



At left: OMH Commissioner **Ann Sullivan, MD**, discussing the Governor's mental health care budget. At right: Executive Deputy Commissioner **Moira W. Tashjian, MPA**, during a community engagement session.

Community engagement OMH travels the state for input on historic budget

An unprecedented multi-year investment by Governor **Kathy Hochul** is offering an opportunity to transform the provision of mental health care in New York State.

To determine how to best make use of these funds, OMH staff have been visiting communities throughout in the state, gathering in-person feedback from people and families who receive services, valued partners, providers, advocates, local leaders, and community members.

These community engagement sessions are giving OMH valuable information on how to implement new programming and use these new resources to enhance the mental health system, increase access to mental health services, end service gaps, and promote equity in access.

The **\$1-billion** package was part of the 2023-24 state budget that was passed last week. The budget will provide funding for new residential units, increase inpatient capacity, and dramatically expand outpatient services. It will invest in peer-based outreach, expand school-based mental health services, and close gaps in insurance coverage for behavioral health services.

Residential units

The budget provides \$890 million in capital and \$120 million in operating funding to establish and operate **3,500 new residential units**.

The additional units include: 500 community residence-single room occupancy units, which provide housing and intensive services to individuals with serious mental illness who are at the highest risk of homelessness; 900 transitional step-down units and 600 licensed apartment units serving individuals who require an intermediate level of services; 1,500 supportive housing units serving individuals with a serious mental illness who have less acute needs but still require support to live in the community. Also included is \$25 million in capital and \$7.3 million in operating costs for **60 community step-down housing units**

Continued on the **next page**

MORE THAN *enough*

Mental Health Awareness Month 2023

Mental health is a priority EVERY day

Not just during the month of May

By *Will Foley*

May is Mental Health Awareness month. Everyone has mental health, but not everyone has a mental illness.

Since it was first declared in 1949 by the National Association for Mental Health, now known as Mental Health America, May is lauded as **our** month. The month to bring advocacy, education, and connection to the masses. When buildings are lit in green and, for the next 31 days, our cause gets top billing.

It is wonderful to have a month where so much of the focus is on "your thing." Yet, it seems like we forget or worse, ignore it, for much of the rest of the 334 days. Unless it affects you. Regardless of whether you believe it does, it does.

I can give you facts. One in five individuals lives with a mental health challenge. Individuals with mental health issues are more likely to be the victims of a violent crime than a perpetrator. Mental illness is not a weakness, as a matter of fact, I consider it a super-power. People do and often recover and go on to live meaningful, productive, and prominent lives.

Mental health awareness starts with recognizing that being well is a full-time job. It's truly a lifestyle choice. Getting the right food, adequate hydration, enough rest, and exercise.

Continued on the **next page**

in New York City to serve formerly unhoused individuals who are making the transition from inpatient care.

Inpatient beds

The budget will provide \$18 million capital and \$30 million operating funding to **expand inpatient psychiatric beds**, including opening 150 new adult beds in state-operated psychiatric hospitals, representing the largest expansion at these facilities in decades.

In addition, the budget provides OMH with increased authority to sanction Article 28 community hospitals for failing to comply with the number of psychiatric beds outlined in their operating certificate, which demonstrates the Governor's commitment to ensuring that beds taken offline during the COVID-19 pandemic are restored to operation immediately.

Outpatient services

To expand outpatient services, the budget invests \$60 million in capital and \$121.6 million operating funding, which will establish **12 new comprehensive psychiatric emergency programs** providing hospital-level crisis care and triple the number of state-funded **Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics** statewide – from 13 to 39 – that offer walk-in, immediate integrated mental health and substance use disorder services for New Yorkers of all ages and insurance status.

Mobile and outreach

The budget will create 42 additional **Assertive Community Treatment teams** for children and adults to provide mobile, high intensity services to the most at-risk New Yorkers and eight additional **Safe Options Support** teams — five in New York City and three in the rest of state — to provide outreach and connection to services for homeless populations with mental illness and substance use disorders. The capacity at 20 Article 31 clinics will be expanded, providing core mental health services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Care coordination

An investment of \$28 million will help create 50 new **Critical Time Intervention care coordination teams** to provide wrap-around services, from housing to job supports, for individuals needing transition assistance, including children and adults discharged from hospitals and emergency rooms.

This investment will ensure the success of new requirements for hospitals to responsibly admit and discharge patients, including comprehensive standards for evaluation and increased state-level oversight to ensure these protocols are being used effectively.

Peer support

An investment of \$2.8 million will expand the **Intensive and Sustained Engagement Treatment** program to offer peer-based outreach and engagement for adults with serious mental illness. An additional \$3.3 million will be invested in the **Individual Placement and Supports program**, ensuring the expanded use of this evidence-based model of supported employment for adults with mental illness.

Continued on the [next page](#)

What you put into your body and in between your ears. The ability to get out and let the sunshine on you and take part in community activities.

But things we don't equate with mental health are things like, affordable housing, availability of nutritious food, education, and internet access. We don't think about affordable health care or the effects of racism and fear as challenges to people keeping their mental sharp.

It's hard to think of self-love and self-care when you're in survival mode. Wondering where the next paycheck is coming from, or if you have to make the decision between keeping a roof over your head, paying for your medication, or more expensive still, childcare.

Maybe we can see with a renewed vision that how we approach everything affects our mental health. There is no separation between mind, body, and spirit. Also, remember this: Your environment, socialization, choice of vocation, financial literacy, and intellectual ability also are parts of the whole. When you look at others, try to see that they may be carrying a heavy weight that no one sees. Our communities won't survive if we don't thrive.

Here are some resources for you to access professional help and knowledge.

If anyone you know is in an acute mental health crisis or expresses they actively want to hurt themselves, please **call 911**. Other sources of information:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
<https://988lifeline.org/>
- Mental Health Association in New York State
<https://mhanys.org>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
<https://afsp.org/chapter/capital-region-new-york>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
<https://www.naminy.org/nys/about-us/>
- Suicide Prevention Center of New York
<https://www.preventsuicideny.org>
- New York State Office of Mental Health
<https://omh.ny.gov>

My hope is you will take these resources and never have to use them. But, as we have learned anyone can have a mental health challenge and we need not go it alone.

Will Foley is a Mobile Integration Team Peer Specialist at the Capital District Psychiatric Center in Albany. He also produces the "Above Ground Podcast" and writes for Nippertown.com, where a version of this article originally appeared.

Commissioner Sullivan and Executive Deputy Commissioner Tashjian visited Elmira to talk about the executive budget and tour renovations being made to the children's unit at Elmira Psychiatric Center.



School-age children

The budget provides \$30 million to expand mental health services for school-aged children, including \$20 million for **school-based mental health services** and \$10 million to implement **wraparound services** training. The budget includes \$10 million to strengthen suicide prevention programs for high-risk youth.

Family services

The budget allocates \$18 million over two years to reimburse providers for **family preventive mental health services** for parents and their children; and \$24 million over two years to reimburse providers for adverse childhood experience screenings.

The budget also builds on investments made in the fiscal year 2023 budget, including \$12 million for **HealthySteps** and **home-based crisis intervention** programs to promote early childhood development and treatment for children and teens; and \$3.1 million to bolster treatment for individuals with eating disorders.

988 Lifeline

The budget provides \$60 million to support the **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** - an increase of \$25 million from the prior budget. To support the workforce, the budget includes a four-percent cost of living adjustment and an additional \$5 million for OMH's **Community Mental Health Loan Repayment Program**, expanding the eligibility for the program to include licensed mental health professionals.

Insurance coverage

In addition to providing critical funding, the budget also **closes gaps in insurance coverage** that have posed a barrier to New Yorkers needing mental health care and substance use disorder services. Under the changes outlined in the budget, commercial insurance plans must adopt network adequacy standards for behavioral health services; cover life-saving mobile crisis, crisis intervention, and post-discharge services, those provided in school-based mental health clinics, and life-saving addiction medication treatments and overdose reversal medications that are available over the counter; and follow utilization review standards that prohibit preauthorization or concurrent reviews for the first 30 days of mental health treatment for adults in an in-network inpatient hospital or crisis residence.

Statewide resource and information networks

Complementing this investment plan is the establishment of **two statewide networks** to provide behavioral health information, support, and services – one dedicated to helping youth, the other to assist families. The networks will be administered by OMH. Each statewide network will receive \$5 million over five years to foster networking, advancement support, and the workforce pipeline of peer advocates.

Crisis intervention

More than \$13 million in state funding is being dedicated to expanding access to **Home-Based Crisis Intervention** teams throughout the state. This funding will help create 13 new teams and expand 26 existing ones, enabling them to provide critical mental health services so that at-risk children and youth can avoid psychiatric hospitalization.

For more:

Governor Hochul
Highlights \$1 Billion Plan
to Overhaul New York
State's Continuum of
Mental Health Care:
<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-highlights-1-billion-plan-overhaul-new-york-states-continuum-mental-health>

OMH is providing \$6.2 million to create 11 teams to serve children and youth between the ages of five and 21, who are at imminent risk of psychiatric hospitalization.

The agency also partnered with the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities and the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council to establish two teams that will exclusively serve children or youth dually diagnosed with both a developmental disability and mental illness. OMH is also providing \$7.3 million to expand existing teams serving children in crisis. There are 26 teams statewide, which assist roughly 2,600 children.

Trauma-Informed Network

OMH will provide \$9.5 million over five years to Coordinated Care Services, Inc. to establish a **Trauma-Informed Network and Resource Center** to advance understanding of trauma, the use of trauma-informed principles, and the availability of trauma-informed care throughout the state.

Addiction services

The state's **Opioid Settlement Fund** is providing \$2.2 million to help connect vulnerable New Yorkers to addiction services and other critical supports.



Program Coordinator **Dr. Jennifer Lewis Johnson** (center) with recipients of the first cycle of grants under the “Reimagine: I am the Change” program. From left: **Dawn Berry-Walker, Brenda McDuffie, D.Q. Grant, and Nicole Jordan** from Erie County Mental Health; **Kayla Kennon, Vanessa Jones** from OMH; **Anthony Peirce, Dr. Johnson, Yolanda Smith, Alexa and Edreys Wajed, Dr. Eric Frimpong, and Dr. Grace Rowan** from OMH; and **Margaret Smith**.

‘Reimagine’

Helping Buffalo recover after last year’s tragic violence

“Reimagine: I am the Change,” is a dedicated fund to supporting grassroots, community-based, mental health initiatives that fill a gap for culturally relevant wellness and healing practices in Buffalo’s East Side.

The program was created by OMH through a \$1.4-million emergency-response grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) after the racially motivated shooting at the neighborhood’s Tops Market in May 2022 that killed 10 individuals.

Dr. Jennifer Lewis Johnson came to Buffalo from Dallas, Texas, to coordinate the program. “I consider it not only an honor, but a privilege, to serve the Western New York community,” she said. Shortly after her arrival to she gave the program its current name. “I felt it was important give meaningful context to the grant and a sense of ownership to the community.”

Continued on the [next page](#)



This program has already taken on a collaborative form of its own, mainly due to Dr. Lewis Johnson's framework of inclusion and equity. She's conducted numerous community grant information sessions throughout Buffalo's East Side to create spaces to inform, engage, and include the community.

The program was created by OMH through a \$1.4-million emergency-response grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) after the racially motivated shooting at the neighborhood's Tops Market in May 2022 that killed 10 individuals.

Awards through the first round of grants include funding for six community-based organizations, creating non-traditional mental health wellness services – including creative and expressive art, integrated jazz, collaborative conversations with BIPOC clergy, arts that heal for seniors:

- **Community Health Center of Buffalo, Inc:** Art That Heals; \$100,000
- **Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc:** Healing Together: A Family & Community Healing Collaborative; \$50,000
- **Confident Girl Mentoring:** Support for Children Impacted by Trauma; \$40,000
- **Cultrue, Inc:** The New Masters Healing Buffalo through the Arts; \$126,200
- **Pappy Martin Legacy Jazz Collective:** Celestial Jazz Wellness Series; \$128,000
- **The Galactic Tribe:** The Wakademy; \$95,000

The second cycle of the grant program closed on April 28, 2023. OMH is looking forward to reviewing the new applications.

An additional \$363,250 is being dedicated to support the Black Mental Health Response Team, a team of Black and African American clinicians and other mental health staff, operated by BestSelf Behavioral Health, to provide rapid access to professional, culturally appropriate mental health outreach, engagement, and clinical support to address existing shortages of therapeutic and other mental health supports.

This funding will also provide \$116,609 for the Psychological First Aid Train-the-Trainer initiative to create a local cadre of individuals in the impacted communities to provide training. This nationally recognized model is designed to help people cope with the stress, shock, confusion, fear, feelings of hopelessness, grief, anger, guilt, and withdrawal that arise when a traumatic event has occurred.

In total, more than \$2.35 million in SAMHSA funding has been dedicated to programs to support the East Side community.

Memorial of flowers and dove cut-outs with the names and faces of the victims of the May 14, 2022, mass shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo. Val Dunne Photography/ Shutterstock.

Continuing response to community needs

This program continues OMH's efforts to respond to the community tragedy, which included extensive public outreach, state aid to communities, coordination of care resources, and valuable information and resources on addressing trauma.

Staff from the state Office of Victim Services went to Buffalo to help victims and families obtain financial assistance and provide information about how service providers can access the additional funding to expand services and support.

OMH has conducted several statewide webinars, focusing on helping community leaders – such as clergy, education officials, local government, public safety leaders, and behavioral health providers - with understanding how to assist individuals, families and youths coping with the grief and trauma.

Presentations provided general information about the mental health effects of racism and violence, crisis response, and helping others cope with grief and trauma. Specific information focused on children and youth.

Webinars also addressed the specific needs of parents, educators and other systems and programs that serve children and youth – such as pediatric primary care, afterschool and summer programs, faith-based organizations, and child welfare and juvenile justice. Topics included understanding common reactions in children and youth, supporting immediate and long-term needs, and helping parents and caregivers support themselves.

For more:

On the One-Year Anniversary of Mass Shooting at Tops Supermarket in Buffalo, Governor Hochul Announces Nearly \$10 Million to Address Vital Needs of East Buffalo
<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/one-year-anniversary-mass-shooting-tops-supermarket-buffalo-governor-hochul-announces-nearly>



Maxine M. Smalling, MS, BS(N), RN, OMH Chief Executive Nursing Officer (left photo, center) visited Rochester Psychiatric Center, where she was able to see its Nurse Residency Program in action, including education, team-building exercises, and guest speakers.

OMH honors its nurses

Celebrating May as Nurses Month in New York State

OMH is honored and excited to celebrate our nurses during Nurses Month 2023. The American Nurses Association 2023 theme, **Nurses Make a Difference, Anytime, Anywhere, Always,** resonates with the work of OMH nursing leaders, infection control nurses, and psychiatric mental health nurses in a post pandemic era with increasing demands for safe and high-quality mental health services for children, youth, and adults across New York State.

Continued on the [next page](#)

OMH recognizes its nurses for the valuable contributions and the difference they make as they rise to the challenges of a complex and changing healthcare environment.

In a post-pandemic era, OMH nurses continue to provide safe and high-quality nursing interventions. They keep patients and employees safe 24 hours a day, seven days a week on all OMH state-operated inpatient units that span 26 facilities across the system of care.

Their nursing expertise around medication administration is invaluable to driving medication empowerment and the recovery of clients in care at OMH outpatient clinics, residential programs, through the Mobile Integration Teams, and Family Care Programs.

Recently, in the New York City Region, OMH nurses readily responded to the call to conduct direct one-on-one outreach with individuals experiencing homelessness, deploying evidenced-based mental health engagement strategies, and critical interventions as valuable members of the newly created Safe Options Support Program.

OMH nurses continue, as always, to make a difference using targeted transitional planning activities and models like our very successful Skilled Nursing Facilities Support Program and use of Tele-ECHO clinics. These differences increase community providers' capacity to meet the mental health needs of individuals and support the timely return of individuals to their homes and communities. In this process, as nurse practitioners and psychiatric mental health nurses, they are critical leaders and contributors, using innovative models and new technologies like Tele-ECHO, stronger interprofessional collaborations with prescribers and clinicians, care coordination activities, and stronger partnerships to improve the recovery of individuals and strengthening the continuum of care.

Their willingness to make a difference, anytime, anywhere, and always was evidenced by OMH's state-operated system rapidly opening an innovative transition to home unit. The timely opening of the transitional unit allowed OMH to lead and model the strategies needed to meet the increasing demands for access to more innovative mental health services. Their efforts are already driving timely admissions and discharge activities with warm hand-offs between nurses and providers working in Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs, mental health clinics, skilled nursing facilities, residential settings, and homecare agencies.

OMH values its nurses' contributions to operationalize these new interventions and strategies. Their contributions are making a positive difference in the recovery of individuals living with a serious mental illness and OMH efforts to grow and strengthen intermediate levels of care as part of the broader strategy to have a comprehensive, innovative, and strong mental health system of care to meet the needs of New Yorkers.

On behalf of the entire OMH community, we thank and celebrate OMH nurses during this Nurses Month!

Mobile Access Program

Rapid-access telehealth program reaches milestone



OMH's emergency Mobile Access Program (MAP) recently conducted its 1,000th counseling session for individuals in emotional distress.

MAP is a statewide, police-based, rapid-access telehealth program that connects people in crisis to mental-health clinicians for assessment, safety planning, and connection to services and resources.

Continued on the [next page](#)

At the request of police, clinicians conduct remote face-to-face evaluations using an internet-enabled tablet.

The program has grown from a small pilot in 2019 to being active in 13 counties and 28 law-enforcement agencies with plans for continued expansion. The latest to join in this effort is the Cayuga County Sheriff's Office, which started providing iPads this month to all road patrol deputies, granting access to remote mental health services for individuals in crisis.

The program is coordinated by the Institute for Police, Mental Health, and Community Collaboration, which works closely with OMH to develop crisis intervention team programs to help local crisis response systems become less-reliant on law enforcement when responding to people in emotional distress and to help police be more prepared when called to respond. It provides police departments and mental health agencies with iPads, Zoom accounts, and training.

"MAP is a great example of harnessing technology for positive system transformation," said Institute Director **Don Kamin, PhD**. "Law enforcement officers are not the optimal response to individuals experiencing mental health-related crises and by providing them with iPads they are able to quickly contact a mental health clinician to conduct remote, face-to-face evaluations to better help individuals in emotional distress." Kamin also works with law enforcement, behavioral health system representatives, and other community partners to address the needs of individuals with mental illness and their family members through system reform, improved collaboration, and training initiatives.

The 1,000th call came at the request of the Ontario County Sheriff's Office. A clinician from Rochester Regional's Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program at Clifton Springs Hospital was the clinician on the call. "We've trained our entire office on how to use the iPads and have found the program to be very beneficial," said **Sgt. Mark Taylor** of the Ontario County Sheriff's Office, who supervises the program for his department. "By facilitating evaluations for 911 callers in the comfort of their living room, we can offer much better customer service and people are very appreciative of that."

"We've been tracking the data during the past three years, and we're seeing that nearly 80 percent of people in crisis remain at the scene after a MAP session is conducted," said OMH Commissioner **Ann Sullivan, MD**. "This is because mental health staff conduct an evaluation in real-time to remotely plan for appropriate care that reduces unnecessary transportation to a hospital by law enforcement and linking individuals to community-based care for follow-up."

"We've had great success in partnering with law enforcement to deliver this program," added **Cassandra Cowley**, Program Manager of the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program in Clifton Springs, who oversees the mental health clinicians who participate in MAP in Ontario, Yates, and Seneca counties. "People can remain in the community the vast majority of the time and we can offer follow-up support and begin creating linkages for them. People are so happy to be able to receive these supports in their home rather than going through the often-traumatizing process of being brought to the emergency room."

"This is an innovative use of technology to better serve individuals in crisis," said **Raná Meehan**, Director of the Mental Health/Criminal Justice Collaboration Unit in OMH's Division of Forensic Services. "Although we're encouraging people in crisis to call 988 instead of 911, we want to be able to provide timely connections to professional help when police are dispatched because someone called 911. MAP provides this."



Don Kamin, PhD



Raná Meehan

What's Great in Our State

A Celebration of Children's Mental Health

OMH's "What's Great in our State" celebration, held once again in-person on May 9 at the Albany Marriott, recognized the work that New York programs, schools, providers, and individuals do every day to improve the lives of our children.

A full house was in attendance to hear keynote speaker **Marc Brackett, PhD** (below, left), discuss social and emotional learning.



Presenting a proclamation (at left) from Governor **Kathy Hochul** of Children's Mental Health Week, was **Patrick K. Wildes**, Assistant Secretary for Human Services and Mental Hygiene, shown with (left) **Sarah Kuriakose, PhD**, BCBA-D, Associate Commissioner, Division of Integrated Community Services for Children and Families; and OMH Executive Deputy Commissioner **Moira Tashjian**.



Some of the youth artwork on display.

OMH Commissioner **Ann Sullivan, MD**, (fifth from the right) with the event's honorees. From left: OLV Human Services Residential Treatment Facility Director **Dan Bolden** and a member of his team - Systems of Care Award; **Isaiah Santiago**, Youth/Young Adult Award; **Heather Tafuro**, Family/Caregiver Award; **Joseph (Joe) Palmer**, Superintendent, Frankfort-Schuyler



Central School District – Schools/School District Award; representatives of the Mental Health Association of Columbia-Greene Counties with **Thomas Hess**, President of the association's Board of Directors - Organization/Community Group Award; Executive Deputy Commissioner Tashjian; and Associate Commissioner Kuriakose.

Lifetime recognition recipient **Dr. Jean Holland** (first photo at right) was not able to attend, so her colleague **Adrienne Williams-Myers**, Program Director at Northside Center for Child Development (second photo) accepted the award on her behalf.



Workshops were offered on digital wellness, trauma-informed systems of care, and supporting the needs of individuals with autism.



Scholarships

Encouraging the next generation of mental health professionals

The mental health field, like many health care professions, is experiencing significant shortages of clinicians, in particular clinicians who are multi-lingual, which continues to drive disparities in access, quality, and treatment for those who are not proficient in the English language.

This is why New York State created the \$4 million Mental Health Scholarship Program to support underrepresented students entering or enrolled in mental health degree programs at the State University of New York and the City University of New York.

In addition to helping students acquire skills and credentials to build rewarding careers, this initiative works to reduce mental health disparities found in the state's diverse communities by increasing the level of services delivered in a culturally relevant way.

At right are the first recipients of the There are 11 students from six different SUNY campuses.

The program aims to expand and diversify New York's mental health workforce, which lacks sufficient representation of ethnic and racial minorities, especially in roles requiring advanced degrees or education-based certifications. The program is made possible by a federal grant awarded to OMH.

Scholarship recipients

- **Daisy Calvario Velasco**, Sophomore Human Development Major, Binghamton University
- **Celine DeCambre**, Junior Psychology Major, University at Buffalo
- **Caitly Dominici**, Junior Psychology Major, Purchase College
- **Michelle Dong**, Sophomore Sociology Major, University at Albany
- **Jeannette Guasio**, 1st Year Masters Student in Social Work, Binghamton University
- **Quinn Hendershot**, 2nd Year Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology, Binghamton University
- **Teresa Mejia**, 2nd Year Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology, University at Albany
- **Luiza Perez Ortiz**, 1st Year Masters Student in Mental Health Counseling, University at Buffalo
- **S. Rashid**, 1st Year Masters Student in Psychology, University at Buffalo
- **Ramsha Suhail**, 1st Year Masters Student in Mental Health Counseling, SUNY Old Westbury
- **Esther Turay**, Junior Psychology Major, University at Buffalo