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**CLEVELAND COUNTY
RECOVERY PROGRAM**

November 27, 2023

For Immediate Release

**COUNTY SUPPORTS FIRST STEPS TOWARD RECOVERY
Cleveland County Commissioners Allocate ARPA Funds for Sobriety Support Initiatives**

[NORMAN, Okla.] — Monday, Cleveland County Commissioners designated \$250,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support Firststep’s sober living programs.

Established in the late 1980s as a branch of OKC Metro Alliance, Inc., Firststep Recovery Programs assist individuals struggling with substance abuse in reclaiming sobriety and independence in their lives.

“The Firststep Programs are valuable community resources for Cleveland County,” said Firststep Executive Director, Jennifer Francis. “These ARPA funds will allow us to continue our mission of increasing sobriety, decreasing incarceration, and helping individuals recover their lives from drugs and alcohol.”

Firststep functions as a sober living community that connects residents with outpatient services and licensed therapists. Moreover, there is no financial burden on the resident or their family.

“Firststep gives individuals tools they can use to regain their sobriety,” said District 1 County Commissioner Rod Cleveland. “Unfortunately, addiction can initiate a damaging cycle involving job loss, incarceration, and the breakdown of home and family. Our aim is to work proactively by supporting the professionals in our community in the commendable work they are already undertaking.”

The funds awarded to Firststep will support improvements to the facility and open up the possibility of new programs for residents.

“Giving folks a purpose or an opportunity is a big part of helping them get back on track,” said District 3 Cleveland County Commissioner Rusty Grissom. “When we’re able to allocate funds in such a way, it benefits the entire county.”

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Upon receiving \$55 million in ARPA funds, Cleveland County conducted a series of stakeholder engagement meetings and distributed a county-wide survey to discern needs and evaluate the pandemic's impact on our communities. This communication enabled Cleveland County Commissioners to identify public and behavioral health, economic impact, and infrastructure as funding priorities.

“This allocation to Firststep addresses a number of the key goals we had with our ARPA funds,” said District 2 Cleveland County Commissioner Jacob McHughes. “Sober living programs like this not only support mental health but also boost the economy, making our communities healthier and stronger.”

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