

# STEPPINGUP

A National Initiative Reducing  
Overincarceration of People with Mental  
Illnesses

## The Role of Lived Expertise in Advancing Stepping Up

April 10, 2024 | Dr. Megan  
Davidson, Gretchen Frank



# Agenda

- Stepping Up and the PA TA Center Overview
- Why Lived Experience/Expertise?
- Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) Project through Stepping Up
- Considerations for Centering Lived Expertise and Meaningful Engagement
- How to Establish a LEAP in Your County
- Discussion/Q & A



# Speakers

- Megan Davidson, PhD, *Program Director, Behavioral Health, The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center*
- Gretchen Frank, JD, *Senior Policy Analyst, Behavioral Health, CSG Justice Center*



# The Council of State Governments Justice Center

We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.



# CSG Justice Center Equity and Inclusion Statement



The Council of State Governments Justice Center is committed to advancing racial equity internally and through our work with states, local communities, and Tribal Nations.



We support efforts to dismantle racial inequities within the criminal and juvenile justice systems by providing rigorous and high-quality research and analysis to decision-makers and helping stakeholders navigate the critical, and at times uncomfortable, issues the data reveal. Beyond empirical data, we rely on stakeholder engagement and other measures to advance equity, provide guidance and technical assistance, and improve outcomes across all touchpoints in the justice, behavioral health, crisis response, and reentry systems.



# Stepping Up Initiative and the Pennsylvania Technical Assistance (TA) Center



# STEPPINGUP Initiative

**Stepping Up** is a national initiative to identify, address, and reduce the overincarceration of people with mental illnesses in jails.



**Justice Center**  
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

#StepUp4MentalHealth  
[www.StepUpTogether.org](http://www.StepUpTogether.org)

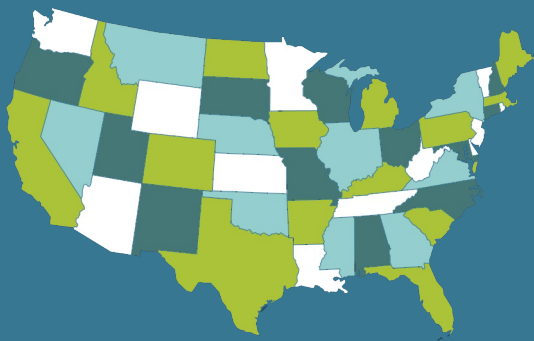


# STEPPINGUP

## 9 Years and Counting



More than **570** counties across **45** states have joined Stepping Up to reduce the prevalence of mental illnesses in jails.



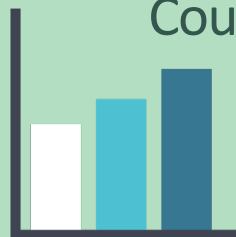
**48%** of Americans live in a Stepping Up county.



Approximately **2 million** times each year, people who have serious mental illnesses are booked into jails.



**40+** Innovator Counties are blazing the trail in data collection.



**5** states have launched statewide Stepping Up initiatives.





# Pennsylvania Stepping Up TA Center

- The TA Center launched in 2018 and is funded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, administered by the CSG Justice Center.
- There are 36 counties that have passed resolutions in support of Stepping Up in PA.
- Renewed for another 2 years (through 2025)



# What is a Stepping Up TA Center?

Through a **Stepping Up TA Center**, CSG Justice Center professionals provide tailored and individualized guidance so counties can use accurate data to guide their policies and practice.

The goals of the TA Center include the following:

1. Helping communities identify and address the behavioral health needs of individuals encountering local justice systems
2. Building capacity of counties to collect and use key data indicators to drive decision-making
3. Supporting cross-system collaboration to strategically reduce the overincarceration of people with serious behavioral health needs.

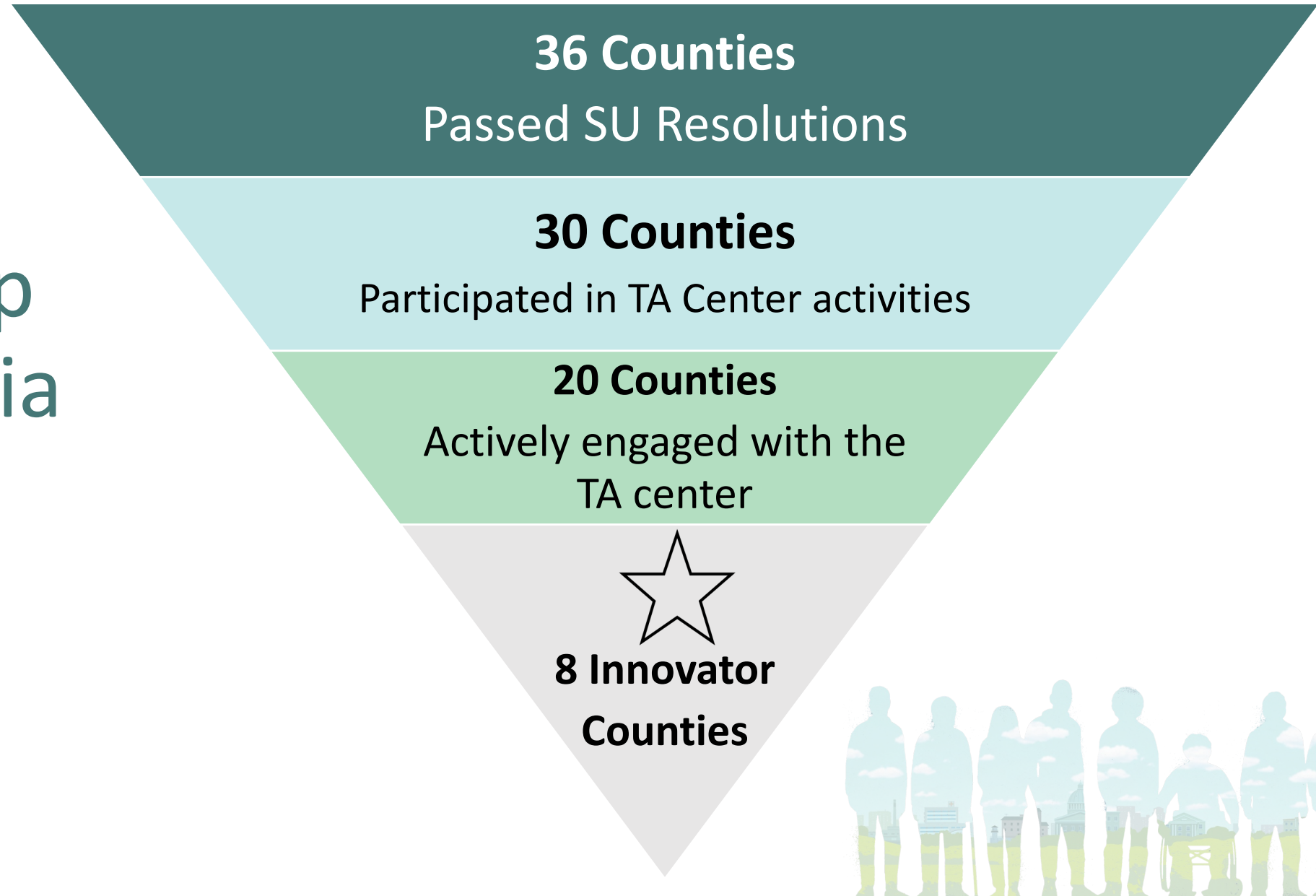


# Work of the Pennsylvania Stepping Up TA Center

- ✓ Dedicated staff point of contact (training, 1:1 TA, webinars)
- ✓ Peer connections with sites across PA and nationally
- ✓ Open line of communication between county and state leaders
- ✓ Access to national experts and resources on best practices
- ✓ Guidance on high-impact strategies and policies that achieve lasting results



# Stepping Up Pennsylvania by the Numbers



# Why Lived Experience/Expertise?



# Lived Experience vs. Lived Expertise

**“When we say ‘lived experience,’ we mean knowledge based on someone’s perspective, personal identities, and history. When we say ‘lived expertise,’ we are talking about the summation of someone’s perspective, personal identities, and history coupled with their professional or educational experience. Respectfully, there is a difference.”**

—Philip “Change Agent” Cooper, Lived Experience Advisory Panel Member



# The Value of Lived Expertise

- Creates a vital link between those who make decisions within the criminal justice system and the individuals directly affected by their decisions
- Provides unique and crucial perspectives that can inform the development and implementation of effective policies and practices that promote success

“By actively involving individuals with lived expertise, it is possible to develop more humane, effective, and equitable approaches to addressing behavioral health issues and reducing the over-incarceration of vulnerable populations.”  
—*CSG Justice Center LEAP members*



# Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) Project through Stepping Up





# LEAP Project Background

## Stepping Up New Focus Areas (Beginning in 2020)

### *1. Racial Equity*

- Applying the Stepping Up Framework to Advance Racial Equity brief (May 2023)
- Stepping Up to Advance Racial Equity: Lessons Learned and Implications for the Field brief (upcoming release)
- Updated Six Questions document

### *2. Voices of Lived Experience/Expertise*

- Partnership with C4 Innovations
- Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP)



# LEAP Project Overview

**Goal:** Develop guidance about elevating the voices of people with lived experience in the behavioral health and criminal justice systems.

**Partners:** C4 Innovations and Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP)

**Panelists:** Eight people from across the country with diverse backgrounds who have experiences with behavioral health treatment and recovery supports before, during, and after incarceration



# Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP)



Larry (Leo) Davis



Manny Gomez



Phillip Cooper



Edwin Suarez



Helen "Skip" Skipper



Parker Chamberlin



Ronald Marshall



Ruth Utnage

# LEAP Project: Scope of Work

- Drafted focus group guide and conducted focus groups with other people with lived experience and family members
- Reviewed foundational Stepping Up documents and provided feedback
- Featured as speakers in fieldwide webinar
- Shared their personal stories and spoke to the importance of this work to the CSG Justice Center's Behavioral Health Division
- Developed a list of recommendations for how counties can more effectively engage people with lived experience



# LEAP Project: A New Resource

- New Brief (Upcoming): ***Centering Lived Expertise: How to Meaningfully Elevate the Voices of People Directly Impacted by the Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health Systems***
  - By the Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP), CSG Justice Center
    - With contributions from C4 Innovations and the Center for Effective Public Policy
  - Primary Purpose:
    - Provide guidance about how to meaningfully engage and partner with people with lived experience to advance policies and practices at this intersection.



# Considerations for Centering Lived Expertise and Meaningful Engagement



# Continuum of Meaningful Engagement



## Outreach

- Surveys
- Public Forums



## Consultation

- Focus Groups
- Interviews



## Hiring

- Beyond Peer Specialist Roles



## Collaboration & Shared Leadership

- Committees/Advisory Boards
- Co-Design



# Considerations for Effective Engagement

1. Setting the Stage for Success
2. Meaningful Engagement in Action
3. Follow-Up and Sustainability





# 1. Setting the Stage for Success

- Transparency
- Trust
- Diverse Representation
- Awareness of Stigma and Discrimination
- Technical Assistance and Training
- Resources and Accessibility



## 2. Meaningful Engagement in Action

- ✓ Cultural Competence
- ✓ Trauma-Informed Approach
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Active Involvement in Decision-Making
- ✓ Feedback Mechanisms

**“For US by US:** Anything that is done on our behalf should have US included!”

—*Kimberly Comer, Focus Group Participant*



# 3. Follow-Up and Sustainability

- **Meaningful Follow-Up**
  - Acknowledge contributions
  - Share any deliverables or policy changes that stemmed from insights shared
  - Review and approve any resources that derive from the engagement process before project wrap-up
- **Evaluation and Accountability**
  - Regularly evaluate engagement processes to continue evolving toward more meaningful participation.



# How to Establish a LEAP in Your County: Key Steps from the CSG Justice Center LEAP Members



# Function of LEAPs

“LEAPs are poised to play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of life for people facing behavioral health and criminal justice challenges within communities.”

—*CSG Justice Center LEAP members & C4 Innovations*

## For example, they can do the following:

- Review and provide valuable feedback on programs, policies, and processes.
- Hold focus groups to share and gather information from community members and others with lived experience.
- Plan and implement new programs, policies, and processes.
- Recommend new and/or improved strategies.
- Serve as invaluable decision-makers.



# Key Steps to Establishing LEAPs

1. Self-Assessment
2. Identification and Communication of the Purpose and Goal
3. Recruitment and Member Selection
4. Compensation
5. Training and Support
6. Engagement Practices
7. Evaluation and Feedback



# Discussion/Q & A



# Thank You!

Join our distribution list to receive updates and announcements:

<https://csgjusticecenter.org/resources/newsletters/>

For more information, please contact:

Megan Davidson, [mdavidson@csg.org](mailto:mdavidson@csg.org)

Gretchen Frank, [gfrank@csg.org](mailto:gfrank@csg.org)

*The presentation was developed by members of The Council of State Governments Justice Center staff. The statements made reflect the views of the authors and should not be considered the official position of The Council of State Governments Justice Center, the members of The Council of State Governments, or the funding agency supporting the work.*

© 2024 The Council of State Governments Justice Center