



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Resolution Supporting NACo's "Stepping Up Initiative" to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jails

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

WHEREAS, prevalence rates of serious mental illnesses in jails are three to six times higher than for the general population; and

WHEREAS, almost three-quarters of adults with serious mental illnesses in jails have co-occurring substance use disorders; and

WHEREAS, 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 two to three times more on adults with mental illnesses that require interventions compared to those without these treatment needs; 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, Cook County and all counties take pride in their responsibility to protect and enhance the health, welfare and safety of its residents in efficient and cost-effective ways; and

WHEREAS, Cook County has successfully reduced its total jail population by 20% since 2013; and

WHEREAS, Cook County's 'County Care' program has expanded behavioral health services in communities throughout Cook County, and stakeholders have joined in an effort to enroll jail detainees in 'County Care' before they are released; and

WHEREAS, every Cook County Jail detainee with mental health needs is interviewed by a social worker, before discharge from the jail, in order to arrange for appropriate community-based transitional services such as medical appointments, counseling, behavioral health services and supportive 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 the President and the Cook 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 state of Illinois and across the country to support a national initiative and encourage all county officials, employees and residents to participate in Stepping Up. We further resolve to:

- Continue to convene or draw on a diverse team of leaders and decision makers from multiple agencies committed

to safely reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.

- Continue to collect relevant data and use it as baseline information to guide decision making.
- Continue to work with all stakeholders to examine treatment and service capabilities in order to determine which programs and services are available to people with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders. As well as identifying state and local policy and funding barriers to minimizing contact with the justice system and providing treatment and supports in the community.
- Implement research-based approaches that advance our goal of reducing the jail population and the number of mentally ill jail detainees.
- Continue to create processes to track progress using data and information systems, and to report on successes.