
NEWS RELEASE

Stepping Up Initiative



Cleveland: The Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court, the Cuyahoga County Executive's Office, and the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board are continuing their commitment to reduce the overwhelming number of individuals with mental illness entangled within the criminal justice system through *The Stepping Up Initiative*.

This initiative launched nationally in 2015 through the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the National Associations of Counties and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation. The goal is to reduce the number of people living with mental illness in jails. In Ohio, the initiative funding comes from The Peg's Foundation and is under the leadership of Retired Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton.

In April of 2017, several key leaders and judges from the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court, County Executive's Office and The Cleveland Municipal Court spent two days observing and learning more about the innovative work being done in Florida's 11th Judicial Circuit Mental Health Diversion Program with Judge Steven Leifman in Miami-Dade, Florida. This site learning session was tremendously beneficial to supplement thoughtful ideas and enhanced concepts for planning purposes when responding to the needs within Cuyahoga County.

Through support from *The Stepping Up Initiative*, the Cuyahoga County Stepping Up Taskforce, hosted a two-day seminar last August in which more than 50 key leaders and stakeholders from criminal justice and behavioral health systems worked together to improve cross-collaboration efforts.

Throughout 2018, the Cuyahoga County Stepping Up Taskforce will continue the development of strategic action planning for the top priorities identified during the seminar. Wednesday, May 16, was the 2018 Stepping Up Initiative's Day of Action.