

HOPE.
RECOVERY.
RESILIENCE.

OMH NEWS



Office of
Mental Health

ANN SULLIVAN, MD / Commissioner
Spring 2022



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

MAY 2022

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OMH and its partners are working to increase awareness of mental health issues

Since it was first declared in 1949 by the organization known at the time as the National Association for Mental Health – now [Mental Health America](#) (MHA) – May has been observed as Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States.

MHA's theme for this year's observance is: **"Back to Basics,"** with the goal of providing foundational knowledge about mental health and mental health conditions, and information about what people can do.

The [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI), meanwhile, has titled its celebration: **"Together for Mental Health,"** offering to use this time to bring voices together to advocate for mental health and access to care.

The wording may be different, but the essential concepts behind both are the same:

- The trauma of mental illness is real.
- Recovery is possible.
- Support is vital.
- Everyone should have an opportunity for a full life.

OMH is conducting several of its own activities during May to help make the public more aware of mental health issues and reduce the impact of stigma in our society.

This edition of *OMH News* discusses some of these projects and the innovative programs the state continues to put into place to help those whose lives are affected by mental illness.

We welcome your comments at: omhnews@omh.ny.gov.



Healthy NY Summit

OMH Commissioner **Dr. Ann Sullivan**, far right, with her fellow participants in a panel discussion on mental health issues at the 2022 Healthy New York Summit in Manhattan on April 20.

From left: **Pamela Mattel**, LCSW, President and CEO, CBC/Coordinated Behavioral Care; **Dr. Ruth Gerson**, SVP of Mental Health Services, The New York Foundling; **Dr. Rosa Gil**, President and CEO, Comunilife, Inc; **Linda Lee**, Chair, New York City Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addictions; and **Dr. Michael A. Lindsey**, Incoming Dean; Executive Director, Silver School of Social Work; NYU McSilver Institute, who served as moderator.

What's Great in Our State: 2022

Celebrating Children's Mental Health Awareness Week



After a two-year break in which the event was held online due to the COVID pandemic, "What's Great in Our State," OMH's 2022 celebration of children's mental health awareness was once again held live and in-person. The event is an opportunity for all who work to support children's mental health to share their experiences and strategies. The scope of this event continues to grow, this year it was sponsored by 14 state agencies and not-for-profit organizations.



Honorees

The event honored individuals and organizations for their exceptional work supporting the social-emotional health of children and youth. From left: Representatives from **Promise Zone of Onondaga County**, recipient of recognition for the Organizations/Community Groups category; the **Rensselaer City School District**, School/School District category; **Hempstead Prevention Coalition**, Systems of Care category; **Angela Colon-Rentas** of Compeer Rochester, Youth/Young Adult category; **Donna M. Bradbury**, MA, LMHC, OMH Associate Commissioner, Office of Prevention and Health Initiatives and host of the event; and **Dr. Esteban Fuentes** of Greater Binghamton, Health Center, Lifetime Achievement category. Unable to attend was recipient **Nicole Drey**, recipient for the Family/Caregiver category.



Governor's proclamation

Jihoon Kim (left) Governor **Kathy Hochul's** Deputy Secretary for Human Services and Mental Hygiene, presents the Governor's proclamation for Children's Mental Health Awareness Week to **Donna M. Bradbury**.



Keynote

“Take charge of your life, and your physical and mental well-being. Celebrate the work you’ve done and give back to yourself,” said author **Justin Michael Williams**, as part of his lively keynote presentation titled: “You Are Enough: Discovering Your Unique Energy Signature” that incorporated music, mindfulness, and discussion on social justice.



Workshops

Educational sessions offered information on mental wellness in early childhood, overcoming challenges in youth advocacy, and creative approaches for suicide prevention when working with high-risk youth.



Exhibition

Examples of some of the artwork created by youth who are currently receiving services at Greater Binghamton Health Center, Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center, and New York City Children’s Center.



First in the nation!

OMH is creating ACT teams just for youths

OMH is now the first state mental health agency in the nation to designate Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams specifically for youths.

ACT teams provide mental health services to people with serious emotional disturbance. Personnel include psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, mental health clinicians, and peer advocates.

This team approach allows ACT teams to deliver intensive, highly coordinated, individualized services, and skilled therapeutic interventions to ensure children and families have the level of treatment and services to support their recovery. Teams are highly responsive and flexible to

meet the individualized, changing needs of the child and family, and they offer support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They're run by not-for-profit agencies that have experience in this field.

"Development of the Youth ACT program is an example of OMH's commitment to increase access to services in the home and community for children and youth with mental health issues and their families," said Commissioner **Dr. Ann Sullivan**. The pioneering teams we're developing will provide services to at-risk young people when and where they need it most and help them stay in school and develop the skills they can use to lead successful and independent lives."

The new Youth ACT program will help people ages 10 to 21 who are at-risk of entering residential or inpatient psychiatric treatment to receive services while remaining with their families. The goal is to help youths and families recover by helping them to stay together.

New York State is providing \$21 million to develop 15 Youth ACT teams. Nearly \$15 million will be annual and provided through state-aid and Medicaid reimbursements. Another \$6 million will come from one-time start-up funding from the federal government, provided through the time-limited expansions of the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) Block Grant and Federal Medical Assistance Percentage programs. Additional funding for these programs was allocated under the U.S. Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan Act.

As the teams begin to treat clients, OMH will evaluate their effectiveness, and has formed a steering committee of researchers, clinicians, and family and youth partners to guide the evaluation and refine the model.

Youth ACT teams will be established in:

- **Capital Region** - Parson's Child and Family Centers, serving Albany and Schenectady counties.
- **Finger Lakes** - Hillside, serving Monroe County.
- **Mid-Hudson** - MHA Westchester, serving Westchester County.
- **Mohawk Valley** - Integrated Community Alternatives Network, serving Oneida County.
- **Southern Tier** - Children's Home of Wyoming, serving Broome County.
- **Western New York** - Child and Family Services, serving Erie and Niagara counties.
- **Central New York** - Onondaga Case Management, serving Onondaga County, and Hillside, serving Chenango and Cortland counties.
- **Long Island** - Central Nassau, serving Nassau County; and Hope for Youth, serving Suffolk County.
- **New York City** - Child Center of NY, serving Manhattan; Jewish Board of Family & Children's Services, serving Staten Island, Queens, and the Bronx; and JCCA, serving Brooklyn.

OMH will be issuing a Request for Proposal to develop another five teams that will serve children and families in the:

- **Capital Region** - One team serving Warren, Washington, and Saratoga counties.
- **Mid-Hudson** - One team serving Orange County.
- **Mohawk Valley** - One team serving Fulton and Montgomery counties.
- **Finger Lakes** - One team serving Ontario, Wayne, Seneca, and Yates counties.
- **Southern Tier** - One team serving Steuben and Chemung counties.



Investing in children’s mental health services and education programs

The 2022-23 New York State Budget will provide \$2.5 million over five years to create a Mental Health Resource and Training Technical Assistance Center for Schools.

The center will support all New York State public and private schools and help them provide mental health education as part of the K-12 health curricula.

Other youth mental health program provisions, include:

- **Recover from COVID School Program (RECOVS)** - Investment of \$100 million over two years will create a new state matching fund that will help school districts with the highest needs. Funding will support the hiring of mental health professionals and the expansion of school-based mental health services. It will also fund expansion of summer learning, after school, extended-day, and extended-year programs to help students make up academic ground.
- **HealthySteps** - The budget increases funding by \$10 million. HealthySteps helps pediatricians expand their focus on a child’s physical health to include social-emotional and behavioral health and to help support family relationships. Healthy Steps is facilitated by mental health professionals with expertise in child and family development who work with families and pediatricians to provide mental health and trauma-informed care in a primary care setting.
- **Child Health Plus Insurance** - The Executive Budget includes \$11 million in the 2023 fiscal year – increasing to \$44 million in 2024 – to improve access to children’s behavioral health services by aligning Child Health Plus benefits with Medicaid benefits - including mental health and substance use services, home- and community-based services, evidence-based treatment for individuals diagnosed with serious mental illness, and residential rehabilitation for youth.
- **Trauma-Informed Care network** - The budget includes \$10 million to expand the network and provide specialized treatment that addresses experiences that can traumatize children, including the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Children and Family Treatment and Support Services (CFTSS)** - The budget increases funding for this program by \$8 million. CFTSS provides an array of services, including youth and family peer supports and psychosocial rehabilitation, and can work with children and youth before they have a diagnosis, providing individualized and community-based supports for both prevention and treatment.
- **Home-Based Crisis Intervention (HBCI)** – The budget increased funding – \$7.5 million in 2022-23, \$10 million when fully annualized – to develop new HBCI teams and expand current caseloads to serve 2,640 families each year, doubling the current volume. HBCI provides short-term, intensive, in-home crisis intervention services to a family in crisis as an alternative to admitting their child in a psychiatric hospital.
- **Residential Treatment Facilities** - These facilities serve the state’s most vulnerable and highest needs children. The budget significantly increases funding – \$7.5 million in state funds, \$15 million with matching federal funds.

Confronting stigma

OMH to award grants for local projects

OMH is awarding up to \$105,000 in grants to projects that help reduce the stigma that’s often associated with mental illness.

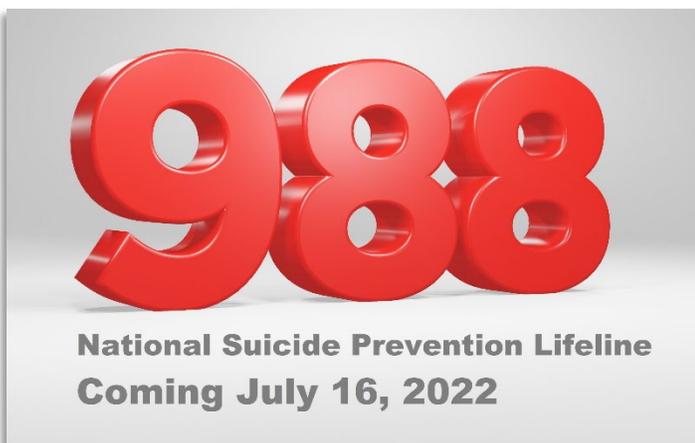
Award recipients will receive up to \$15,000 to conduct anti-stigma programs between May 2022 and June 2023. OMH is currently reviewing applications, the deadline for submissions was April 2. To be considered, agencies must have at least one year of experience serving persons with mental illness and be recognized for their work serving underserved, under-represented or minority populations.

Funding is provided through the voluntary tax check-off program launched in 2016, which allows taxpayers to contribute easily to the “Mental Illness Anti-Stigma Fund” when filing their state taxes.



Recipients will develop projects such as targeted messaging and advertising, production of printed materials, speakers, training, contact with people with lived experience, and multimedia productions. Examples include:

- **Educational activities** - Anti-stigma activities taking place in educational institutions, including colleges and universities, some of which deny admission to people due to their mental health histories. This includes creating materials to correct inaccurate depictions of mental illness, which can prevent students with mental illness from fully participating in the educational experience.
- **Underserved populations** - Activities that provide innovative, culturally relevant approaches to reducing stigma in underserved populations.
- **Housing** - Activities intended to combat stigma and discrimination in housing, which prevents people with mental illness from obtaining and maintaining safe and affordable housing. Targeted audiences may include landlords, homeowners, management companies serving landlords and owners, building superintends, and billing and rent collection personnel.
- **Employment** - Activities intended to combat stigma and discrimination in the workplace, which make it difficult for people living with mental illness to find and keep meaningful jobs. Targeted audiences may include corporate employers, Department of Labor representatives, and employment and staffing agencies.
- **Parenting** - Activities intended to combat the stigma and discrimination experienced by individuals with mental illness who are also parents.
- **Media** - Activities intended to combat the stigma, discrimination, and negative stereotypes in the media. This could also include social media.
- **Health care** - Activities intended to combat stigma and discrimination in the health care system that leads to people with mental illness not receiving the health care they need.



Transition to 988

OMH receives \$7.2 million federal award to strengthen crisis call centers

In April, New York State was awarded \$7.2 million by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), to help strengthen crisis call center services in preparation for the transition on July 16, 2022, of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline from the current **1-800-273-8255** to **988**.

New York State's award is part of nearly \$105 million in grant funding provided nationally by the American Rescue Plan to 50 states and four territories. New York State will

use the funds to improve response rates and ensure calls that originate in their states are first routed to regional crisis contact centers. They may also use the funds to build the workforce necessary for enhancing local text and chat response.

This award came just days after passage of the New York State Budget, through which Governor Hochul secured \$35 million for the 2022-23 fiscal year to significantly expand call center capacity throughout the state. This support will increase to \$60 million on an annual basis.

OMH has already allocated one-time funding of \$10 million in supplemental Community Mental Health Services Block Grant resources to provide start-up funds for the call centers in the current year to build up statewide capacity and infrastructure by hiring and training staff, fortifying the network of backup centers, broadening the availability of chat and text services, and ensuring proper connections to community services.

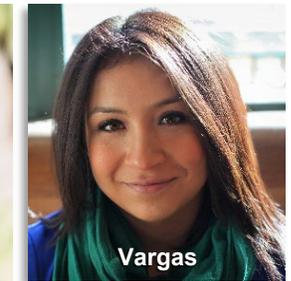
The U.S. Congress in 2020 designated the new 988 dialing code to provide easier access to crisis services. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States had one death by suicide every 11 minutes in 2020. Suicide was the second leading cause of death for ages 10 to 14 and 25 to 34. SAMHSA's 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health data shows 4.9 percent of adults 18 or older had serious thoughts of suicide, 1.3 percent made a suicide plan, and 0.5 percent attempted suicide in the past year. Among adolescents 12 to 17, 12 percent had serious thoughts of suicide, 5.3 percent made a suicide plan, and 2.5 percent attempted suicide in the past year. The findings vary by race and ethnicity, with people of mixed ethnicity reporting higher rates of serious thoughts of suicide.

Mental Health Equity Journey Awards

Promoting behavioral health equity & addressing the mental health needs of all New Yorkers

OMH presented its 2022 Mental Health Equity Journey Awards in March, which are given to organizations and individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to improving access to healthcare for New Yorkers in marginalized and underserved communities:

Individual awards



- **Kerron Norman**, Chief Program Officer for Lutheran Social Services of New York, for her contributions toward dismantling the causes and effects of persistent poverty and social injustice for the communities she serves.
- **Sara Taylor**, the Founding President and Chief Executive Officer of Positive Steps and Managing Director of Taylor-Jones Event Management Services, for her work empowering and motivating vulnerable populations living in poverty. Sara also founded the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) PEEEEEEK Parent Mental Health Project.
- **Melanie Funchess**, an advocate for children, youth, and families for more than two decades, for her work on community building, educating others on the effects of racial trauma, and promoting mental wellness in communities of color. She is CEO and Principal of Ubuntu Village Works, LLC, an organization dedicated to creating culturally responsive community-driven healing and wellness spaces. She has served as a Commissioner of Schools for the Rochester City School District and the Director of Community Engagement for the Mental Health Association of Rochester/Monroe County.
- **Dr. Michael A. Lindsey**, a noted scholar in child and adolescent mental health, for his work toward eliminating suicide, particularly in young Black youth. He is the Executive Director of the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at New York University, the Constance and Martin Silver Professor of Poverty Studies at NYU Silver School of Social Work, and an Aspen Health Innovators Fellow. He leads the working group of experts supporting the Congressional Black Caucus Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health. Dr. Lindsay was recently appointed Dean of NYU's Silver School of Social Work.
- **Dior Vargas**, an intersectional mental health activist, for her efforts in eradicating the stigma of mental illness in the QTBIPOC community. Vargas delivers education and resources to all communities, emphasizing the QTBIPOC community. Her photo project titled "The POC and Mental Illness photo project" has provided visibility to BIPOC individuals living with mental illness.

Community program awards

- **In Our Own Voices**, a progressive organization that directly works to combat oppression and marginalization in the LGBTQ+ POC community, for its commitment and dedication to reducing disparities and marginalization in the LGBTQ+ POC community.
- **Hamilton-Madison House**, a voluntary, non-profit settlement house dedicated to improving the quality of life of the Lower East Side's Asian community, for its work in reducing disparities by providing culturally and linguistically sensitive Behavioral Health Services to New York City's Asian community.
- **Rainbow Heights**, a support and advocacy program for LGBTQ+ consumers of mental health services, for its diligent work in reducing disparities for the underserved and disenfranchised LGBTQ+ community.

State-operated program awards

- **Hutchings Psychiatric Center**, for making great strides in reducing disparities for clients, engaging in training that promotes cultural awareness in their workforce, and continuing to provide quality culturally and linguistically appropriate care to clients and the community.

- **Greater Binghamton Health Center**, for working diligently to provide a diverse/inclusive work environment – developing agency-wide Diversity & Inclusion training, creating the Cultural Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Committee, advocating strongly on behalf of LGBTQ+ patients.

“These awardees are committed to promoting behavioral health equity and addressing the mental health needs of all New Yorkers, particularly the unique needs of populations that historically and currently face disparities,” Commissioner Sullivan said. “They’re doing wonderful work and I’m happy to recognize their efforts.”

The celebration of these awards goes with OMH’s broader equity agenda and the commitment to reducing disparities for New York’s marginalized, underserved, and unserved populations. Some of the agency’s select equity focused initiatives include:

- Collaborating with **Nathan Kline Institute’s Center for Research on Cultural and Structural Equity in Behavioral Health** to conduct an agency-wide review aimed at identifying systemic and executive policies, procedures and practices that unintentionally contribute to racial inequities in New York’s mental health care system.
- Leveraging formal partnerships with the **State University of New York** and the **City University of New York** to develop diversity pipeline programs to increase the level of diversity in New York’s mental health workforce.
- Developing an online training curriculum to support broad mental health system adoption of the **National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care**, as well as additional modules on reducing racial and ethnic-based bias in the delivery of clinical services and providing culturally appropriate clinical services for the primary special population groups served.
- Adding equity components to all **agency requests for proposals, as well as licensing and funding requirements** grounded in the National CLAS Standards to ensure that organizations are prioritizing activities related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (i.e., diversifying the workforce, understanding the role that culture plays in an individual’s recovery and providing staff training on these vital topics).

NY CARES UP

New program to provide support for uniformed personnel

OMH received funding in April for **CARES UP** (Changing the Conversation, Awareness, Resilience, Empower Peers, Skills Building/ Suicide Prevention for Uniformed Personnel), an initiative to strengthen resiliency and suicide prevention efforts among military Veterans and uniformed personnel – including law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical service members, and corrections officers.

CARES UP was developed by OMH’s Suicide Prevention Center to provide much-needed mental wellness support to first responders, uniformed personnel, and military veterans – all of whom are at an elevated risk for suicide compared to the general population in New York State. The program will provide life-changing and life-saving services for veterans, their families, and companions.

“This program ensures that New York keeps its promise to care for those who served our state and nation not only with the challenges they may face upon their return home but any obstacles which may arise throughout their lives,” said Commissioner Sullivan.

Veterans services

The awards include \$210,000 for three organizations that serve veterans:

- Tioga County Veterans' Service Agency
- WNY Heroes, Inc.
- The PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Program of Rensselaer County

Funds will be used to increase participation in a model national program called the Expiration of Term of Service Sponsorship Program (ETS-SP), which helps service members and veterans as they shift from military to civilian life by connecting them with a local volunteer peer sponsor.

The program focuses on the first year of post-military life, a timeframe associated with high rates of homelessness, criminal justice involvement, alcohol and substance use, unemployment, and suicide among Veterans. Using peer-reviewed, evidence-based best practices, ETS sponsors are trained and certified to build relationships and resiliency.

