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PRESS RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACT

Leia Baez, Douglas County PIO, 402-444-6439

Douglas County Named Stepping Up Innovator County for Efforts to Collect Accurate Data on People in Jail Who Have Mental Illnesses

Douglas County was named this week as one of a select group of Stepping Up Innovator Counties in the United States for its expertise in collecting baseline data on the number of people in its jail who have mental illnesses.

The Stepping Up initiative was launched in May 2015 by the National Association of Counties (NACo), The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Foundation to mobilize local, state and national leaders to achieve a measurable reduction in the number of people in jail who have mental illnesses.

Douglas County joined Stepping Up in 2015 and has taken significant steps toward reducing the number of people in its jail who have mental illnesses. Some of those efforts include:

- Hiring a director to lead the local implementation of the national Stepping Up Initiative
- Forming a Stepping Up team to develop shared data definitions and collect baseline data
- providing Crisis Intervention Training for correctional officers and 911 operators
- Utilizing a mental health screening tool for individuals booked into jail to identify those who are likely to have a serious mental illness
- Developing a Data and Information Sharing Workgroup focused on reducing barriers identified when sharing information between the behavioral health and criminal justice systems
- Developing the Familiar Faces Project designed to focus on individuals who are frequently in jail and who have mental illnesses in order to reduce recidivism and improve consumer outcomes

As an Innovator County, Douglas County will help other counties improve their data collection efforts by participating in training sessions, taking part in presentations, sharing information and its experiences through the Stepping Up website, and more. For more information, visit <https://stepuptogether.org>.

Media is invited to a press conference and Q&A on incarceration and mental illness

When: Wednesday, May 29, 2019 at 10 a.m.

Where: Douglas County Department of Corrections (training room), 710 S. 17th St., Omaha

Details: Mike Myers, director of Douglas County Department of Corrections, will release new details on efforts to reduce the number of people with mental illness in the Douglas County Jail.