

RESOLUTION # _____

RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE STEPPING UP INITIATIVE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IN JAILS”

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

WHEREAS, the rate of serious mental illnesses in confinement facilities are three to six times higher than for the general population, with statistics showing that almost 13% of North Carolina’s prison population requires some type of intervention due to mental health issues; 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 can continue to cycle through the criminal justice system, often resulting in tragic outcomes for these individuals, their families, and their communities; and

WHEREAS, county jails are generally an unsafe environment for those with mental health treatment needs; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners has undertaken a serious effort to address the local service needs of those with mental illnesses through the appointment of a special Task Force; and

WHEREAS, Buncombe County, like all counties, takes pride in our responsibility to protect and enhance the health, welfare and safety of our residents in efficient, safe, and socially just ways; 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 counties to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in county jails; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners for the County of Buncombe as follows:

1. That the Board of Commissioners does hereby sign on to the Call to Action to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in our county jail and commits to sharing lessons learned with other counties in North Carolina and across the country to support the Stepping Up Initiative.
2. That the Board of Commissioners will utilize resources available through the Stepping Up Initiative and other resources provided by the Council of State Governments Justice Center to convene a diverse team of leaders and decision makers from multiple agencies who are committed to safely reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.
3. That this team will utilize the comprehensive resources available through the Stepping Up Initiative to develop a plan to reduce the number of people with mental illness in the county jail for 2016-2020, consistent with the Council of State Governments Justice Center report and recommendations, to be presented to the Board of Commissioners at its first meeting in December 2015.
4. That this resolution shall be effective upon its adoption.

This the 4th of August, 2015

ATTEST

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR THE
COUNTY OF BUNCOMBE

Kathy Hughes, Clerk

By: _____
David Gantt, Chairman

APPROVED AS TO FORM

County Attorney