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**Lewis Jenkins Tapped for National Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission**  
*New initiative brings together county leaders to drive action on mental health*

**DALLAS** – Dallas County Judge Clay Lewis Jenkins is one of 14 county leaders appointed by the National Association of Counties (NACo) to a new Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing. The group, unveiled last week at NACo’s Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., is tasked with leading the development of policy and programmatic recommendations at the federal, state, and local levels to address systemic issues contributing to the ever-growing mental health crisis.

“Increasing access to mental health services and improving overall wellbeing, particularly for our underserved and younger people, is one of the two overarching goals I have for the next four years,” said Lewis Jenkins. “We are in a state of unprecedented reported mental stress, and it's imperative that we increase access to the tools that people need to live their best life.”

Lewis Jenkins added, “I'm already working with San Diego County, California and other jurisdictions on potential best practices we can incorporate. We are working with our mental health providers on searching for the best ideas to help, not just during the time that we have American Rescue Plan money to spend, but to build systems and access that continues to bless people for years to come. This new NACo Commission will allow us to share our successes and failures with one another in the hopes that we can benefit from other counties’ experiences.”

Counties are well-positioned to lead action on the mental health crisis because counties play an integral role in local health, justice and human services systems. Direct mental health service delivery responsibilities are falling increasingly to America’s counties, which serve as the nation’s safety net for residents in need, act as first responders, operate crisis lines, and manage public hospitals and detention centers.

“In 2021, nearly one in four U.S. adults and one in five adolescents experienced a mental illness,” said NACo President Denise Winfrey. “This commission understands the urgency of the moment. It’s made up of people who, in their own communities, are seeing the effects of the mental health crisis, and have an idea of where we need to start in order to address it.”

For more information about NACo’s Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing, click [here](#).

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The National Association of Counties (NACo) strengthens America's counties, including nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to advocate for county government priorities in federal policymaking; promote exemplary county policies and practices; nurture leadership skills and expand knowledge networks; optimize county and taxpayer resources and cost savings; and enrich the public's understanding of county government. [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).