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County of Orange Selected to Attend National “Stepping Up” Summit

(Santa Ana, CA) – The County of Orange has been selected following a highly competitive process to participate in the National “Stepping Up” Summit aimed at reducing the prevalence of individuals with mental illnesses in jail, to be held in April in Washington DC.

The initiative was created last year by the National Association of Counties with partners from the Council of State Governments’ Justice Center and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation. The Orange County Board of Supervisors fully supported the initiative by approving a resolution in May 2015 to encourage efforts by the Sheriff’s Department and Health Care Agency to enhance collaboration toward reducing the number of people in jails with mental illness and co-occurring substance use.

“Jails across the nation serve an estimated two million people each year with serious mental illnesses, almost three-quarters of whom also have substance use disorders,” Orange County Sheriff Sandra Hutchens said. “We look forward to sharing our strategies to change the way these folks are linked to treatment; break the cycle of recidivism; and support the road to recovery – as well as the tremendous opportunity to learn from the successful approaches shared at the Summit by other local government organizations.”

“These types of collaborative initiatives are essential as we look across the country at best practices and sharing successful strategies for the common challenges that we face,” Board of Supervisors Chairwoman [Lisa Bartlett](#), Fifth District, said.

County representatives attending the Summit include Sheriff Hutchens, Chief Probation Officer Steven Sentman, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health Services Mary Hale, Deputy Director of Correctional Health Kim Pearson and Supervisor [Todd Spitzer](#).

“It’s important to find ways to help people get the services they need without becoming soft on crime,” said Supervisor Spitzer, Third District. “Finding methods to reduce crime is vital to ensuring safe communities.”

To learn more, please visit <http://www.naco.org/resources/programs-and-initiatives/stepping-initiative>.

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