having a Substance Addiction	3,378	3	--	0	17	10	109	5	10	3,532
# of inmates referred to Stepping Up (SU) Services	901	5	2	23	1	3	56	34	35	1060
# of inmates that received SU case management services <i>(includes those receiving services from previous years)</i>	92	1	0	27	17	6	68	10	12	233
# of case managed clients that were employed	5	--	0	--	1	6	N/A	--	--	12

Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe - Mobile	Wellstone – Cullman	Indian Rivers	North Central- Limestone*	West Alabama	North Central- Morgan	Central Alabama	East Alabama – Chambers*	Wellstone – Madison*	Total
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	92	--	0	--	17	4	N/A	--	--	113
# of inmates referred to mental health treatment	92	--	0	--	9	1	68	--	--	170
# of inmates that received mental health treatment	92	--	0	--	9	--	68	--	--	169
# of case managed that were re-arrested	3	--	0	--	2	--	10	--	--	15
# of inmates that go to ER after original arrest	5	--	0	--	0	0	0	--	--	5
Average length of time in jail after re-arrest (Days)	3 days	--	--	--	1 week	30 days	--	--	--	--

* This data is based on what was pulled by the T/A team from QuickBase from the timeframe of October 2020 – September 2021

**Approximation based on number of individuals booked into jail between October 2020 - August 2021

Table Summary of Year Three Stepping Up Site Outcomes: Hospitals

Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe - Mobile	Wellstone – Cullman	Indian Rivers	West Alabama	Total
# of patients referred by the hospital	63	1	9	27	100
# of patients screened for SMI	63	1	--	27	91
# of patients screened positive for SMI	63	1	--	16	80
# of patients that received a Mental Illness Assessment	63	1	9	27	100
# of patients confirmed as having SMI	63	1	9	16	89
# of patients screened for a SA	63	--	4	8	75
# of patients that screened positive for SA	10	--	4	8	22
# of patients that received a SA Assessment	10	--	4	8	22
# of patients confirmed as having SA	10	1	4	8	23
# of patients referred to Stepping Up Services	63	1	9	5	78
# of patients that received case management services	63	1	5	5	74
# of case managed clients that were employed	0	--	0	1	1
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	63	--	1	4	68
# of patients referred to mental health treatment	63	--	5	5	73
# of patients that received mental health treatment	63	--	5	5	73
# of patients from ER that returned to ER	5	--	--	0	5
# of patients from ER that were arrested	0	--	--	0	0

Table Summary of Year Three Stepping Up Site Outcomes: Courts

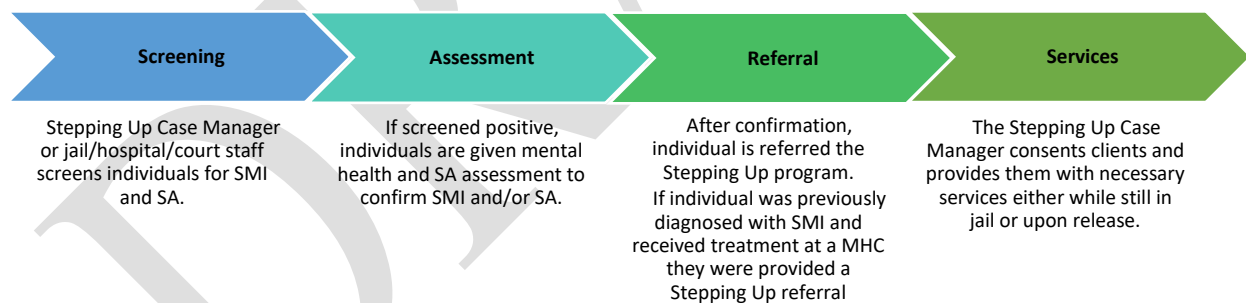
Stepping Up Alabama Sites	Wellstone	Indian Rivers	Total
# of individuals referred by the courts	--	10	10
# of individuals screened for SMI	41	10	51
# of individuals screened positive for SMI	32	8	40
# of individuals that received a Mental Illness Assessment	9	4	13
# of individuals confirmed as having SMI	9	5	14
# of individuals screened for a SA	1	3	4
# of individuals that screened positive for SA	1	3	4
# of individuals that received a SA Assessment	1	3	4
# of individuals confirmed as having SA	1	3	4
# of individuals referred to Stepping Up Services	9	1	10
# of individuals that received case management services	8	1	9
# of case managed clients that were employed	1	0	1
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	6	0	6
# of individuals referred to mental health treatment	8	4	12
# of individuals that received mental health treatment	8	1	9
# of individuals from courts that returned to courts	0	2	2
# of individuals from courts that were arrested	0	1	1

SUMMARY OF YEAR THREE OUTCOMES

As with the previous two years, 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, hospital and court staff had less time and ability to focus on data collection while dealing with unexpected COVID surges and changes in policies. Although mental health centers, hospitals, and courts had more robust data collection systems, the pandemic created additional barriers to data collection due to limited staffing for data management and other competing priorities.

Despite these challenges, case managers worked to implement a system with the jails, courts, and the hospitals that ensured 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 courts and because hospitals were Ground Zero for COVID-19 treatment and the referral systems with the courts were just coming online, it is difficult to assess how consistently screenings were conducted.

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



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.

SITE RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNED

To help improve programming and the T/TA approach, each site was asked to identify lessons learned and provide recommendations for the upcoming year. This section provides a summary of those responses.

Collaboration with Jail Systems, Law Enforcement, Courts, and Hospitals

The greatest lesson learned across sites has been the importance of trust and collaboration. To successfully implement and sustain 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, facilitated conversations to identify gaps, barriers and policy, 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.

One challenge among sites has been staffing issues such as increasing turnaround and loss of long-standing staff. Case managers have a crucial role in maintaining relationships with jail systems, courts, and hospitals. For example, Morgan County stated that due to Case Manager turnover, they were not able to enter the jail or hospital for quite some time. They hired a new Case Manager who has reestablished relationships with jail staff and psychiatry team, and as of June 2021, they have resumed routine screenings in the jail. Staff retention is crucial in maintaining important relationships and sustaining program activities among sites. In addition, it has been important for the sites to understand the staffing issues within the jails, courts, and hospitals. The staffing shortages within the jail, court, and hospital cause partners to have limited access to those venues and clients; however, it is important to not only have patience but to also collaborate in creative ways so partners understand the program is mutually beneficial to all parties involved.

In Year Three, COVID-19 pandemic remained a barrier to collaboration in local jails and hospitals. Many sites were not consistently present in jails, just gained permission to enter jails and were not able to access hospitals at all. With the ongoing challenge of the pandemic, both AltaPointe and Limestone County were able to maintain their relationships with jail administration. This year, some counties were shining examples of how providing education, building trust, and leveraging relationships have resulted in positive outcomes. Indian Rivers, 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. For example, during this grant year Indian Rivers conducted Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) to over 150 police officers throughout the state. Although Indian Rivers was unable to begin the grant year in the jail, their continuation of CIT helped them leverage the trust necessary to foster collaborative efforts that resulted in a conditional release for several clients. As a result of these efforts, they were able to re-enter the jail towards the end of the grant period.

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 and staff limitations in all sites. Another issue was that several data points were not in the purview of the jail. To measure progress related to Stepping Up we ask jails to collect on the following *four variables*:

- Percentage 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 in 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. Very few sites were able to provide data on recidivism, and none of the jails were able to report on connections to treatment. Due to the limitations of evaluating the supports we bring to the jails and costs associated, we have underestimated the impact of the program.

In addition to ensuring that jails understand 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 of 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. In addition, we expect that once staffing issues stabilize within the hospitals and the courts, this data will also be made available.

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 re-enrolling in services is pushing Alabama's mental health system to the brink.

Individuals with serious mental illness require support 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. However, currently the SOAR program is working to address this prevailing issue.

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:

- Stakeholder leaders, county commissioners, and policymakers' involvement is essential to make changes needed
- Consistent internal team communication is key
- 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, mental health and crisis centers)
- 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.
- Centering the social determinants of health such as food, shelter, and medication make a difference in recidivism rates
- Internal team investment in the project is crucial
- Beginning new programs and processes in long established systems takes ample time

STEPPING UP YEAR THREE CONCLUSIONS

In spite of dealing with an unexpected surge within this 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 **jails, courts, 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, courts, and hospitals to direct their financial and staff resources to more appropriate individuals.

Individuals Served through Stepping Up Alabama Year Three

The results of Year Three 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 2021, across five counties, the **Alabama sites administered validated SMI and SA screenings to over 19,000 individuals in jails, courts, or in hospital emergency rooms and 1,346 individuals (7%) screened positive for SMI.** Of those who screened positive for SMI, these sites administered a mental illness assessment to **2,008 individuals (67%) in the jails, hospitals, and courts.** Of those who received a mental health assessment, **1,225 individuals were confirmed as having an SMI, and 3,559 individuals were confirmed as having a substance addiction or co-occurring disorder.**

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 the sites often did not have the staffing or infrastructure for tracking these data consistently, nor adequate staffing to support services. However, because of the experience from Years One and Two and the development and enhancement of the QuickBase data system, each site was able to collect data more consistently, support linkages to assessment and treatment and decrease recidivism rates.

Overall, 67% 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 28% 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 grant period, each site was provided funding for one case manager who must 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 Three of the **316 consumers that received case management services, 15 were re-arrested, resulting in a 4% jail recidivism rate and 5 presented at the ER, resulting in a 2% hospital recidivism rate.** These outcomes should be interpreted with caution because 2021 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-arrested². 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. In addition, the T/TA team is working with the sites and the states to reduce the data collection burden. The community mental health centers are also experiencing higher than normal rates of turnover which is making consistent data collection a challenge. As such, in the upcoming years, changes will be made to the program requirements to meet the issues the sites are facing. However, these changes may result in a difference in the type of data the T/TA team is able to report on.

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

Policy Changes

Change took place at the policy level across all sites in this year because of the efforts of the Stepping Up Initiative. One significant example is in **AltaPointe Health where the City Attorney Office has been very vital to the Stepping Up Initiative. Jennifer Susman took the initiative and has expanded the program to where it can be offered in Municipal Court as a Treatment-based Sentencing Alternative Program.**

A second significant example is in **Indian Rivers; despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Tuscaloosa County Sheriff gave Indian Rivers permission to place their Stepping Up masters-prepared social worker physically at the jail daily. This agreement has also been facilitated the same with the local hospital.** The social worker will split her time daily between the jail and the hospital emergency department, facilitating assessments, referrals, linkage, and advocacy.

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 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. Due to receiving additional grant funding, AltaPointe was able to hire a second case manager to support the Stepping Up Program. Central Alabama Wellness has worked with their local planning committee to identify additional funding options. They are currently pursuing additional funding from local agencies. 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 553 Stepping Up Counties nationwide and 37 are Innovator Counties. Two of those Innovator Counties were funded through ADMH, Shelby and Mobile.

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 Four, ADMH is expanding the infrastructure to support the creation of additional Stepping Up sites and the continuation of existing sites. This expansion includes opportunities for counties who are not currently involved to become a Stepping Up County. The Alabama Department of Mental Health has a goal of every county in the State of Alabama to be part of the Stepping Up Initiative. The State of Alabama should consider working with the Sherriff’s professional groups, county commissions, and wardens to offer education and support to address gaps and barriers such as social and ecological infrastructure to ultimately reduce and prevent recidivism.