



# COUNTY OF NEVADA HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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## NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Memo

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**MEETING DATE:** January 24, 2023  
**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** **Ryan Gruver**  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution accepting designation of Nevada County as a Stepping Up Innovator County.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve the attached Resolution.

**FUNDING:** There is no funding associated with this item.

**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. Some highlights of these efforts include: initiating a mental health screening process for everyone entering jail; supporting a full-time therapist in the jails (in addition to Wellpath staff) to do assessments and link people to care after jail; implementing Medication Assisted Treatment for substance use disorder in jail and linking people directly to residential treatment straight from jail; implementing mental health diversion court; establishing a case manager in the public defender's office to link people to care; purchasing and staffing a house to support people with serious mental illness also suffering from homelessness as they leave jail; and establishing mobile crisis services.

For the past few years, our local Stepping Up group has worked with an outside consultant to refine and better analyze our local data. These conversations have deepened our understanding of who is being booked into jail and what their needs are. As a result of having this data and a comprehensive understanding of it, we have been well positioned to apply for and receive numerous grants that we are using to continue to improve services. National Stepping Up leadership has reviewed and approved recognition of Nevada County as a Stepping Up Innovator County.

Nevada County is being recognized as an Innovator County for the steps we have taken to use data to guide our Stepping Up work. If the Board accepts this designation, we will join a small group of 21 counties nationwide who have achieved this distinction. The guidelines for becoming a Stepping Up Innovator County are the following:

**Stepping Up Innovator counties can demonstrate that they have accurate, accessible data on the prevalence serious mental illness at their county jail. Stepping Up encourages counties to follow a three-step approach to obtaining this data:**

1. **Using a shared definition** of serious mental illness across justice and behavioral health systems;
2. **Screening every person** booked into jail using a validated screening tool and referring those who screen positive for a full clinical assessment; and
3. **Tracking** and analyzing this data electronically.

Being recognized as an Innovator County is not a financial award but it is a recognition of the hard work county departments and community partners have done to address this critical issue. As an Innovator County, we will participate in training sessions with other counties to teach them about what we are doing and how they can improve their own data collection efforts, take part in presentations, and share our experiences through the Stepping Up web site, among other things.

It is recommended that the Board approve the attached resolution accepting designation as a Stepping Up Innovator County.

More information, including the current list of Stepping Up Innovator Counties, can be found at the following link: <https://stepuptogether.org/the-counties/#/>

**Approved by:** Ryan Gruver, Health & Human Services Agency Director