



Clergy & Laity United  
for Economic Justice

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July 1, 2016

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**Dear Supervisors,**

We appreciate the interest Supervisors Carbajal, Farr, and Wolf showed at the June 13th Board meeting in learning how our county might join *Stepping Up: A National Initiative to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illness in Jails*.

Disturbed by the findings of neglect and abuse detailed in the Disabilities California report released in February of this year, which describes the situation of the mentally ill in our jails, our community is looking to you for a county plan to reduce their number as soon as possible.

The Sheriffs' Blue Ribbon Committee estimated the number of those in jail with mental illness is 20-30% of the jail population, that is, 200-300 people. It also stated that *most* of those in jail do not belong there!

In response to the Board's interest, and following *Stepping Up's* own guidelines, CLUE Santa Barbara has four recommendations, outlined here and explained in more detail below:

**First**, pass a resolution to implement *Stepping Up*.

**Second**, recognize that there is strong community support for Supervisors' leadership on this initiative.

**Third**, increase the 2017 August funding for Behavioral wellness general fund allocation to the level recommended by Tri West, their paid consultant, to \$9m, and target some of the new housing and services to people with mental illness in jail.

**Fourth**, take action on two short-term steps:

1. Accept the offer to implement a jail survey as soon as possible.
2. Learn from the Sonoma County Initiative Implementation

### **Explanations**

**1)** Lead a collaboration with other county leaders to pass a resolution to implement Stepping Up, and commit to implementing the program's six actions for reducing the number of people with mental illness in jail.

**2)** Recognize that there is strong community support for Supervisors to take leadership.

Prior to bringing Stepping Up to the Board, CLUE Santa Barbara discussed with community leaders the need for assessment and targeted housing with services for the people in jail with mental illness. We met with NAMI, Behavioral Wellness Deputy Director Pam Fisher, HEART, City Housing Authority and Families ACT. All agreed this was important. However, it became clear that it would take county leadership to approve this goal and facilitate a collaborative effort to develop an action plan. The following input was received:

The Behavioral Wellness/HEART team in August will propose a total of 200 new housing units in 5 facilities. CLUE Santa Barbara asked HEART in March to attach a statement to the proposals prioritizing a number of these units for this jail population. We were told that this recommendation was beyond the scope of HEART/BW and must come from the jail staff.

C3H recommended that leadership for the mental health assessment in jail, and for the targeted housing, would need to come from Behavioral Wellness.

The Deputy Director of Behavioral Wellness (BW), Pam Fisher, agreed to contact lieutenant Mark Mahurin, the new Jail Grievance Committee chair, to plan a meeting to talk with BW and CLUE Santa Barbara about Corizon assessment data. The contact was made several weeks ago, with no response yet from the jail. At the Board meeting on June 13th, Director of Behavioral Wellness, Dr. Cleghorn, told the board she had spoken to the Sheriff about the initiative and as yet there was no response or action plan. She added that the Sheriff had attended a meeting on *Stepping Up* and appeared interested in implementation.

NAMI has asked the Board of Supervisors for more assessment information on those with mental illness in jail. After CLUE SB's meeting with NAMI, they agreed to write you a statement of support for a focus on alternative housing for those in jail with mental illness. They support *Stepping Up*.

The City Housing Authority offered a concrete action plan to help. See below.

Families Act also supports implementing *Stepping Up*.

**3)** Thank you for recognizing the need for a \$243,000 capital fund for Mental Health beds! We look forward to a discussion with you of how and in what timeline we can fund all 5 facilities Behavior Wellness will propose from the HEART team for August. CLUE SB supporters advocate for exploring how some of these new facilities with mental health services can be targeted for those in jail, especially if we would be implementing the *Stepping Up* initiative.

We also ask you to revisit the general fund allocation to Behavioral Wellness. New facilities need more services. Simultaneously, our county needs to increase the 2017 funding for Behavioral Wellness capital needs and general fund allocation.

Since 2013 the general fund contribution for Behavioral Wellness has been underfunded each year, falling far short of that of neighboring counties, as documented in the Board's own Tri West report. The BW budget does not yet reflect the recommended \$9m/yr from the general fund contribution.

In addition, the Board initially agreed to consider funding over \$2m for the new STAR jail facility for those with mental illness INSIDE the jail, and over \$1m per year for ongoing operations. Now that the STAR facility has been rejected, CLUE SB calls on Supervisors to spend that same amount on the housing and services needs OUTSIDE the jail as an alternative for the same population.

#### **4) Take action on two short-term steps:**

**1. Begin the *Stepping Up* initiative** by facilitating the implementation of the jail survey as soon as possible.

Rob Fredricks, the Deputy Director of the City Housing Authority who developed the surveys for the Point in Time count for people without homes, has agreed to administer surveys to all those with mental illness in our jail served by Corizon on a daily basis (approximately 125). The surveys are conducted on a volunteer basis.

This is a great opportunity. These surveys have been administered in jail before, but with no tracking of data on the specific needs of the jail population with mental illness.

CLUE SB is calling on the Board of Supervisors to consider beginning the *Stepping Up* initiative by facilitating the implementation of this survey.

Evidence from the past demonstrates this survey, with its computerized data system, is reliable.

We believe Santa Barbara Co can use this in our jail to gather data on:

- the number of unduplicated cases of people with mental conditions served by Corizon annually, and the number of frequent offenders
- the number of those eligible for alternatives
- the number of people needing diverse housing and services
- as well as how to align needs with current and new facilities
- and how to measure annual reduction in the number of frequent users of jail and mental health services

**2. Learn From Sonoma County.** Last year, Sonoma County signed on to implement *Stepping Up*. When CLUE SB was helping initiate the Homeless Point in Time Count, we visited other counties to learn how they successfully implemented the program. You could facilitate a team visit to Sonoma County as a very effective next step.

Assessing and safely moving these people from jail to more appropriate alternatives is the right thing to do and will reduce the cost to the county. It is our sincere hope Santa Barbara joins over 270 other counties, including at least five in California (LA, Orange, Santa Clara, Sonoma, and Yolo), and implements this initiative.

Lets step up and take action!

**Maureen Earls,  
President CLUE SB**