



Health and Human Services Agency

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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: June 24, 2025

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: **Phebe Bell**

SUBJECT: Resolution approving execution of a renewal contract with O'Connell Research, Inc. for services including planning for the implementation of CARE Court, CalAIM Behavioral Health linkages, support for the Incompetent to Stand Trial program, and general support for the Stepping Up initiative in the maximum amount of \$100,000 for the contract term of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the attached Resolution.

FUNDING: This agreement is funded with CARE Court Planning funds from Department of Health Care Services as well as collaboration planning funds from the Department of State Hospitals. These planning activities are mandated. No budget amendment is required and there are no county general fund dollars required in the agreement.

BACKGROUND: In May of 2015, the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation (APA Foundation) partnered to create Stepping Up with the purpose of rallying local, state, and national leaders to achieve a measurable reduction in the number of people in jail who have serious mental illnesses (SMI).

In December of 2016, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution 16-586, supporting Nevada County's participation in the Stepping Up Initiative. With this action, Nevada County joined more than 500 counties in 43 states, representing 40 percent of the U.S. population to advance Stepping Up's core goals of building a local leadership team, working to identify the number of people with mental illnesses entering the jail system, ensuring that those people are connected with services, and developing a comprehensive plan that will lead to an actual reduction in the number of people with mental illnesses in the jail.

Nevada County's participation in Stepping Up was brought forward by a collaborative group of County departments including the Sheriff's Office, Probation, Public Defender, District Attorney, and Behavioral Health. Stepping Up focuses specifically on the data that shows that people with SMI are arrested at higher rates, stay longer in jail, and return to jail more often than people without mental illness. Addressing this disparity and better linking people to treatment instead of incarceration is the primary goal of this initiative.

In the years since the resolution was adopted, the same group of departments has been meeting regularly and has implemented numerous system changes and improvements to better link people with SMI to treatment services instead of incarceration. In recent years this work has been supported by O'Connell Research which allows the group to utilize data driven analysis of system needs in order to design effective interventions and system improvements.

Under this contract, O'Connell Research will continue to support the Stepping Up collaborative in the work of connecting more people to treatment instead of incarceration when appropriate. In addition, the contract will allow this group to design the process and flow of the new CARE Court mandate so that the County is prepared for implementation in late 2024. This contract will also provide support to the Behavioral Health Department in the program and workflow design of the new mandated CalAIM justice involved linkages program. Lastly, this agreement will include support for the Incompetent to Stand Trial Diversion process. The group will continue to discuss ways to minimize the number of people who are referred to the state hospital by expanding early intervention and diversion programs in the community.

It is recommended that the Board approve this contract as it allows numerous departments and institutions to work together to improve the functioning of our criminal justice and behavioral health systems to best serve community members who are struggling with mental health and substance use disorder needs

Approved by: Phebe Bell, Behavioral Health Director