

STEPPING UP ALABAMA

2021-2022



YEAR FOUR EVALUATION REPORT

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



Stepping Up Alabama









As of September 2022, 27 of the 67 counties in Alabama have passed Stepping Up resolutions or proclamations. Between October 2018 and June 2022, mental health centers in **seventeen of the 27 counties** received grant funding by the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to implement this initiative.

However, the Alabama Department of Mental Health has 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 June 2019, the same RFP was released to replicate these services in **new** counties. In 2020, an RFP was released to the previously funded eleven counties to provide support for continuation of the project and re-establishment support to some mental health centers whose programs were impacted by COVID-19 and other circumstances within their community.

ADMH also opened the application process for interested counties to receive funds to initiate their own Stepping Up program. New sites were onboarded quarterly in cohorts. Lawrence, Talladega, and Tallapoosa counties began their program in January 2021; Washington and Russell counties began their program in April 2021; and Baldwin, Clay and Jefferson counties began their program in July 2021.

County	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03	Year 04
Etowah-Dekalb-Cherokee (CED) Mental Health Board, Inc. – Cherokee County				
Mental Health Board of Chilton and Shelby Counties – Shelby County				
Mountain Lakes Behavioral Healthcare – Jackson County				
Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Morgan County				
Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Limestone County.				
Wellstone, Inc. – Cullman County				
Wellstone, Inc. – Madison County				
AltaPointe Health – Mobile County				
East Alabama Mental Health Center – Chambers County				
Indian Rivers Behavioral Health – Tuscaloosa County				
West Alabama Mental Health Center – Marengo County				

County	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03	Year 04
Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama – Lawrence County.				
AltaPointe Health – Talladega County				
East Alabama Mental Health Center – Tallapoosa County				
East Alabama Mental Health Center – Russell County				
AltaPointe Health – Washington County				
AltaPointe Health – Baldwin County				
AltaPointe Health – Clay County				
JBS Mental Health - Jefferson				

This evaluation report outlines the outcomes of eight community health centers funded for Year Four of Stepping Up Alabama:

AltaPointe Health – Baldwin	East Alabama Mental Health – Tallapoosa
AltaPointe Health – Clay	East Alabama Mental Health – Russell
AltaPointe Health – Talladega	JBS Mental Health - Jefferson
AltaPointe Health – Washington	North Central - Lawrence

YEAR FOUR ACTIVITIES

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.

During the initial funding year for these Stepping Up sites (January 2021 – June 2022), each of the eight counties had varying levels of success in the implementation of the program. Most counties were able to develop relationships and work with the local jails and community at large. However, some counties faced insurmountable barriers related to finding qualified case management staff, lack of community interest and buy in despite signing letters of support prior to the awarding of funds, and denial of access to the jails, hospitals and courts.

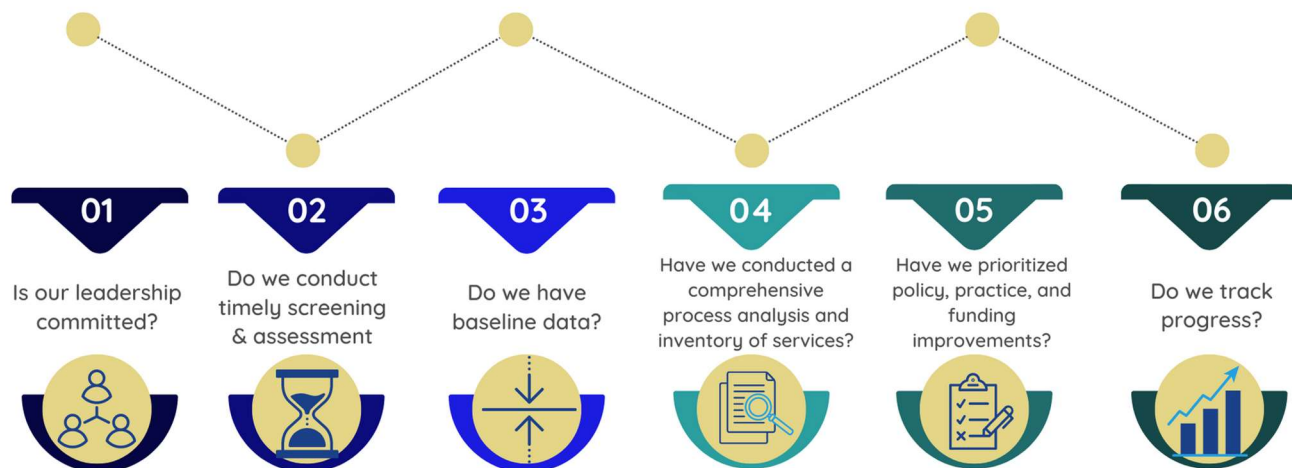
COVID-19 has had a lasting impact on the abilities of all local agencies. It resulted in major employee losses in every employment sector which impacted the ability of mental health centers to recruit and retain talented staff. The various waves of COVID also limited access to both jails and hospitals for health and safety reasons and staff limitations.

In spite of these challenges, **all eight counties were able to serve clients with Stepping Up Case Management Services**. Furthermore, **all counties were able to reach clients in jail settings and four counties were able to reach clients in the courts**.

Policy-Level Change: Planning Committees

At the policy level, change is only achieved through buy-in from community leaders and policy makers. In their grant proposals, each of the mental health centers submitted letters of support from key stakeholders. During the first quarter of the grant year, each site was expected to have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in place with key partners such as law enforcement, hospital administration and judges. A key component to the program was that **each county would convene and facilitate a planning committee** that included membership from various sectors of the community, specifically those engaged in county-level criminal justice and mental health planning. It is expected that during the planning committee meetings, much of the policy change work occurred. Through these meetings, community champions and various stakeholders are 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

All initial sites are given four months to ramp up services and build relationships. Beginning the fifth month, it is anticipated that on the individual level, case managers were expected to work with the jails, courts, and/or hospitals to develop a system that ensured **all** jail inmates, as well as individuals at Emergency Departments (EDs) who appeared to be mentally ill, were screened for serious mental illness (SMI) and substance addiction. Due to varying circumstances four of the counties, Baldwin, Talladega, Washington, and Jefferson, 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 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 referred to the Stepping Up case manager. 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.

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

In order to achieve change at both the individual and policy level, each county mobilized community support by conducting community education through a variety of outlets. First, sites conducted **Crucial Conversations**, a community engagement strategy designed in Year One by Markstein, a marketing communications agency. Crucial Conversations were conducted using slide decks designed to educate community stakeholders. These conversations sought to establish a common understanding of and a personal connection with mental illness, encourage ownership of the community issues at hand, and engage community stakeholders in identifying solutions. Most importantly, the Crucial Conversations tool communicated the importance of the Stepping Up Initiative. This year, The Dannon Project T/TA team worked with the Public Information Officer at the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to create individualized slide decks for each new county. Once the decks were disseminated, Dr. Leslie-Patton from the T/TA team reviewed the slide decks individually with the case manager at each site and described how to present the slides in a user-friendly manner. Once trained, each site was asked to conduct at least one Crucial Conversations in their community. **Four sites conducted 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 participated in the annual **Stepping Up Month of Action** that took place in 2021 -2022. 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 assist as they conducted a Stepping Up activity to recognize this “Month of Action,” which took place during Mental Health Awareness Month. Examples of activities conducted included hosting events to raise awareness, publicizing Stepping Up success stories in the media, and developing multiple promotions on social media, as well as conducting training seminars.

Finally, several sites leveraged media to educate the public about the Stepping Up efforts. These included broadcasts on the local news, press releases picked up by various media outlets, articles published in the local papers, and creating a presence on social media. Additional information on these efforts 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. Gaining entry into the hospitals and jails was extremely difficult, particularly the hospitals. Jails and hospitals were stretched thin due to limited staff and dealing with sudden waves of COVID-19 cases in their inmate and emergency department

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

populations. These barriers made it virtually impossible for hospitals to provide referrals. As a result, none of the sites were able to work with local hospitals during the grant period.

Despite the challenges, 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 began to monitor the daily arrest records from the jails and cross-reference them with their own databases to identify individuals with a history of serious mental illness (SMI) or co-occurring disorders. Once identified, the case managers reached out to these individuals once they were released from jail and, in some cases, conducted home visits to introduce Stepping Up (SU), complete SU Program enrollments, and connect these individuals with mental health services. Sites also increased their social media campaigns to increase public awareness of Stepping Up. 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, most sites were 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 Four Stepping Up sites. The SU team members went above and beyond the call of duty to make a difference in the communities they served.

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, Ph.D.
- Kimberley Broomfield-Massey, Ph.D.
- Katie Mitchell Clampit, LMSW
- Kelsey Hixon, 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

Description of T/TA Service	
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 developing 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 departments.
7	Provide reminders of National Stepping Up training and webinar schedule.
8	Provide assistance to support planning and implementing planning team meetings.
9	Provide assistance with planning May, Stepping Up Day of Action activities 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. Provide assistance to sites regarding Quickbase documentation and training.
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	Provide monthly T/TA calls with administrators and monthly T/TA calls with case managers at the end of each month to discuss progress towards goals and issues which may arise.
15	Provide data collection and evaluation support through quarterly evaluation calls with administrators and case managers.
16	Coordinate any support needed with the National Stepping Up Office.
17	Coordinate with sites and ADMH for any and all media releases or stories
18	Attend partner meetings, Crucial Conversations, or other events that arise as needed and scheduling permits.
19	Provide support to sites with partner surveys, client surveys, and gaining feedback from partners and clients on the Stepping Up program.
20	Assist sites with applications to become Innovator Counties and coordinating submission with the National Stepping Up Partners.
21	Other needs as they arise.

Ensuring Fidelity to the Stepping Up Model

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

The Dannon Project team customized each of the tools in the handbook to align with Alabama’s unique implementation of serving both jails and hospitals. Additional customizations were made to align with implementation in the 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 opportunities 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. Clampit supported Dr. Leslie-Patton to identify training needs of the case managers and provide support related to working with individuals within the correctional system. Dr. Broomfield-Massey worked with the sites to review the types of data to be collected from the jails, courts, 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 questions related to data collection forms and evaluation tools disseminated. Ms. Hixon supported monthly reporting, and Collaboration Meetings, conducted searches for resources and training opportunities, and assisted the team as needed. Mrs. Pruitt ensured that the project deliverables were implemented within the timeline and

guidelines of the ADMH contract. The Dannon Project IT Coordinator also supported Quickbase IT requests.

In addition to the scheduled 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, evaluation meetings, and individualized technical assistance, when possible, the T/TA team attended electronically 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.

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” During these monthly 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. In response to a request from the sites, the Learning Collaborative was streamlined to a one-hour meeting. The T/TA also garnered input from the sites on topics that were important to them and provided opportunities for experienced sites to present on best practices and lessons learned. The table below describes the topics discussed at each meeting.

2021 Jan	Preparing your Partners for Success	2021 Feb	Evaluation Tools Training & Review	2021 Mar	Sustainability
2021 Apr	Evaluation & 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;
Community
Support of
Stepping Up

2021
Sep

Engaging your
Stakeholders
with Stepping
Up Outcomes –
Dr. Cindy
Gibson

2021
Oct

Review End of
Year Reports
Discussion: What
are the barriers
to the success of
your Stepping
Up program

2021
Nov

QuickBase
Discussion:
What are the
barriers to the
success of you
Stepping Up
program

2021
Dec

Presentation
from the
Council of State
Governments
Justice Center
on Stepping Up
progress and
future goals

2022
Jan

Follow up from
Dec. National
Presentation
Discussion:
Challenges in the
jails and with
filling positions

2022
Feb

Value Added
Services: Why
do they need
us –
Richard Fallin

2022
Mar

Final Report
Template
Review
Discussion:
Lessons learned
from Mr. Fallin's
presentation

2022
Apr

Data Review
New Reports in
QuickBase

2022
May

Discussion of
BJA grants
Introduce
monthly
reporting
system

2022
Jun

Testing monthly
reporting
system
Review Updates
to Stepping Up
website

To ensure the program was off to a strong start, the T/TA team convened three *Administrative Kick Off Orientation* meetings. These meetings, held on January 22, May 7, and August 31 in 2021 were specifically for program managers and key community stakeholders. 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. The T/TA team also hosted three rounds of three-day virtual training sessions for the case managers from each site in June 2021, September 2021, and February 2022. 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 training and identified and scheduled additional training. Over the course of Year Four, 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 (if available)
- Submit a Sustainability Plan
- Submit a Mid-Year and Final Report

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

- Sample MOUs for use with partners
- Project Coordinators Handbook
- Validated SMI and Substance Addiction tools for use in the jails (i.e., Brief Mental Health Screen, Correctional Mental Health Screen, UNCOPE)
- Mid-Year Reporting Template
- Sustainability Plan Template
- Connections to Relevant Trainings (i.e., ORAS)
- Final Report Template

Another valuable resource made available on the Stepping Up website is the Strategy Lab. This search engine assists sites in finding resources used and best practices conducted across the nation. This Strategy Lab enables sites to search for articles, templates and presentations.

Collecting Data

This year, the T/TA team made great strides in data collection efficiency through the expansion of The Dannon Management Information System (DMIS) called QuickBase. QuickBase is a database that serves 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 data to the Alabama Department of Mental Health. Beginning March 24, 2021, QuickBase check-ins 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 issues with QuickBase.

Each grantee was asked 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. With jail inmates, minimal demographic data was required for inmates who were screened only (e.g., name, date of birth, screening outcome). Additional data was required for clients that screened positive for an SMI and/or substance addiction (e.g., previous diagnosis, 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, courts, and hospitals. The baseline Excel spreadsheet had multiple tabs for the hospital or jail to provide aggregate, individualized, and in-depth data (redacted for hospitals) on individuals touched and/or screened for SMI and/or SA in CY2019 and CY2020. In the few instances where this data was collected, the T/TA team met with the sites to discuss methods in which the files could be sent.

Collecting baseline data was a challenge, particularly from the jails, because some jails simply did not have the technological infrastructure to measure and provide the information that was requested. Also, many jails were not screening inmates consistently for SMI or SA. Only one site was able to collect aggregate baseline data from the jail. The remaining sites were unable to acquire any baseline data. In subsequent years, the T/TA team will work with that site to present a case study on the impacts of Stepping Up services within the community.

Collecting Data: Moving Forward

This year was the inaugural year for these grantees. The T/TA team took time to train the grantees, respond to suggestions and critiques of the system provided by our users, and train case managers on how to generate the reports built into the system. During the upcoming grant year, the T/TA team will continue to build out reports in the system using input from grantees to ensure data quality and report on program outputs and impacts. Currently, using the QuickBase application requires double data entry on the part of the Case Manager; however, as we have a more stable case management team structure, 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 565 counties in 43 states that have passed Stepping Up Resolutions or Proclamations, *only 43 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**. In 2023, the T/TA team will assist Baldwin County in completing an application to become an Innovator County.

2021-2022 STEPPING UP ALABAMA – SITE SUMMARIES

AltaPointe Health – Baldwin County, AL (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)

Organizational Collaboration

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

- AltaPointe Health Adult Outpatient Nurse Staff
- Baldwin County Corrections Therapist, Katrina Colley
- Baldwin County Sheriff's Office, "Hoss" Mack
- Baldwin Circuit Court Judge, Scott Taylor
- Baldwin County Probate Judge, Harry D'Olive

The AltaPointe Stepping Up team cited Baldwin County Sheriff Hoss Mack and Judge Scott Taylor, as key stakeholders for their program. They noted that both individuals were instrumental in providing referrals, creating systems which allowed the Stepping Up Team to screen and assess incarcerated individuals, and developing and growing the Planning Committee for community wide change. Through strategic planning and partnerships, the Stepping Up team was able to expand their screening and assessments beyond Baldwin County Jail to also include Daphne City Jail, Fairhope City Jail, Robertsdale City Jail, Foley City Jail, and Orange Beach City Jail, Baldwin County Mental Health Court. The Stepping Up Case Manager travels to each of the smaller locations to complete more in-depth screenings and assessments on those who screen positive for mental illness at booking.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails and Courts

Stepping Up Case Manager, Kimber Mirabella, and other members of the AltaPointe Baldwin County team had a close relationship with the Baldwin County Jail. All individuals who are booked in the Baldwin County Jail are screened for mental illness using the intake/screening form developed by the Baldwin County Stepping Up Team that includes the Brief Jail Mental Health Screen. Those who screened positive are referred by the jail to the Stepping Up Case Manager. The case manager also reviews the daily bookings and cross reference those with AltaPointe records to determine if anyone incarcerated is a current or previous client. Once the referral has been received, the case manager coordinates with jail staff to set up a meeting with the referred individual to complete their assessment. If the individual meets the eligibility requirements of the program, the case manager provides routine follow-up with the individual and jail staff until the person is released. The case manager worked very closely with the jail's therapist to receive needed information for individuals in the program such as medications, progress notes, and other data.

AltaPointe also established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the newly formed Baldwin County Mental Health Court. This court was established by Circuit Court Judge Scott Taylor who quickly became a champion for the Stepping Up Program. This partnership provided referrals to the program and also provided a level of accountability to the clients to follow through with the program services and work with the case manager to establish consistent care.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

AltaPointe focused their efforts on working with the jails and the courts during this reporting period.

Building Community Awareness

Baldwin 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 with additional resources. During the grant year, they conducted **three Crucial Conversations**. Marketing materials were also created to spread awareness throughout the community and to potential stakeholders.

Sustainability

The AltaPointe Stepping Up program implemented an aggressive sustainability plan for securing funding, including 1) the engagement of the County Commission to receive annual funding through a developed proposal; 2) consistent contact with the courts and District Attorney's office to receive referrals and potential funding; and 3) actively seeking state and federal grant opportunities. AltaPointe will continue to look for funding opportunities and increase partnerships in the community to sustain the Stepping Up program.

Success Stories

Client 1

The Stepping Up Case Manager received a referral from Mental Health Court for the patient. She was released from jail and sentenced to treatment and the Stepping Up program. The patient had been incarcerated multiple times and had not been compliant with treatment in the past. Upon referral to Stepping Up, the case manager was able to assist the patient in receiving stable housing, supportive services, mental health treatment, medication management, and other life skills needed to be successful. The patient is currently living at the boarding home and doing well. She is compliant with treatment, taking her medication as prescribed and has a positive outlook on her life and future.

Administrative/Policy Level

In October 2021, AltaPointe established a partnership with Baldwin County Mental Health Court. This became a great source of referrals and contributed to the success of the Stepping Up Program and the clients because the clients are held accountable for treatment by the court. The results of this partnership are increased referrals, increased compliance of clients, and overall long-term success and improved outcomes. The court will continue to partner with Stepping Up to provide referrals and help to increase community awareness about the program and its positive effect on the community.

In addition, Ms. Mirabella has established a deep partnership with the Baldwin County Correction Therapist. Through this partnership, they have been catalysts for data driven changes in Baldwin County. The most significant gap was related to inmate release and access to medication and psychiatric care. Ms. Mirabella worked with a local pharmacy to create a lay-away program to ensure clients remain stable on their medication and that finances are not longer a barrier to optimal mental health. She worked with the jail and courts to establish mental health care prior to release.

AltaPointe Health – Clay County, AL (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)

Organizational Collaboration

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

- Ashland and Lineville Police Departments
- City Magistrate
- Department of Human Resources

The AltaPointe Stepping Up team acknowledged Ashland Police Chief, Joseph Stafford, as the champion for the project. The site reported Chief Stafford was instrumental in solidifying the partnership with Clay County Jail and assisting the team in problem solving ways to engage the court systems with the program. He also assisted the team in understanding the day-to-day operations of the police and the booking process for Clay County Jail. Chief Stafford also provided help in identifying grant opportunities for sustainability of the program.

Other key stakeholders were the city magistrate and the Department of Human Resources. The city magistrate provided support in opening avenues of communication with judges and city/county organizations. The Department of Human Resources provided insight into inmate needs while incarcerated and upon release. As a result of the partnership, DHR is providing food assistance to inmates upon their release from jail. The Stepping Up team values their stakeholders because this collaboration ensures that all parties have a better understanding of the need to identify individuals with SMI while in jail and effective ways to reduce the recidivism rate of these individuals.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails

Unfortunately, there was not enough staff for all inmates to be screened at booking. However, Stepping Up (SU) Case Manager, Jackie Angel, and other members of the AltaPointe Clay County team worked closely with the Clay County Jail. Ms. Angel was hired in February 2022, eight months into the grant year. Once she was trained, a system was set up in which she went into the jail weekly and screened individuals based on referrals provided by the jail. Once the case manager established the person met Stepping Up eligibility requirements, she provided routine follow-up until their release date. She updated Quickbase and the Electronic Health Record with all services provided in the jail and upon release.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

AltaPointe focused their efforts on working with the jails and the courts during this reporting period.

Building Community Awareness

Clay 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. As a result of Crucial Conversations, AltaPointe was able to successfully form a partnership with Clay County Department of Human Resources who agreed to assist individuals in applying for food assistance once they have been released from jail.

Sustainability

The AltaPointe Clay County program would like to expand Stepping Up services into the courts and hospitals moving forward. Chief Stafford is also working with the team to apply for grants which will allow for continued funding and a mental health liaison for the jail. AltaPointe plans to offer training to collaborative partners to engage partners at a greater level and possibly secure community funding to help sustain the program.

Success Stories

The greatest lesson and overall success story would be realizing that consistency in attempting to reach a community is vital to obtaining success. Clay County is very rural, and it can be difficult to convince a rural community to implement a new program which they have never heard of. When the Stepping Up organizers initially tried to engage with the community, there were several members who were not interested.

The team noted the first couple of meetings were chaotic and although the community did not understand the program itself, they were reluctant to listen to the details of the program. The success came when Stepping Up staff met with a few of the leaders and had the opportunity to explain exactly what the Stepping Up program is and how it would benefit the community. They were given ample time to explain the program and discuss any concerns /issues. The leaders were very interested and looked forward to bringing the information to the community.

The monthly team meetings were very successful as each member participated in discussing ideas and plans. These discussions would sometimes run over the allotted meeting time because the team was so engaged in the planning and saw the significance of the Stepping Up program within Clay County. The barriers the team had to overcome to get to where they are today with this community has proven to be worth it. The leaders of the community are now fully supportive of the Stepping Up program and are looking forward to many shared success stories within Clay County.

AltaPointe – Talladega County, AL (January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021)

Organizational Collaboration

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

- Talladega County Jail Captain, Shea Brown
- Nurse from Quality Correctional Health Care
- Sylacauga Housing Authority, Robert Blanchard
- Talladega Behavioral Health Systems
- Talladega City Police Lieutenant, Jimmy Thompson (Champion)
- Talladega City/County Police Sheriff, Jimmy Kilgore
- Private Citizens, Decorey Hale
- Talladega County Jail, Amy Brown and Danielle Austin

Stepping Up Talladega identified the aforementioned organizations and individuals as key members of their planning committee. These individuals and their organizations were instrumental in providing guidance, encouragement, and the opening of doors with community stakeholders.

Stepping Up Services in the Jails and Courts

Stepping Up Case Manager, Yamira Danso and other members of the SU team have a close relationship with their key stakeholder, Talladega County Jail. Ms. Danso is dynamic and proactive and has opened lines of communication between Stepping Up and Law Enforcement and the court systems. Because the Talladega County jail does not screen for mental illness or substance use disorders. Therefore, the case manager cross referenced the jail census with the AltaPointe database to identify clients that need to be screened. In addition, jail staff referred inmates that exhibit sign of serious mental illness for screening. In addition to the relationships with the jail, the case manager developed relationships with local judges. Ms. Danso would also contact judges offices regularly to receive names of justice involved individuals at risk for recidivating. Ms. Danso and the SU staff were working to implement SU as a condition of their release.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospital

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Stepping Up has been unable to access local hospitals, and have not yet established a working relationship with emergency rooms. A key goal of the next grant year is to establish relationships with the hospitals.

Building Community Awareness

The Talladega County Stepping Up team identified engaging the media by running radio and television ads in May 2021 to promote the kickoff event for Stepping Up. In addition, to the radio and television promotion, they hosted a community event on May 15 for the Stepping Up Month of Action. This event had great community support with donations from local businesses and attendance from the local fire department, food truck vendors, and had a kids corner with games and story time. In addition, Crucial

Conversations were an important way to garner support for the program. The site conducted a Crucial Conversation in November with the Housing Authority.

Sustainability

The program has several goals for the next reporting period including building relationships with local hospitals and the community, expanding the planning team, determining effective ways to communicate data to the community and planning team, and establish an efficient tracking method of preparing reports for the planning committee. In addition, the Talladega County Stepping Up program is seeking continuation funding through the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

Success Stories

Collaboration and access to the jail was a huge success although access to the local hospitals was difficult due to COVID-19 restrictions. Access to the local hospital will be a priority for the upcoming grant year. The planning team has slowly grown and evolved, and they have, after several months, were able to identify a Champion. They will continue to encourage community partnerships and grow the planning team in the next planning year.

AltaPointe – Washington County, AL (April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022)

Organizational Collaboration

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

- Case manager, Ms. Haley Dickey
- Local law enforcement and jail staff
- County commissioners
- Probation and paroles
- A representative from Washington County District Court
- Probate judge of Washington County
- Staff from the Washington County Department of Human Resources
- Washington County Commission
- Chatom Police Department
- Probate Judge, Nick Williams (Champion)

Planning meetings were held quarterly, and Judge Williams, Mr. Caldwell Adams, who attended on behalf of the district judge, Mr. Donald Greene, a probation officer, and Ms. Ashley Carlock, the Washington County DHR director attended meetings regularly.

Stepping Up Services in the Jail and Courts

Case manager Ms. Haley Dickey conducted Brief Jail Mental Health and UNCOPE screenings at Washington County Jail. Initially, limitations placed by the jail allowed Ms. Dickey to screen referred inmates weekly, but as time elapsed, the jail agreed to more frequent screenings. Because of lack of a suitable jail in Choctaw County, Washington County incarcerates individuals from Choctaw County. As such, some individuals screened were from Choctaw and were referred to West Alabama Mental Health. Ms. Dickey provided vital instrumental support including transportation to appointments, obtaining medications, exploring housing, and applying for benefits.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospital

During Year 1, the Washington County Stepping Up Initiative was unable to execute an MOU with the Washington County Hospital administration. Despite this, the hospital administration was invited to quarterly planning team meetings and AltaPointe staff continues to build those relationships and provide support to the local hospital and emergency department.

Building Community Awareness

To draw attention to the program and connect to the community, Washington County Stepping Up invited the local news to their kick-off event. Stepping Up events were also posted on the public Washington County Facebook Calendar. Additionally, in order to build relationships with service providers, Stepping Up Washington County hosted a Cruical Conversation United Way of Southwest Alabama. In addition, the program is planning a walkathon to commemorate Mental Health Awareness Month and Stepping Up Month of Action, as well as inform the community of Stepping Up services.

Sustainability

Stepping Up Washington County is passionate to expand in order to serve more community members. Action items to achieve this goal include developing a partnership with the Washington County Hospital administration, having the Stepping Up Case manager attend bond and court hearings, and explore mental health appointment capabilities at the jail.

Success Stories

Client 1

A resident of Washington County with a support system that consisted of his sisters and his girlfriend. He had a legal history mostly due to substance use. He had four episodes with AltaPointe and had previously had a psychiatric hospitalization. While on a 72-hour hold, he screened positive for SMI and substance use disorder and was then referred to Stepping Up. This client was at risk of hospitalization due to posing a risk to himself or others. The case manager helped him manage scheduling, coordinate transportation, and attend appointments. Since accepting Stepping Up services, the client has had no further contact with law enforcement and has avoided hospitalization. The client has a positive outlook for the future and is receiving support applying for benefits.

Administrative/Policy Level

AltaPointe has expanded existing relationships with Washington County Jail and the Probate Court. Prior to the implementation of the Stepping Up program, AltaPointe conducted evaluation for the jail and court as needed. However, upon the implementation of Stepping Up, the probate judge of Washington County joined the planning team and became the program's champion. The judge has been instrumental in assisting AltaPointe in strengthening the partnership with the jail. Over time, the jail agreed to more screenings and to allowed for virtual mental health visits.

East Alabama - Tallapoosa County (January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021)

Organizational Collaboration

There were several individuals instrumental in the implementation of the Tallapoosa Stepping Up program, including:

- Initial Case Manager, Jessica Driggers
- Hired Case Manager, Tineka Wykoff
- Clinic Coordinator, Minnie Harrell
- Tallapoosa County Jail Admin, Blake Jennings, (Champion)
- Judge Storrie
- Tallapoosa County Sheriff
- Tallapoosa County Commissioner

Stepping Up Services in the Jail

Ms. Jessica Driggers was able to establish relationships with the Tallapoosa Jail staff and Sheriff, as well as the Nurse and Commanding Officer of the jail who were key for SMI referrals. Ms. Driggers and then Ms. Wykoff conducted Correctional Mental Health and UNCOPE screenings during weekly jail visits. It is important to note that Tallapoosa County suffered from staff shortages. Ms. Driggers worked in Tallapoosa county for the first 5 months of the grant period and Ms. Wykoff worked for four month. At the end of the reporting period, East Alabama did not have a case worker for Tallapoosa County. As such, although clients were screened and received services, continuity of care was lacking, due to staffing issues.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospital

Because of inconsistent staffing and interruptions in program flow, Tallapoosa Stepping Up was not able to provide services in the hospitals during this reporting period.

Building Community Awareness

In the beginning of the grant year, Tallapoosa Stepping Up identified several ways to build community awareness by engaging with the community. These included conducting Stepping Up presentations to the Chief of Police, the Probate Judge, and other individuals that will be instrumental on the planning team. Tallapoosa Stepping Up also set up tables at the Sherriff's Office County Rodeo and a series of community farmers markets. Finally, Stepping Up partnered with Community Action Agency of Tallapoosa.

Sustainability

The program had challenges with staffing during the reporting period. Ms Jessica Driggers filled in as the case manager for Tallapoosa County but was limited by also serving as case manager for Russell and Chambers. Ms. Driggers left in May 2021. Ms. Tineka Wykoff was with Tallapoosa from April – August 2021. After her departure, Tallapoosa was not able to hire another case manager before the reporting period ended. Because of this interruption, the program was unable to host the quarterly

planning meetings and Crucial Conversations, screen additional individuals, and enact other key areas of the program. Fortunately, Tallapoosa Stepping Up was able to hire case manager Ms. Sonia Francis February 2022. She served as case manager for Tallapoosa and Chambers County – during the program's next reporting period. The program has several goals for the next reporting period including finding and retaining a new case manager, build and maintain relationships with other counties, apply and receive the Crisis Center Grant, and identify more members to be a part of the planning team.

Success Stories

Because of inconsistent staffing and interruptions in program flow, Stepping Up Tallapoosa was unable to record any success stories during this reporting period.

East Alabama - Russell County (April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022)

Organizational Collaboration

Russell County collaborates with many partners and stakeholders in the area. The site identified several stakeholders who were instrumental in the success of the program including:

- Temporary Case Manager, Ms. Jessica Driggers
- Hired Case Manager, Precious Billing
- Judge Reverend Warren (Stepping Up Champion)
- Russell County Sheriff Heath Taylor
- Probate Judge Alfred Harden, Jr.
- Clinic Coordinator Minnie Harrell
- Russell County Jail Sergeant

Stepping Up Services in the Jail

Russell County's, initial case manager, Ms. Jessica Driggers, was able to establish initial relationships with the Russell County Jail and staff. She conducted Correctional Mental Health and UNCOPE screenings during jail visits. Through the establishment of this relationship, Ms. Driggers was able to conduct screenings in the jail and connect clients to the Stepping Up Program. Unfortunately, Ms. Driggers resigned from East Alabama in May 2021. Ms. Precious Billings was hired in September 2021, but was only employed for two months. In total, Russell County only had a case manager on staff for 4 months, which is not feasible for staging up a program such as Stepping Up. In addition, upon Ms. Driggers departure, the team was no longer granted access to conduct screenings in the jail.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospital

Because of inconsistent staffing and interruptions in program flow, Russell County Stepping Up was not able to provide services in the hospitals during this reporting period.

Building Community Awareness

Due to the limitations from inconsistent case manager staffing, Russell County Stepping Up was not able to host community planning meetings or build community awareness during this reporting period.

Sustainability

The program had challenges with consistency and staffing during this reporting period. Ms. Jessica Driggers filled in as the case manager for Russell County but was limited by also serving as temporary case manager for Tallapoosa and Chambers. Ms. Precious Billing was hired in September 2021 as a case manager but was not in the role long enough to effectively integrate into the program and keep it flowing. Ms. Billings resigned in November 2021. When a consistent case manager is hired, the program will be able to operate smoothly and consistently. Stepping Up Russell County has several goals for the continuation of the program. These include building up baseline data at the county jail, building and strengthening community relationships, screening every individual booked into the jail for SMI, and

hosting Crucial Conversations with the Sheriff's Office, Police Department, and other community stakeholders.

Success Stories

Because of inconsistent staffing and interruptions in program flow, Stepping Up Russell County was unable to record any success stories during this reporting period.

JBS Mental Health Authority - Jefferson, Blount, St. Clair (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)

Organizational Collaboration

JBS Mental Health Authority stated that all Stepping Up planning team members were influential in contributing to the progress of the Stepping Up Initiative. Notable stakeholders included:

- The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department
- The Jefferson County Circuit Judge
- Jefferson County Mental Health Court
- JBS Western Mental Health
- JBS Urgent Care Clinic
- JBS Probate Court
- NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- Jefferson County Advocacy
- Birmingham Police Department CSO Officer
- The Dannon Project
- Jefferson County Commissioners Office
- Jefferson County Public Defender's Office
- UAB Department of Psychiatry Substance Abuse Division Criminal Justice Program (TASC)
- Birmingham Fire and Rescue (C.A.R.E.S)
- Mt. Moriah Baptist Church.

With these partners, JBS conducted quarterly planning team meetings. The planning team had many accomplishments such as: being able to continuously provide services within the Jefferson County Jail and the community during the COVID-19 pandemic, being able to inform the community of Stepping Up services within the jail as well as the community, creating collaborations between the different entities within the judicial system, and working toward the common goals (to reduce recidivism, provide connection to services, and maintaining continuity of care).

Stepping Up Services in the Jails and Courts

Case Manager Sivi Woolridge was able to work with jails to support Stepping Up services through establishing and providing community resources upon discharge to maintain continuity of care. She attended weekly treatment team meetings, mental health courts (at the request of the judge and jail clinical staff) and Naphcare meetings as scheduled to discuss client care within the jail. Sivi did not screen any individuals in the Jefferson County Courts. All screenings were done through UAB and Naphcare. When there is a need, the jail refers the client to the Clinical Staff and the clinical staff then makes the referral to the JBS Stepping Up Case Manager. JBS has also established and provided community resources upon discharge in an attempt to maintain continuity of care

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

JBS reported that they have not yet been able to provide services in hospitals during the grant period. As such, they have focused their efforts on working with the jail and court referrals they receive.

Building Community Awareness

JBS staff conducted Crucial Conversations, which allowed them the opportunity to engage with the community about Stepping Up. They were able to discuss with the community the 3 W's (What, When and Where): "What Is Stepping Up?", "When did it come into place?", and "Where are we when it comes to collecting data and reducing recidivism?"

Many informal Crucial Conversations were also conducted with community agencies throughout this first year of the Stepping Up Initiative. The Stepping Up case manager was able to engage with the courts, community, jail, Sheriff's Department staff, medical staff, drug court, The Dannon Project, R.O.S.S (Recovery Organization of Support Specialist), and the Public Defender's Office regarding the Stepping Up initiative. Related to media exposure, JBS has established platforms on Facebook (JBS Mental Health Authority"). JBS Agency Website (www.jbsmentalhealthauthority.com), and Instagram to promote Stepping Up and various Stepping Up activities.

Sustainability

During Year 2, JBS plans on hosting and conducting training with their collaborating partners and building relationships with their community. They plan to maintain consistent regular contact with their community partners and stakeholders. They have not identified a grant to support and sustain their efforts in the future, outside of ADMH funding, , however they do plan to continue to seek out grants in the future.

Success Stories

One of JBS's standout clients was a mother whose current support system consists of her minor children and stepmother. The client has a legal history due to domestic violence and currently has 4 episodes with the agency. She screened positive for SMI and SA and was referred by the jail Clinical Counselor because of her history of SMI and needing assistance with accessing mental health treatment in the community upon being discharged from the jail. JBS was able to assist with getting an early release from jail by staffing with the clinical counselor at the jail and then staffing with her attorney, as well as consistent monitoring and follow up regarding her treatment. JBS also facilitated getting her an intake appointment for mental health treatment. The client reported obtaining a job and working towards reunification with her children, which includes stable housing.

Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama - Lawrence County, AL (January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021)

Organizational Collaboration

Lawrence County collaborates with a host of stakeholders and numerous other organizations that provide critical infrastructure services for the North Central Alabama community. Key stakeholders include:

- The Sheriff's Department
- County jails
- Municipal law enforcement agencies
- Healthcare providers
- Court personnel

Stepping Up Services in the Jails and Courts

Lawrence County Case Manager, Ashlyn Vandiver, worked diligently to create relationships with organizations within Lawrence County. A key stakeholder to the Stepping Up program was the Lawrence County Jail. Due to staffing, Lawrence County Jail was not able to screen all inmates for SMI and SU at booking. In addition, individuals were not screened through the courts. However, the Stepping Up Case Manager was permitted to conduct screenings in the jail and courts when a referral was received. The workforce deficit greatly complicated referrals with the jail as there is only one day per week that the jail had enough staff to accommodate Stepping Up personnel. The jail was very open to calling when they needed a screening and allowed the case manager to enter the jail and conduct those screenings. The COVID-19 pandemic caused difficulties in screening as periodic outbreaks made it so the Stepping Up staff could not enter the jail. . In spite of these setbacks and workforce shortages, SU provided advocacy and case management services to Lawrence County Jail inmates *while* incarcerated as well as case management and advocacy services to those clients who were released.

Stepping Up Services in the Hospitals

While supportive of the idea of Stepping Up, The Lawrence Medical Center was unable to become a partner because of staffing issues and ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks.

Building Community Awareness

The Lawrence County Stepping Up program actively engaged in the use of social media platforms to promote the program. The case manager also conducted two Crucial Conversations in May 2021, during Stepping Up Month of Action. One Crucial Conversation was with the North Alabama Regional Council of Governments and the Second was with local providers at the Lawrence County Interagency Meetings. It was through these meetings and her diligence about creating relationships that made Ms. Vandiver effective at garnering resources for her clients once they were released from jail and court. It was through these partnerships that clients were successfully linked clients to mental health treatment, housing, substance abuse treatment, clothing closet, food stamps, food pantries, social supports, and other services.

Sustainability

The Stepping Up program is always providing information and education through advisory groups, at the annual Opioid Summit, and through continuing conversations with new staff from other agencies as well as new organizational staff. Due to a lack of staff, Lawrence County has found it difficult to fund a new Stepping Up program, however they are open to collaboration in grant writing.

Success Stories

Lawrence County had two standout clients in year four:

Client One- This client was incarcerated for Domestic Violence. The court was willing to not revoke probation contingent upon the client's work with the Stepping Up Program. The Stepping Up Case Manager worked with the client, family, and court. The client was able to receive a mental health evaluation and began to receive counseling and medication services. The client's charges were dropped, and the client was able to transition into step-down case management services.

Client Two - Client two had an extensive incarceration history as well as a substance use problem. Stepping Up was able to link clients to counseling and medication services at the Mental Health Center. The client was able to work with Stepping Up case manager to apply and receive Patient Assistance Program for medications and has remained psychiatrically stable with no return to jail. The client has recently been able to find part-time employment.

TABLE SUMMARY OF YEAR FOUR STEPPING UP SITE OUTCOMES: JAILS

Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe – Baldwin	AltaPointe – Clay	AltaPointe – Talladega	AltaPointe – Washington	East Alabama – Russell	East Alabama – Tallapoosa	JBS - Jefferson	North Central – Lawrence	Total
# of individuals referred by the jail	151	17	90	37	11	26	87	6	425
# of inmates screened for SMI	6653	17	88	37	11	28	87	5	6926
# of inmates that screened positive for SMI	151	5	25	33	11	11	20	5	261
# of inmates that received a Mental Illness Assessment	151	5	25	5	0	9	20	2	217
# of inmates confirmed as having SMI	151	5	25	3	11	21	20	2	238
# of inmates screened for SA	0	17	30	0	0	28	20	0	95
# of inmates that screened positive for SA	0	13	30	0	11	20	12	2	88
# of inmates that received a SA Assessment	0	13	30	0	0	20	12	2	77
# of inmates confirmed as having a Substance Addiction	0	13	30	0	0	24	12	2	81
# of inmates referred to mental health treatment	151	0	27	3	0	0	4	3	188
# of inmates that received mental health treatment	151	0	27	3	0	0	0	2	183
# of inmates referred to Stepping Up (SU) Services	151	5	29	7	11	26	87	3	319
# of inmates that received SU case management services	45	1	29	3	0	3	21	19	121

Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe – Baldwin	AltaPointe – Clay	AltaPointe – Talladega	AltaPointe – Washington	East Alabama – Russell	East Alabama – Tallapoosa	JBS - Jefferson	North Central – Lawrence	Total
# of case managed clients that were employed	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	5
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	17	25
# of case managed that were re-arrested	7	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	11
# of case managed clients that went to ER after original arrest	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Average length of time in jail after re-arrest (Days)	2 days – 2 wks	--	--	30 Days	--	--	21 Days	--	--

**Approximation based on number of individuals booked into jail between April 2021 – June 2022

TABLE SUMMARY OF YEAR FOUR STEPPING UP SITE OUTCOMES: COURTS

Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe – Baldwin	AltaPointe – Clay	AltaPointe – Talladega	AltaPointe – Washington	East Alabama – Russell	East Alabama – Tallapoosa	JBS - Jefferson	North Central – Lawrence	Total
# of individuals referred by the courts	15	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	17
# of individuals screened for SMI	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
# of individuals screened positive for SMI	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
# of individuals that received a Mental Illness Assessment	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
# of individuals confirmed as having SMI	15	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	17
# of individuals screened for a SA	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
# of individuals that screened positive for SA	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
# of individuals that received a SA Assessment	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
# of individuals confirmed as having SA	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
# of individuals referred to mental health treatment	15	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	17
# of individuals that received mental health treatment	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
# of individuals referred to Stepping Up Services	15	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	17

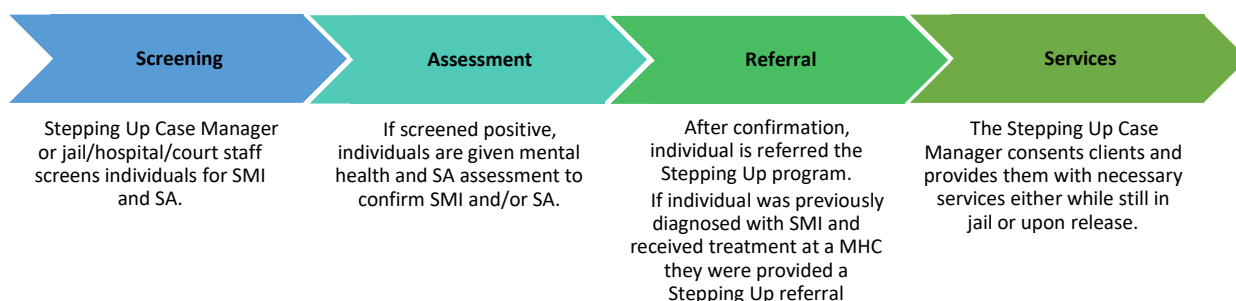
Stepping Up Alabama Sites	AltaPointe – Baldwin	AltaPointe – Clay	AltaPointe – Talladega	AltatPointe – Washington	East Alabama – Russell	East Alabama – Tallapoosa	JBS - Jefferson	North Central – Lawrence	Total
# of individuals that received case management services	15	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	17
# of case managed clients that were employed	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
# of case managed clients that had stable housing	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
# of clients from courts that returned to courts	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
# of clients from courts that were arrested	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	7

SUMMARY OF YEAR FOUR OUTCOMES

As with previous 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 staffing issues, overcapacity, and other barriers which make it difficult for jail staff to focus on data collection while dealing with such unprecedented circumstances and changes in policies.

Despite these challenges, case managers worked to implement a system with the jails and four courts that ensured inmates in the jail and mentally ill individuals that presented at the courts were screened for SMI and SA and could be linked to appropriate services based on their needs. SMI screenings were implemented in all jails, although not consistently for some counties. Because hospitals were Ground Zero for COVID-19, no partnerships resulted in referrals.

Although implementation varied 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 when available, 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 and Courts

The greatest lesson learned across sites has been the importance of trust, collaboration, and communication between entities and all members of the planning committee. Effective communication and collaboration between organizations working with individuals with mental illness coming out of jail is crucial for successful reentry and rehabilitation. Serious mental illness (SMI) can exacerbate the challenges of reentry, including finding housing, employment, and accessing healthcare. Collaboration between members of the planning committee can provide individuals with access to resources that can help them navigate the complex web of services they may need. Effective communication between these organizations can ensure that individuals receive coordinated, high-quality care that meets their specific needs. Collaboration and communication can also help to address any potential gaps in services and prevent individuals from falling through the cracks, which can ultimately lead to improved outcomes for both the individuals and the communities in which they live.

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 follow 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.

An important part of the Stepping Up Model is stakeholders working together to maintain continuity of care for clients. Individuals referred to Stepping Up may require a range of services, including medication management, therapy, and social support, to maintain their mental health and well-being. Those involved in implementing and maintaining the program model must work together to ensure that these services are coordinated and integrated into a comprehensive care plan which addresses the need while incarcerated and upon release. Without this collaboration, clients may experience gaps in care that can lead to worsening symptoms, hospitalization, or a return to jail. In addition, clients may face additional stress and uncertainty, which can further exacerbate their mental health condition. AltaPointe Baldwin County noted that consistent communication between stakeholders is the greatest lesson learned because continuity of care must be maintained for the success and well-being of each client.

Enhancing Data Systems in the Jail Systems

Collecting current and historical data from the jails proved to be a challenge due to the wide variation in technological infrastructure and database capacity within the county jails. Another issue was that several data points were not in the purview of the jail. To measure progress related to Stepping Up we ask jails to collect on the following **four variables**:

- % of individuals with SMI booked in jails,
- Length of stay in jail for people with SMI,
- Connection to assessment and treatment for people with SMI, and
- Recidivism for people with SMI

Even as the staff in the jails and mental health centers worked diligently to try to collect data, **gathering data from reliable databases on inmates proved to be very difficult to collect in most counties**. Only one jail was collecting consistent, electronic data on mental health screenings. Only three sites were able to provide data on the length of stay. Not all sites were able to provide data on recidivism, and none of the jails were able to report on connections to treatment. These limitations greatly impacted our ability to highlight the true impact of the program.

Jails will need to be made aware of the importance of capturing this data. **They also need the capacity to collect this data effectively and efficiently**. For Stepping Up Alabama to be a success, the jails must have the infrastructure necessary to ensure they can collect both baseline and real time data to track improvements made over time. **Time must be taken to investigate ways in which the state can provide the jails with cost-effective, user-friendly, centralized data systems that will allow them to collect this data in a timely manner**. Investments made in the collection and analysis of data across jails hold potential additional benefits to the jails as well, including better and more accurate reporting 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.

Necessity of Increased Social Service Programming

Individuals with serious mental illness require support to remain out of our jails. In addition to appropriate therapies and medication management, these clients' 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 basic services needed**. 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 other resources. They also assisted clients in accessing affordable medications and prescription discounts, social support and activities, and transportation. AltaPointe Baldwin County was able to create an ongoing partnership with a local pharmacy to assist clients upon release with having affordable access to their necessary medication. All sites cited a dearth of resources to assist in keeping their client's stable.

Lawrence County highlighted the need for:

- Additional affordable supportive housing resources
- Flexible, affordable transportation resources
- Access to inpatient substance use treatment

Without access to these resources, individuals with serious mental illness may experience increased stress, anxiety, and depression, leading to worsened mental health outcomes. In addition, lack of access to resources can lead to homelessness, unemployment, and other challenges that can further worsen their mental health which leads to an increase in recidivism. Therefore, it is critical to ensure that individuals with serious mental illness have access to the resources they need to achieve optimal mental health outcomes and live fulfilling lives.

Lessons Learned – Site Responses

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

- The necessity for continued communication amongst the jail, the court, and mental health to be an efficient transition for the patients and maintain continuity of care.
- Consistency in attempting to reach the community is vital to obtaining success.
- Working collaboratively with different entities sharing the common goal, to reduce recidivism and connect clients to needed resources.
- The importance of educating the community regarding mental health and treatment.

STEPPING UP YEAR FOUR CONCLUSIONS

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, 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, courts, 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. Although the sites were unable to partner with hospitals for referrals, when individuals receive consistent care, they are less likely to seek emergency mental health treatment from the emergency room.

Individuals Served through Stepping Up Alabama Year Four

The results of Year Four highlight the great strides made towards reducing the number of people with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders in both jails, courts, and emergency rooms in Alabama. Because each site has four months to ramp up before seeing clients, it is especially impressive that in their eight months of implementation, across eight counties, the **Alabama sites administered validated SMI and SA screenings to almost 7,000 individuals in jails or courts and 263 individuals (3.7%) screened positive for SMI.** Of those who screened positive for SMI, these sites administered a **mental illness assessment to 219 individuals (83%) in the jails or courts.** **Of those who received a mental health assessment, 255 individuals were confirmed as having an SMI, and 83 individuals were confirmed as having a substance addiction or co-occurring disorder.**

Challenges with Consistent Case Management Staffing

Sites that initiated their Stepping Up programs during this program year, faced greater barriers than to those that initiated pre-COVID. This is due, in part, to increasing cost of living, the “great resignation” that has been impacting all areas of work. This lack of staff consistency is particularly detrimental to the field of social services as it disrupts the continuity of care. Continuity of care is important with the SMI and SMI/SA population because of their vulnerabilities. Best practice is that a case manager follow a client from program induction through termination. It is vital that individuals with these diagnoses have consistent and timely case management services. This also rings true with building trust with policy makers and the community at large. In order for communities to fully engage with the Stepping Up program there needs to be consistency with the messaging and the point of contact.

Moving forward, the T/TA team will review which program components are vital to the success of the Stepping Up program to reduce the reporting burdens on the case managers. However, it is also necessary for the state to **consider creating a specific designation for Stepping Up case managers**. Stepping Up case managers are expected to work both on the individual and systems levels; making this job more complex than that of a general case manager.

Challenges with Data Collection

Collecting baseline (previous year) and intervention (current year) data from the jails on the four key measures (% of individuals with SMI booked, length of stay, connections to treatment, number of inmates that were re-arrested) presented challenges because jails often did not have infrastructure for tracking these data consistently, 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 implementation data more consistently, support linkages to assessment and treatment, and decrease recidivism rates.

Overall, 83% of individuals who screened positive for SMI received a mental health assessment. However 54% of those confirmed as SMI or co-occurring disorder consented to receive Stepping Up services. This identifies an opportunity for the program model. Clients must consent to receive an assessment and must consent to receive Stepping Up case management. The data indicates that while clients are willing to receive an assessment, they are not willing to receive case management services. It is incumbent upon each site to identify additional methods to enroll clients into case management services. This statement is primarily focused at the smaller counties, where caseloads are low and stigma may be an issue. For larger sites, capacity may also be an issue for this lower rate of enrollment. 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 Four of the **138 consumers that received case management services, 18 were re-arrested, resulting in a 13% jail recidivism rate.** These outcomes should be interpreted with caution because 2022 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 their capacity to collect data on the four key measures.

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

Changes took place at the policy level across all sites this year because of the efforts of the Stepping Up Initiative. One significant example is in **AltaPointe Health worked closely with the newly established Baldwin County Mental Health Court to create a robust partnership which allows the court to refer individuals to the program as well as helps in holding those clients accountable to the Stepping Up program. This accountability helps to ensure clients receive the necessary services and stay consistent in their treatment.**

Another example is AltaPointe Health (Washington County) established a relationship with the Probate Judge, Nick Williams, who quickly became the champion of the program. Judge Williams worked with AltaPointe and Washington County jail to facilitate the initial partnership between the two entities. The jail has now agreed to increased screenings and allowed the case manager to begin working with individuals who are still incarcerated via telemedicine.

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.

To conclude, moving forward to Year Five, 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 for every county in the State of Alabama to be part of the Stepping Up Initiative.