



COMMON PLEAS COURT

GENERAL DIVISION

Richard E. Berens, Judge
David A. Trimmer, Judge



Fairfield County Recommits to Addressing Mental Illness within the Criminal Justice System

On February 8, 2022, over 50 Fairfield County elected officials, department heads, and external stakeholders participated in the Stepping Up Ohio Countywide Meeting.

Stepping Up Ohio, a chapter of the national Stepping Up initiative, is a statewide effort to break the cycle of jails serving as *de facto* county-run mental health hospitals. The mission of both the national and Ohio's Stepping Up initiative is to help criminal offenders with mental illness get connected to clinical treatment and other services so they can get well, make positive life changes, and stay out of jail. This, in turn, results in a better quality of life for the individual and long-term cost-savings to taxpayers.

The meeting, which was conducted virtually, featured several presentations on mental illness and the criminal justice population. The meeting also provided an opportunity for information-sharing and collaboration, as local agencies and organizations shared resources, grant opportunities, and programmatic updates with an interested and engaged audience.

“The Court appreciates the leadership of Retired Justice Stratton in this endeavor as well as the work of the local counseling agencies, counselors, and other organizations which the Court collaborates with in addressing these needs,” said Common Pleas Judge Richard Berens. “The efforts and investment we all make to meet the needs of offenders with mental illness who are charged with and/or convicted of crimes will serve to protect victims, reduce future crime, and enhance the welfare and safety of our community.”

If you are interested in participating in Fairfield County Stepping Up meetings or initiatives in the future, please contact Fairfield County Reentry Coordinator Samantha Green at Samantha.green@fairfieldcountyohio.gov. For general information about Stepping Up Ohio, visit <https://mha.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/mha/community-partners/criminal-justice/stepping-up-initiative/stepping-up-initiative> or email Melissa Knopp at knoppm@steppingupohio.org.

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