

A bold agenda for 2024:

Building upon the Governor's plan to strengthen the continuum of mental health

As 2024 begins, the New York State Office of Mental Health is building on Governor **Kathy Hochul's** \$1-billion investment to strengthen the delivery of mental health care.

Based on input from OMH's statewide community engagement sessions – during which the agency received feedback from roughly 1,700 New Yorkers – it's developed an ambitious schedule to begin aggressively building out this plan.

A fantastic amount of work has already been undertaken in a short period of time. During these past eight months, OMH has issued procurements and made funding awards in numbers that are unprecedented for this agency. Projects under the Governor's plan are already helping to build early intervention and youth programs and expand access to all levels of care.

New York State is **improving insurance coverage** and adding hospital capacity so that the most seriously ill can receive the care they need. The state has made multi-billion-dollar investments in safety-net hospitals, passed the largest Medicaid rate increases in more than a decade, and announced \$2.6 billion in capital transformation funding to help transform and modernize health care facilities.

In the coming months, OMH will continue its work to improve insurance coverage for those requiring mental health services, develop additional inpatient and Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) capacity, and help make sure hospital-based frontline practitioners have the information and resources they need to ensure all New Yorkers in crisis receive appropriate inpatient and post-discharge care.

Focusing on youth

Services for children, youth, and families are a major part of the plan. OMH is establishing a **Youth Advisory Board** to ensure behavioral health programs and policies are youth-informed and incorporate best practices. Governor Hochul conducted a Youth Mental Health Listening Tour in communities throughout the state to gather input to influence future initiatives, which culminated with the Youth Mental Health Summit last summer.

“As we spoke with young New Yorkers during the listening tour last spring, we became keenly aware of the many different behavioral health issues confronting our youth,” said OMH Commissioner **Ann Sullivan, MD**. “By strengthening school-based supports and providing additional assistance to children and adolescents, we can help successfully address these challenges earlier in their lives.”

As a result, the Governor is supporting legislation that **restricts the collection of minors' personal data** and change how young users are served content online to reduce the harmful effects of social media.

A total of \$50 million is being dedicated to help community-based hospitals throughout the state expand **access to mental health treatment** for children and adults – including youth-led programs, school-based and intensive therapeutic supports, and a specialized workforce trained to treat young populations.

- The state will provide additional funding to **children's community residences**, which allow youth to go to community schools and continue life in their neighborhoods.
- An expansion of partial hospitalization and **children's day treatment programs** for youth who need intensive, daily treatment to address their mental health needs.



OMH Commissioner **Ann Sullivan, MD**; and Governor **Kathy Hochul** discussing the progress of 2023 mental health initiatives and plans for 2024, during a news conference at the New York City Children's Center Bronx campus.

Governor Kathy Hochul has announced a \$1 billion, multi-year investment to strengthen the state's continuum of mental health care and drastically reduce the number of New Yorkers with unmet mental health needs. The plan will increase inpatient psychiatric treatment capacity, expand outpatient services, boost insurance coverage, and develop thousands of new specialized housing units to serve individuals with mental illness. Here is some of the work now underway:

- Additional **Youth Assertive Community Treatment** teams supporting children and adolescents in their communities, and providing wraparound care that includes crisis support, psychotherapy, medication management, and skill-building.
- Governor Hochul will work with the Attorney General and Legislature to adopt the **Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation for Kids Act**, which will require social media companies to restrict addictive features. Parents will be allowed to block access to social media platforms between certain hours.

School clinics

New York State is expanding access to **school-based mental health clinics**. Last year, OMH provided funding for 137 new school-based mental health clinic satellites last year, bringing the statewide total to more than 1,200.

The state's goal is to provide a school-based mental health clinic to any school that wants one, with start-up funding, enhanced reimbursement rates, and enforcement to ensure all insurers pay adequately for school-based services; and increasing funding for Teen Mental Health First Aid training programs, which use peer ambassadors to engage youth.

A total of \$100 million was awarded last month to 50 school districts and BOCES to **address pandemic learning loss** and provide students with mental health support. Fifteen school districts and BOCES have received grants through the Learning Loss Recover from COVID School Program (RECOVS) to expand student access to academic recovery professionals. Another 40 received Mental Health RECOVS grants to expand and support practices that promote mental health and wellness

New York State is **expanding the Community Mental Health Loan Repayment Program** to include slots specifically for clinicians who work in child-serving agencies and treat children and families. Loan repayment is a successful strategy that supports recruitment and retention of such clinicians and allows individuals who are historically underrepresented within the social service workforce the opportunity to go into public service.

Maternal and infant health

To better target interventions, the state Department of Health (DOH) will establish **new reporting requirements** for Medicaid managed care plans to give the state better insight into patients' use of critical prenatal and postpartum services. DOH will also work with birthing hospitals and centers, through the Perinatal Quality Collaborative, to **develop racially sensitive and culturally competent** birth-equity improvement plans based on the results and assessment of their Patient Reported Experience Measure surveys. DOH will also convene regional stakeholder groups to develop recommendations to better target efforts to reduce infant mortality.



Enhancing Youth Services

- Funded 137 new school-based mental health clinics.
- Strengthened suicide prevention programs.
- Increasing statewide coverage of home-based crisis intervention teams.
- Expanding HealthySteps to 46 new pediatric clinics in 19 counties.
- Required commercial insurance plans to cover crisis intervention and school-based mental health services.



Strengthening Inpatient Services

- Opened 150 beds in state-operated psychiatric hospitals.
- Restored nearly 500 beds at community-based hospitals that were offline since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Established 50 Transition to Home beds in New York City.



Expanding Community-Based Care

- Funded 13 new Certified Community Based Health Clinics, with 13 more in planning.
- Adding 42 Assertive Community Treatment teams.
- Establishing 50 Critical Time Intervention teams.
- Adding 12 new Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs to provide crisis outreach and emergency services.
- Funding 3 peer-led Intensive and Sustained Engagement teams.



Addressing Homelessness

- Adding 7 new Safe Option Supports teams in other areas of the state and awarding funding to 4 others.
- Helped 250 chronically homeless individuals into stable housing in New York City.
- Funding 500 community residence units for individuals at high risk of homelessness.



Developing Specialized Housing

- 900 transitional units for individuals leaving more intensive care.
- 600 licensed apartment units for individuals who need intermediate services.
- 1,500 supportive housing units for individuals with living with mental illness.



Strengthening the Workforce

- Expanded eligibility for the Community Mental Health Loan Repayment Program to more licensed mental health professionals.
- Awarded first scholarships to support underrepresented students entering mental health degree programs at SUNY/CUNY.

Expanding beds

Building on a 200-bed expansion last year at state-operated psychiatric centers – New York’s largest in decades – Governor Hochul proposed adding an additional 200. This includes 100 new civil capacity inpatient psychiatric beds, 15 of which will serve children and adolescents who have specialized needs, including those in foster care or with other systems involvement.

The plan will create 25 new forensic psychiatric inpatient beds and repurpose 50 existing psychiatric inpatient beds to specifically service those awaiting restoration to competency before trial.



*Commissioner Sullivan; Executive Deputy Commissioner **Moira W. Tashjian, MPA**; NYCCC Executive Director **Kanika Jefferies**; and other OMH staff joined Governor Hochul in the Bronx last month in discussing mental health initiatives for 2024.*

So far, the state has returned nearly 500 inpatient psychiatric beds in Article 28 hospitals that were taken offline during the COVID-19 pandemic, after issuing a directive to community-based hospitals in 2023. Inpatient capacity state-operated psychiatric centers was expanded by opening 50 new Transition to Home Unit beds in 2022 and 150 new state-operated psychiatric inpatient beds in 2023.

Training and technical assistance

The **Center for Workforce Excellence**, a free training center dedicated to helping behavioral healthcare providers implement evidence-based practices, is being developed by OMH in cooperation with New York University’s McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research.

Certifying evidence-based practices can be time-consuming and cost-prohibitive, meaning many community-based organizations are unable provide such therapies. The center provides this training and certification free of charge, in addition to providing ongoing support.

Supported with a \$4.3-million state investment, the center will provide training and technical assistance to eligible community-based organizations serving youth and families – which will help reduce disparities for people served by smaller providers, such as in rural areas.

Training will incorporate evidence-based practice certification, data management and evaluation, and improving the ability of clinicians to effectively diagnose children at an earlier age so they can receive appropriate services.

Courses include Parent-Child Interaction therapy, which uses play to facilitate healthy interaction between parents and young children. This therapy decreases disruptive behaviors in young children while fostering prosocial behaviors.

The Center is also providing Training for Functional Family Therapy, a new prevention and intervention program for at-risk youth to address a range of concerns – from emotional and behavioral issues, violence, drug abuse, gang involvement, and family conflicts.

The goal is to improve family interactions and provide services to support youth who are at-risk of out of home care, or involvement in the criminal justice or child welfare systems.



For information, visit: <https://www.centerforworkforceexcellenceinebp.org/>.

Public safety:

Addressing challenges, coordinating with law enforcement

Several initiatives for 2024 are designed to address the public safety challenges associated with serious mental illness.

Calling for an unprecedented level of coordination between law enforcement and mental health professionals at the state and local level, Governor Hochul proposed a significant expansion of services to address the needs of this population and minimize deeper penetration into the criminal justice system, as well as reducing frequent emergency room visits or periods of homelessness.



To focus on the relatively small number of individuals known to cycle through shelters, hospitals, jails, and prisons, a team will be dedicated at OMH to establish and monitor data shared by law enforcement, correctional entities, hospitals, and providers to facilitate connections to services, including housing. The team will work through OMH's regional field offices to collaborate with local mental health providers and resources. The Governor will expand Crisis Intervention Team Training, which has been shown to support better outcomes when law enforcement responds to individuals in mental health crisis, thereby reducing arrests, and increasing connections to mental health services.

Mental health courts

The state is using mental health courts to **address underlying causes** of criminal justice system involvement. Funding will establish new mental health courts and allow for existing courts to take on more cases. The state will fund mental health navigators in county court systems that will be responsible for identifying defendants who have a history of mental health treatment, lack of engagement in treatment, or other mental health concerns.

Admission and discharge

To ensure New Yorkers don't fall through the cracks after hospital visits, OMH and DOH will be publishing **regulations** for emergency rooms, inpatient psychiatric units, psychiatric hospitals, and CPEPs on their responsibilities when admitting and discharging patients that present behavioral health conditions. Hospitals will be required to:

- Screen patients with mental health conditions for risk of suicide, violence, substance use, and other complex needs.
- Provide a hand-off to an aftercare provider for those with complex needs.
- Schedule a follow-up psychiatric appointment within seven days when possible.

In addition, funding will be provided to OMH to expand surveillance and regulatory compliance activities across its licensed and unlicensed program settings, including hospital inpatient programs and CPEPs.

New community-based teams

The Governor's proposal will provide funding for **Intensive Forensic Assertive Community Treatment** teams that will deliver around-the-clock support to individuals with serious mental illness. These teams' responsibilities are to maintain lower caseloads and provide continuous, on-the-ground engagement to facilitate connections to care and housing, while ensuring adherence to medication and treatment plans, and support life skill development.

Transitional and specialized housing

Governor Hochul proposed **increasing access to transitional housing** for individuals to have options other than shelters after being released from custody. These units will be served by professionals who can provide case management assistance in obtaining permanent housing, employment, mental health and substance use treatment, and other individualized recovery goals. Governor Hochul also proposed funding **specialized housing** for individuals with a history of repeated arrests and difficulty engaging in mental health treatment, with designated staff to provide both individual-level case support and crisis and de-escalation support for residential staff.

Access:

Working to ensure coverage, mental health equity

In January, the state received approval from the federal government for a groundbreaking Medicaid 1115 waiver amendment to significantly expand coverage for health-related social needs for Medicaid beneficiaries.

Services covered for eligible program recipients will include housing supports, food and nutrition, and transportation required to connect members with social services.

As part of Governor Hochul's health care agenda to further primary care access, New York will increase Medicaid rates for providers participating in the state's innovative primary care model – called "Patient-Centered Medical Homes."



Integrating care

To better **integrate and coordinate mental health services** with primary care, New York will increase support for DOH-licensed facilities and private practices treating mental health conditions. To ensure access to care for adults with complex needs, Medicaid will increase reimbursement rates for health care providers serving individuals with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities.

The Department of Financial Services and DOH have proposed regulations to expand access to mental health and addiction services by **establishing network adequacy standards** for behavioral health insurers. When timely appointments are not available for in-network coverage, New Yorkers will be able to go out-of-network for mental health and addiction services at in-network rates.

Affordability

In 2023, Governor Hochul submitted a request to the federal government to raise the income limit for **Essential Plan eligibility** from 200 percent to 250 percent of the federal poverty line – up to \$36,450 income per year for an individual. Once implemented, this is expected to expand affordable coverage in the Essential Plan to an additional 100,000 New Yorkers.

New York also will offer new **health insurance premium subsidies** to residents enrolled in Qualified Health Plans, as well as eliminate cost-sharing in both the Essential Plan and Qualified Health Plans for office visits, laboratory work and testing, pharmaceuticals, and other supplies and services to promote better management of chronic conditions.

Some of the Governor's other initiatives include:

- Investing underutilized federal pandemic funds to continue **providing grants** to child care programs and support their workforce.
- Piloting staffed **Family Child Care Networks** in regions around the state, with a focus on supporting and growing the capacity of family and group family child care providers to expand business and operational support for family child care programs, the majority of which are staffed by women.
- Proposing an initiative to **increase the differential payment** rate for high quality providers that are accredited by a nationally recognized child care organization, participate in New York's Quality Rating and Improvement System, or have completed training and are an active participant in the Office of Children and Family Services Non-Patient Epinephrine Auto-Injector Initiative.
- Doubling the amount of **Infant Toddler Mental Health Consultants** statewide to support child care providers in the development of young minds, using a preventive approach to support the provider and improve the program environment.

Observations:

'Education, support, advocacy: My journey'

Loraine Lindsay, MHTA, Capital District Psychiatric Center (CDPC), shares her thoughts on her work.

My passion and dedication are directed toward helping the vulnerable in our community lead fulfilling and prosperous lives.

My interest in the human mind and behavior began in my childhood, driving me toward a career centered on understanding and aiding others. To equip myself with the necessary skills, I pursued an extensive educational path, obtaining an Associate Degree in Psychology/Education and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. My commitment to expanding my expertise led me to pursue a Master's Degree in Clinical and Counseling Psychology, with a specialization in Applied Behavioral Analysis and Substance and Recovery.



Loraine Lindsay, MHTA

At CDPC, my duties are varied and deeply impactful. I assist members in developing the skills they need for effective reintegration into the community. This involves not just educational and therapeutic interventions, but constant observation to ensure their well-being and progress.

My approach is goal-oriented, and my work is fueled by a passionate commitment to the betterment of those I serve.

In my experience working in the field of mental health, the significance of education, support, and advocacy has never been more apparent.

Here's a reflection on my journey and the insights I've gained:

The impact of education

Working in mental health, I've seen how vital education is in changing perceptions. Teaching individuals about mental health issues fosters understanding and empathy, both crucial for breaking down stigmas. My role often involves explaining complex emotional and psychological concepts in relatable terms, helping people to see mental health in a new light.

The power of support

Support is the lifeline for many struggling with mental health issues. In my role, facilitating support groups or connecting individuals with the right resources has been incredibly fulfilling. Witnessing the transformation in someone who feels seen and supported is profound. It reaffirms the importance of compassionate, patient, and non-judgmental support in the healing process.

Advocacy as a catalyst for change

Advocacy is a significant part of my work. Pushing for better mental health policies, more resources, and increased public awareness is essential. Every small victory in advocacy means potentially better access to care and a more understanding society. Advocating isn't just about big changes; it's also about empowering individuals to advocate for their own mental health needs.

Through my work, I've learned that education, support, and advocacy are interconnected. They collectively create a more informed, supportive, and responsive environment for dealing with mental health issues. This journey has been both challenging and rewarding, reinforcing the need for continued efforts in these areas.

For me, this is more than a profession; it's a manifestation of my lifelong dedication to understanding human behavior and making a real difference in the lives of those who need it most.

On the road:



Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King

Commissioner Sullivan joined leaders of other state agencies on January 8 in honoring the life and legacy of Dr. **Martin Luther King, Jr.** at a special celebration in the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. The one-hour tribute to Dr. King showcased people and organizations throughout New York State that embody the principles of one of America's most significant leaders for social justice, freedom, and equality. The event was broadcast on Public Broadcasting Service stations throughout New York and is available for streaming at: <https://empirestateplaza.ny.gov/nyking>.



Daniel's Law Task Force

OMH and its partners in Daniel's Law Task Force conducted the second in a series of stakeholder listening sessions on January 11 at the **Charles B. Wang** Conference Center on the State University of New York at Stony Brook campus. Established in response to the death of 41-year-old **Daniel Prude** in 2020, the task force is charged with developing recommendations to guide behavioral-health crisis response and explore avenues for related diversion services. In the photo at right are Commissioner Sullivan, who is the Task Force chair, and Task Force member **Jonathan McLean**, LCSW. Joining virtually in the photo at left are members **Darcie Miller**, LCSW-R; and **Chacku Mathai**. The goal of the sessions is to gather input from communities, governmental entities, and the public on the best practices for engaging individuals in crisis, with a specific emphasis on equity. The task force is also examining a variety of models – both national and international –that could be used in developing a crisis response system.



OMH Subway Outreach Initiative

In December, Commissioner Sullivan and Executive Deputy Commissioner Tashjian met with staff who volunteered for the OMH Subway Outreach Initiative to thank them for their help. For the past two years, these staff dedicated their time outside of their regular work duties to support efforts to help individuals who are unhoused obtain shelter, connect with services, and meet their basic needs. These staff have been able to share their knowledge and experiences with the Safe Options Support Teams (SOS) and OMH leadership, lending to development of workflows and best practices in the field. The 11 SOS teams, meanwhile, have helped nearly 200 formerly homeless individuals find permanent housing during the past two years. Under the 2024 fiscal year budget, New York State is creating eight new teams – five in New York City and three in the rest of the state. Three dedicated overnight outreach teams are already operating in New York City’s subways.

Resources:

A guide to using inclusive language

Language can play a vital role in combating discrimination, marginalization, and oppression. That’s why what you say and what you write are important to our collective efforts to eliminate inequities in the mental health system. To help with this goal, the American Psychological Association has developed an excellent resource for individuals or organizations: *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Inclusive Language Guidelines*. The guidelines address:

- General terms related to equity and power.
- Person-first and identity-first language.
- Sexual orientation and gender diversity.
- Socioeconomic status.
- Avoiding microaggressions in language.
- Identity-related terms.
- Age.
- Disability status.
- Race/ethnicity/culture.

These guidelines can be helpful for any publication or correspondence in multiple disciplines. This includes training materials, internal and external communication, and official policies, such as regulations and legislation. For more information, visit: <https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines>.



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

