



## The Ohio Initiative

Each year there are an estimated 2 million people with serious mental illnesses admitted to U.S. jails—almost three-quarters of whom also have a co-occurring substance use disorder. The toll incarceration takes on these individuals and their families, as well as the costs assumed by taxpayers, is staggering. Jails have become *de facto* in-patient psychiatric facilities across the nation with little impact on public safety. Ohio is no exception, with as many as 15 to 30 percent or more of the individuals in jails having mental illnesses.

Ohio counties have joined with their counterparts across the country to engage in Stepping Up, a national initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails. The initiative was launched in May 2015 by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, the National Association of Counties, and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation, with support from the U.S. Justice Department’s Bureau of Justice Assistance. Stepping Up seeks to provide counties with tools to develop and promote cross-systems data-driven strategies that lead to measurable reductions in the number of people with mental illnesses and co-occurring disorders in local jails.

The Peg’s Foundation contracted with the Hocking College Institute for Social and Economic Advancement to conduct a Readiness Assessment for the status of data collection practices in the 27 Ohio counties registered for Stepping Up as of January 2017. Retired Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton serves as the Project Director and Melissa Knopp, Esq., serves as the project Coordinator for Ohio Stepping Up. Dr. Jane Okwako analyzed the data received from the Readiness Assessments and drafted this report.

## Steering Action from Bottom-up: Ohio’s Promising Pathway

Treatment and re-integration are challenges dominating Ohio’s policy landscape. A state-supported bottom-up movement has emerged with leaders mobilizing resources with multiple stakeholders. A vibrant arena for collective action has been created. Stewardship by local leaders is propelling various initiatives.

Ohio is on a steady path. It ranks third in the country with grade A in criminal justice diversion efforts. Ohio is also poised to be one of the states whose initiative may be replicated across the country.

The ongoing progress described below has key elements:

Stepping Up leadership is successfully marketing win-win solutions

Diverse stakeholders are coming together to work on solutions on the state level

Data-driven initiatives are gaining traction as centerpieces for action

Local stewardship is propelling vital action on the county level.

Cross-jurisdictional peer to peer learning is being embraced

Cross-systems collaboration is increasing

Ohio confronts a daunting task. Its jail population has 15 to 30 percent or more who have mental illness. Resources must be deployed to bolster interventions. Counties are adopting the 6 Questions below\* for self-assessment.

**Is your leadership committed?**

**Do you have timely screening and assessment?**

**Do you have baseline data?**

**Have you conducted a comprehensive process analysis and service inventory?**

**Have you prioritized policy, practice, and funding?**

**Do you track progress?**

These Stepping Up principles are a Call to Action. The assessment tool should continue to be a yardstick for measuring progress. Innovation should be shared in multiple forums. This will create a sharing of solutions that work.

\* Haneberg, R., Fabelo, T., Osher, F., and Thompson, M. (2017). Reducing the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jail: Six Questions County Leaders Need to Ask.



# Readiness Assessment Findings

All information below is in reference to county jails

85.2%  
(23)

Jails with a data collection system

A positive mental health screen leads to a follow-up assessment in all counties

100%  
(27)

Counties with data on mental health treatment providers

92.6%  
(25)

96.3%  
(26)

Counties that routinely use screening tools

92.6%  
(25)

Counties with data on substance abuse treatment providers

Jails that administer criminogenic risk tool/s

14.8%  
(4)

Counties partnering with community based treatment providers

92.6%  
(25)

Counties that screen for veteran status

81.5%  
(22)

48.2%  
(13)

Counties that share screening & assessment information with the court & probation

92.6%  
(25)

Counties that screen for substance abuse

Counties have a validated mental health screening tools

51.9%  
(14)

25.9%  
(7)

Counties that track people going through the county jails

Counties that can identify veterans at arrest

81.5%  
(22)

