



THE
STEPPING UP
INITIATIVE
Forsyth County, North Carolina
Commissioner Gloria Whisenhunt



WHY FORSYTH COUNTY ANSWERED THE NACo CALL TO ACTION?

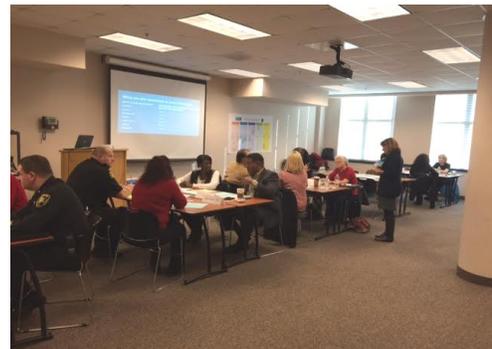
- A significant increase in positive mental health diagnosis in Forsyth County's jail population (171 inmates out of 719).
- A rise in the amount of psychotropic medications distributed at the jail due to behavioral health issues.
- A Stepping Up Initiative Resolution was passed by the Forsyth County BOCC in April of 2015, along with 23 other NC counties (to date).

SUCCESSSES

- Unanimous support from all County Commissioners, law enforcement leadership, social services, community agencies, and mental health advocates.
- Secured funding for a dedicated part-time consultant/data miner/project lead.
- Established a strong Steering Committee, Core Team (4 professionals in the fields of mental health, data/research, budget and policy), and Planning Team.
- Created a model and project framework with well-thought out deliverables, timelines and processes.
- Conducted a successful orientation to the Stepping Up Initiative with agency stakeholders who will be a part of the solution (Courts, community agencies, Human Service Agencies, law enforcement, mental health advocates, etc).
- Developed a Sequential Intercepts Map for Change which allows us to assess our community resources, gaps and opportunities at five intercepts of the criminal justice process.

CHALLENGES

- Gaining access to offender's mental health diagnostic and treatment data mainly due to privacy policies (e.g. HIPAA).
- Ensuring that community entities and partners have clarity on the county's vision and commitment to the Stepping Up Initiative.
- Narrowing the focus.



LESSON LEARNED

- Inventory any existing county databases and relevant policies.
- Establish baseline population statistics.
- Define terms so that everyone is working off of the same definitions (i.e. define mental illness as a comprehensive term to include substance abuse, etc.).
- Be consistent in sharing the message about the initiative.
- Create a webpage to share information and progress of the initiative.
- Use the template/steps of the national initiative as a guide.