

RESOLUTION NO. 368-15

WHEREAS, On May 5, 2015, the National Association of Counties (NACo), the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, and the American Psychiatric Foundation (APF), in partnership with the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance, launched a new initiative to support counties of all sizes in reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails, and

WHEREAS, the initiative is called *Stepping Up: A National Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jails*, and will provide assistance to counties that want to see better results—in diversion, reduced recidivism and recovery—for people with mental illnesses by drawing on the expertise and experiences of state and local policymakers, criminal justice and behavioral health professionals, and individuals with mental illnesses and their families, and

WHEREAS, Counties routinely provide treatment services to the estimated 2 million people with serious mental illnesses booked into jail each year; and

WHEREAS, almost three-quarters of adults with serious mental illnesses in jails have co-occurring substance use disorders, and adults with mental illnesses tend to stay longer in jail and upon release are at a higher risk of recidivism than people without these disorders; and

WHEREAS, County jails spend more on adults with mental illnesses compared to those without these treatment needs, especially individuals that require referrals to forensic and civil state hospitals, due in part to the limited number of available beds; and

WHEREAS, without the appropriate treatment and services, people with mental illnesses continue to cycle through the criminal justice system, often resulting in tragic outcomes for these individuals and their families; and

WHEREAS, Berks County takes pride in its responsibility to protect and enhance the health, welfare and safety of its residents in efficient and cost-effective ways; and

WHEREAS, Berks County has developed the Community Reentry Center which helps appropriate individuals transition to the community during their final months in jail by offering mental health treatment, substance use treatment and targeted case management services while allowing individuals access to furloughs to develop community supports and attend interviews to seek gainful employment, significantly improving their tools for success; and

WHEREAS, Berks County has developed a Mental Health Forensic Diversion Program which works with the Criminal Justice System at numerous intersects (Police, District Justice, District Attorney, Courts) to provide individuals with treatment and divert them from incarceration when appropriate or assist with early release from confinement with treatment and housing; and

WHEREAS, through the *Stepping Up* initiative, the National Association of Counties, the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Foundation are encouraging public, private and nonprofit partners to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails;

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the Berks County Board of Commissioners do hereby sign on to the Call to Action to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in our County jail, commit to sharing lessons learned with other Counties in Pennsylvania and across the country to support a national initiative and encourage all county officials, employees and residents to participate in *Stepping Up*. We resolve to utilize the comprehensive resources available through *Stepping Up* to:


A Cross Systems Mapping Group was convened in November 2015, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's Center of Excellence. This group

consisted of a diverse team of leaders and decision makers from multiple agencies in Berks County as well as individuals who have been through the forensic and mental health systems who are committed to safely reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails. Through this process and various other allied processes, we are engaged in activities to achieve the following:

- Review how to collect and analyze prevalence numbers and assess individuals' needs to better identify adults entering jails with mental illnesses and their recidivism risk, and use that baseline information to guide decision making.
- Examine treatment and service capacity to determine which programs and services are available in the County for people with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders. One example of service capacity is the HealthChoices provider network which is available to individuals with Medical Assistance.
- Identify state and local policy and funding barriers, such as the discontinuation versus suspension of Medical Assistance once an individual is incarcerated.
- Identify ways to minimize contact with the justice system such as involving the Mental Health Diversion Specialist when appropriate as well as providing treatment and natural supports in the community.
- Identify Evidence Based Practices, such as the Assertive Community Treatment Team, that use measurable outcomes which relate to the needs and prevalence assessment data.
- Develop and implement other research-based approaches that advance the plan that the Cross Systems Mapping Group is in the process of developing.
- Create a process to track progress using data and information systems, similar to the information collected by the Mental Health Forensic Specialist and the Community Reentry Center, and to report on successes.

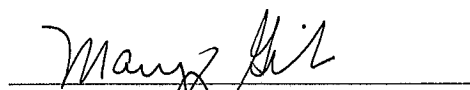
ADOPTED THIS 10th DAY OF DECEMBER, 2015.

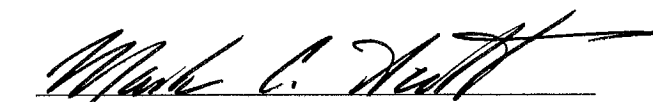
COUNTY OF BERKS


Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair


Kevin S. Barnhardt, Commissioner

Attest:


Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk


Mark C. Scott, Esq., Commissioner