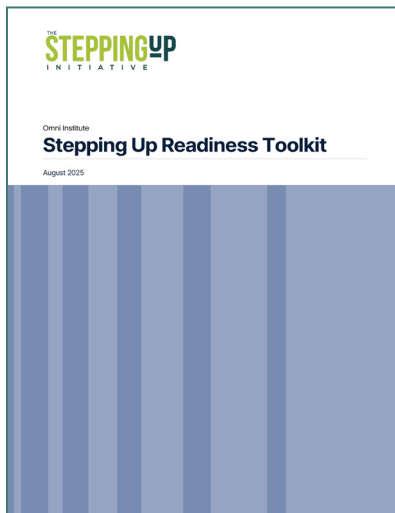


Kansas Roundup

Kansas Stepping Up Technical Assistance (TA) Center Newsletter

The Kansas Stepping Up TA Center Roundup provides the latest news, upcoming events, and announcements from the TA Center as well highlights from Stepping Up counties across Kansas and resources to continue advancing your Stepping Up efforts.

TA Center Highlights



Over the past year, counties across Kansas have sustained momentum through their ongoing partnership with the TA Center. Several counties have opted into the one-on-one technical assistance, peer learning, and hands-on support provided by the TA Center. Others have leveraged new tools like the [Stepping Up Readiness Toolkit](#) to strengthen collaboration, improve data capacity, and sustain their Stepping Up efforts—often while navigating leadership transitions and evolving local priorities. Additionally, staff from the TA Center participated in key statewide convenings, including the Kansas Behavioral Health Summit and Kansas Sheriffs’ Association Conference.

This growing level of engagement reflects counties’ commitment to innovation and their willingness to use the TA Center as a hub for problem solving, coordination, and long-term planning. Together, these accomplishments highlight the leadership, creativity, and collective impact that counties are achieving—and we’re excited to continue partnering with you as this work grows.

Strengthening Data Capacity Across Kansas Innovator Counties

Kansas Stepping Up Innovator counties (Barton, Douglas, Greenwood, Johnson, Lyon, Morris, Osage, Reno, Shawnee, and Wabaunsee) continue to make significant progress in building a stronger, more consistent data infrastructure. After aligning on a shared definition of serious mental illness (SMI) and reviewing the [Four Key Measures](#) in early 2024, they have been working toward more consistent data collection and shared learning across the state.

To deepen this work, the TA Center partnered with the [Omni Institute](#) in the fall of 2024, to learn about each county’s data capacity and needs. Through listening sessions and one on one assessments, Omni gathered insights on workflows, tracking protocols, and data sharing challenges, helping shape coordinated reporting processes and decision making structures.

By The Numbers



23

KS Stepping Up
counties



10

Innovator
counties



23

Counties using a
validated tool to screen
for mental illness



30

Counties consistently
and actively engaged
with the TA Center

This multiyear effort culminated in the August 2025 release of the [Stepping Up Readiness Toolkit](#)—a fieldwide resource shaped by Kansas Innovator counties and available to support Stepping Up counties nationwide. The toolkit provides practical guidance on data collection, tracking, and reporting, and offers a model for other counties working to advance their Stepping Up efforts. To further support counties at any stage of implementation, the Omni Institute, in

partnership with the TA Center, hosted a fieldwide webinar titled, “[Behavioral Health and Justice: Helping Counties “Step Up” at Every Stage.](#)” This webinar introduced the toolkit and highlighted how counties can use it to begin or strengthen their Stepping Up data. It is especially valuable for county leaders, coordinators, jail administrators, behavioral health partners, and others involved in local Stepping Up or data improvement efforts.

County Highlights

Crisis Respite Room Connects People to Care Instead of Incarceration | Kiowa County

The Kiowa County Sheriff’s Department recently opened a crisis respite room, allowing law enforcement and behavioral health providers to connect a person in crisis to care rather than incarceration. Located in Greensburg, KS, on the backside of the sheriff’s office with a stand-alone entrance, the space offers a safe, calming alternative to jail or the emergency department and stands as an innovative rural approach to supporting people in crisis.

Developed in partnership with the local certified community behavioral health clinic (CCBHC) and community partners, the crisis respite room offers immediate stabilization and access to local supports. It’s also helping strengthen Kiowa County’s crisis response system, reducing unnecessary justice system contact, and demonstrating how rural communities can lead with innovative approaches that prioritize safety, dignity, and access to care. By diverting people in crisis away from detention and into appropriate care, this approach **helps reduce unnecessary bookings and supports more effective, community-based responses** to behavioral health needs.



From left to right: Sheriff Kendal Lothman, Kiowa County Sheriff’s Office; Executive Director (retired) Mary Jane Dowler, Iroquois Center for Human Development.]

Veteran Focused Reentry Coordination Fills Critical Gap in Reentry Planning | Reno County

The Reno County Correctional Facility and Horizon Mental Health Center are strengthening veteran reentry support by leveraging a dedicated jail based mental health liaison and reentry case manager to help incarcerated veterans access a full range of services. This coordinated approach ensures veterans are connected to essential resources and can receive meaningful support as they prepare to return to their communities. The program links veterans to vital Veteran Affairs (VA) services—including health care, housing, employment assistance, legal aid, and social support—while addressing the unique challenges associated with incarceration.

Developed as part of the county's collaborative Stepping Up efforts, the program allows for better coordinated reentry planning between the case

manager and VA representatives, improved access to benefits, and smoother transitions back into the community with immediate wrap-around support. By strengthening connections to care and ensuring access to appropriate services, this reentry support plays a critical role in **stabilizing veterans with behavioral health needs and improving long-term outcomes**. Reno County's innovative, coordinated efforts also fill a critical gap often missed or overlooked in reentry planning, ensuring veterans do not fall through the cracks when transitioning from a carceral setting. The jail based mental health liaison and reentry case manager represents a forward thinking model of care coordination that supports individuals experiencing behavioral health needs as they move from jail back into the community and promotes lasting reintegration.

Statewide Behavioral Health and Medicaid Updates

Behavioral Health Advancements in Kansas

The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) has made major investments to strengthen CCBHCs across Kansas. Supported by funding from the Ballmer Group and delivered in partnership with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, they are now equipping state agencies with the targeted technical assistance needed to expand access to high-quality behavioral health care. Through

this work, partners will receive training and guidance to enhance care coordination, improve operational and clinical workflows, and strengthen the behavioral health workforce. Collectively, these efforts will advance the state's commitment to innovative, people centered services and help create a more consistent and equitable system of care for all residents.



Supporting Kansas Counties with New Federal Medicaid Requirements

A major shift in federal policy (*Consolidated Appropriations Act CAA of 2023*) now requires states to maintain Medicaid coverage for youth and young adults during incarceration and to authorize key services at least 30 days before release. These changes are designed to strengthen the reentry process by connecting young people to providers earlier, stabilizing care transitions, and ensuring access to needed medications.

To support Kansas counties in navigating these new requirements, the Stepping Up TA Center—with support from KDADS—recently hosted a community of practice (CoP) titled, *Implementing Federal Youth Medicaid Requirements: Supporting Young Adult Transitions in Kansas Jails: A Community of Practice for Jail Administrators, County Leaders, and Reentry Partners*. Through this learning series, participants shared challenges, explored strategies to strengthen local jail reentry systems, and learned from one another's experiences with screening, data coordination, and cross system collaboration.

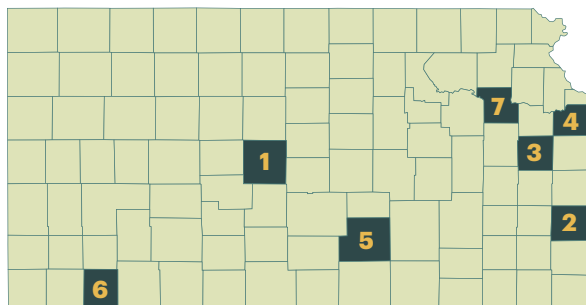
Counties interested in continuing this work or learning how to get started should reach out to the TA Center for additional guidance and assistance.

Stepping Up for Youth in Kansas

Kansas is leading the nation as the first state to launch a statewide Stepping Up for Youth (SU-Y) initiative designed to help Kansas counties improve outcomes for youth with behavioral health needs who come into contact with the juvenile justice system. This project, which launched in October 2023, set out to do the following:

- Create an SU-Y Framework aimed at reducing contact with the juvenile justice system for youth with behavioral health needs.
- Enhance counties' data infrastructure and resource usage to align their policies and practices with best practices that successfully divert youth with behavioral health needs from detention.

In March 2025, **seven pilot counties—Barton, Bourbon, Franklin, Johnson, Sedgwick, Seward, and Shawnee**—committed to advance this effort. These counties received support through monthly cohort meetings, one-on-one technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities as they worked through the SU-Y framework. Their progress was driven by strong cross-system collaboration, engaged core stakeholders, and a shared commitment to supporting youth before deeper system involvement. As a result, these pilot sites have reported meaningful gains in partnership development, collective prioritization of system improvements, and enhanced coordination across agencies. Their early successes are now informing ongoing refinements to the SU-Y framework and helping guide the initiative's expansion statewide.



- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Barton | 5. Sedgwick |
| 2. Bourbon | 6. Seward |
| 3. Franklin | 7. Shawnee |
| 4. Johnson | |

In addition to the county focused efforts, **the SU-Y Kansas initiative includes a state component to align state policies, reduce statutory barriers, maximize funding, and increase cross systems collaboration and efficient use of resources.** To work towards these goals, TA Center staff conducted a state assessment across agencies and hosted listening sessions with a range of local stakeholders across the state, leading to the development of 10 recommendations that state agencies vetted, and a state task force voted to approve. Two of these recommendations include large scale efforts of developing an early intervention system for youth and establishing statewide detention best practice standards, both of which are currently underway with agencies.

Two Key Recommendations

- Develop an early intervention system for youth: Reduce inappropriate involvement in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems and promote the more efficient and coordinated use of state funding.
- Develop statewide detention standards. Strengthen the appropriate use of detention and improve the use of research-based assessments, services, behavior management strategies, and reentry practices.



To learn about launching a Stepping Up for Youth initiative in your county, email kssu@csg.org.

In Case You Missed It



How Assessment Centers Promote Youth Diversion and Public Safety

Last October, the CSG Justice Center hosted a webinar through the Collaborating for Youth and Public Safety Initiative (CYPPI), highlighting the role of assessment centers in providing early intervention, coordinated services, and alternatives to arrest or court involvement. The session explored key challenges and opportunities in reducing youth justice involvement and showcased how Ohio built a statewide network of more than 20 assessment centers—the largest in the country. Leaders from juvenile justice, child welfare, behavioral health, policy, and community-based organizations joined the discussion to learn practical strategies for strengthening diversion and improving outcomes for youth.



State Strategies to Strengthen Local Community Responder Programs

In partnership with its national Expanding First Response Commission, the CSG Justice Center published a series of new recommendations in 2025, which include actionable guidance for state leaders to launch, strengthen, and sustain local community first responder programs. These programs reduce harm, hospital visits, and the burden on police for emergencies related to mental health and homelessness.



Kansas Department for
Aging and Disability Services

Second Annual Kansas Stepping Up and KDADS Mobile Crisis Symposium

The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) and the TA Center hosted the Second Annual Kansas Stepping Up & Mobile Crisis Symposium on May 12–13, 2026, bringing together counties from across the state for two days of learning, collaboration, and shared problem solving. Day one focused on strengthening

county Stepping Up efforts, featuring a presentation titled, “Grounded: Under Pressure—A Practical Approach,” which focused on fostering conversations among the rural and agriculture communities around mental health. It also included breakout sessions from Mirror Inc. discussing their peer support program being uplifted in county jails across the state to support substance use recovery for people in custody. Day two spotlighted mobile crisis response in Kansas, with a continued emphasis on implementing mobile response and stabilization services as part of the state’s crisis continuum of care.

Save the date: The 2027 Kansas Stepping Up & KDADS Mobile Crisis Symposium, scheduled for spring 2027. More information will be shared as the event approaches.

Get Connected

Kansas Peer-to-Peer Connection Hours

Peer-to-peer connection hours offer a valuable opportunity for counties to connect, share experiences, and learn directly from one another on topics such as policy implementation, data collection, and innovative local programs. These interactive, virtual sessions are held on the third Tuesday of every third month and are designed to foster collaboration, problem solving, and shared learning across counties—whether you’re new to Stepping Up or looking to build on existing efforts.



Tailored TA for Your County

The Kansas Stepping Up TA Center will be offering targeted outreach to counties across the state. TA will focus on building rapport and gaining buy-in around Stepping Up, as well as identifying opportunities for collaboration and support with their ongoing efforts related to strategic planning and cross-systems collaborations, data collection and capacity, screening and connection to care processes, and identifying high-impact strategies to implement.

Don’t miss out on this opportunity! To get more information or inquire about becoming a Stepping Up county, email the TA Center at kssu@csg.org.