**STEPPING UP INITIATIVE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE**

**WITH MENTAL ILLNESSES IN JAIL**

**WHEREAS**, counties across the country routinely provide treatment services to the estimated two 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 public; 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**, Travis 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**, Travis County funds and participates in various programs in our justice system to divert and/or provide services to residents with serious mental illnesses; 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 WE,** the Travis County Commissioners Court, 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 our state 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:

* Draw on a diverse team of leaders and decision makers from multiple agencies in Travis County committed to safely reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.
* Expand and enhance existing planning and program efforts in Travis County that are seeking to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in our county jail.
* 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 at the system, program and case levels.
* 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, and identify state and local policy and funding barriers to minimizing contact with the justice system and providing treatment and supports in the community.
* Develop a plan with measurable outcomes that draws on the jail assessment and prevalence data and the examination of available treatment and service capacity, while considering identified barriers.
* Implement research-based approaches that advance the plan.
* Create a process to track progress using data and information systems, and to report on successes.

Signed and entered this 6th day of October 2015.

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Sarah Eckhardt

Travis County Judge

Ron Davis Brigid Shea

Commissioner, Precinct 1 Commissioner, Precinct 2

Gerald Daugherty Margaret J. Gómez

Commissioner, Precinct 3 Commissioner, Precinct 4