

Press



Release

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For Immediate Release

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Legislator Murphy Calls for County to Participate in National Program to Reduce the Number of People with Mental Illness in County Jail

New City, NY (June 1, 2015) – Rockland County Legislator John Murphy has sponsored a resolution in support of a national initiative to facilitate counties' efforts to reduce the number of people with mental illness and co-existing substance use disorders in county jails. The initiative, "Stepping Up" is sponsored by the National Association of Counties (NACO), the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG) and the American Psychiatric Foundation (APF).

"Two to three times more money is spent on incarcerated adults with mental illness as compared to the general jail population," said Legislator Murphy. "And despite best efforts, there are many obstacles to seeing that these adults achieve recovery and avoid recidivism. This initiative is best described as a call to action and recommends a shared commitment plan between state and local leaders, and multiple county departments that will assess the numbers of adults with mental illness that enter the system, their risk of recidivism, examine and identify treatment programs and services and track the progress of each individual. The progress data will become baseline information and a guide for on-going decision making." For Rockland, Murphy envisions a team consisting of representation from the Offices of the Sheriff and District Attorney, jail administration, the Department of Mental Health, local police, judges, drug abuse counselors, probation officials and service providers. The three sponsor agencies provide technical assistance to facilitate planning and implementation, self-assessment and progress reports and help to tailor the program to local needs.

This is Legislator Murphy's third attempt to address the crisis. Murphy initially tried to facilitate a separate Mental Health Court to emulate the successful Drug Court model in partnership with the local National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and a separate unit in the County Jail for the mentally ill, but believes this is the best strategy if implemented under the leadership of Rockland's District Attorney, who has already put programs in place to divert the mentally ill from jail placement. Murphy said, "District Attorney Zugibe is a brilliant, innovative leader on this issue."

Besides being a County Legislator, Murphy was on the County Board of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism. He is currently the President of Loeb House, which operates community living opportunities for mentally ill adults and the Rockland Psychiatric Center Board of Visitors.

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The resolution will appear on the upcoming agenda of the Public Safety Committee. All legislature committee meetings are open to the public and attendance is encouraged. Meetings take place in the legislature's chambers in the Rockland County Office Building, 11 New Hempstead Rd., New City, NY. To obtain information on this or other committee meeting schedules and agendas, please visit www.rocklandgov.com, click on County Legislature and follow link to Committee Agendas or call (845) 638-5100. All agendas are subject to change.

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