

New York State Budget

Investing more than \$196 Million to strengthen mental health care services for New Yorkers

Issuing a proclamation recognizing May as Mental Health Awareness Month, Governor **Kathy Hochul** highlighted the unprecedented investments made into strengthening the state's system of care since she launched her landmark \$1 billion mental health initiative in 2023.

"Our historic investments into mental health have dramatically improved our system of care, allowing more New Yorkers to access treatment and positioning our state as a national leader," she said.

These investments extend to all facets of the mental health system and include the largest expansion of inpatient capacity in decades, stronger regulations to connect New Yorkers with treatment when they leave inpatient and emergency settings, more outpatient supports to help individuals live safely in their community, thousands of new units of specialized housing dedicated to individuals living with mental illness, and sweeping insurance reforms to improve access to care.

"These investments have created a more effective and accessible system of care statewide," said OMH Commissioner Dr. **Ann Sullivan**. "They've helped more people get the treatment when and where they need it most. Mental Health Awareness Month is an opportunity for us to engage in conversations about mental illness, champion stories of recovery, and help every New Yorker understand that help is available."

The new 2026 State Budget, signed into law last week by Governor Hochul, builds on this investment, by dedicating more than \$196 million toward strengthening the state's continuum of mental health care.

Supporting individuals with serious mental illness

- **Involuntary commitment** - Adding language to New York's involuntary commitment statute to define the 'likelihood to result in serious harm' to include a person at substantial risk of physical harm because their mental illness makes them unable or unwilling to provide for their own essential needs such as food, clothing, necessary medical care, personal safety, or shelter due to their mental illness. This change addresses gaps in the existing standard, bringing New York into alignment with 43 other states with similar standards.



*OMH Commissioner Dr. **Ann Sullivan** discussing mental health allocations in the proposed State Budget during a community meeting.*

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



Mental Health Awareness Month is a time to foster recovery and resilience, prioritize mental well-being, and promote open conversations about mental health.

OMH recognizes the importance of mental health and its impact on our personal and professional lives.

Throughout May, we are hosting various events and initiatives to raise awareness about mental health and start conversations to help reduce stigma. With this in mind, we invite you to:

- Read Governor Hochul's [proclamation](#) of Mental Health Awareness Month.
- Watch [Commissioner Sullivan's message](#) (image above).
- Look through our [calendar of events](#).
- Watch the [videos](#) OMH is posting to social media each week in May to highlight individual stories of recovery.

We are also encouraging self-care through our [Be Well](#) public-awareness campaign to help people understand the importance of mental wellness and the impact of stress and trauma.

We all know someone who lives with mental illness or has experienced a mental health issue.

Throughout this month, please take a moment to reflect on how we can collectively educate one another on this topic, and how we can help reduce the stigma experienced by so many who live with mental illness.

OMH wants to thank New York State's mental health providers for everything you do, day-in and day-out to help people living with mental illness and to promote positive mental well-being.

- **Assisted Outpatient Treatment (Kendra's Law)** - Providing \$16.5 million to enhance county-level implementation of Assisted Outpatient Treatment or 'AOT' programs and \$2 million for OMH to add staff dedicated to monitoring AOT, enhance statewide training, and provide additional support for counties and providers. The budget modifies the AOT statute (known as "Kendra's Law") so that new petitions can be filed within six months of an order expiring in instances when the individual becomes disconnected from care and experiences mental health symptoms that substantially interfere with their ability to comply with treatment, or result in emergency treatment, inpatient admission, or incarceration.



Commissioner Sullivan discussing Governor Hochul's proposal to change New York State's involuntary commitment law in April on NY1 News. "This actually puts in the law the statement that individuals at risk of serious physical harm due to their inability to take care of themselves is a basis for involuntary commitment," she said "Right now, it's in guidance. But this puts it into law, which gives it a different level of weight when someone is making this decision."

- **100 new forensic inpatient psychiatric beds** – Adding 100 forensic beds aimed at restoring justice-involved individuals to competency to stand trial in New York City. This complements Governor Hochul's efforts to expand psychiatric bed capacity throughout the state. Since Governor Hochul took office, New York State has added 875 psychiatric beds, including 550 that were brought back online at community-based hospitals, and 325 at state-operated psychiatric centers, marking the largest expansion at these facilities in years.

In addition, the state has funded 109 new beds now under development at community-based hospitals and is preparing to build a new 75-bed Transition to Home unit at the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in Queens.

- **Continuing to address unsheltered homelessness** - Building up to five drop-in locations at subway stations to help homeless individuals out of the station platforms and into spaces where their needs can be assessed, and they can be connected to additional resources and care. At these locations, which will be called "Connection Centers," outreach workers including the state's Safe Option Support teams, will be able to continue their engagement with unsheltered New Yorkers, building the trust that will encourage them to accept services, and helping them access the supports they need to find stability, including placements into specialized overnight shelter settings. Additionally, the state is continuing to collaborate with partners at the city level, making investments that will enhance capacity and resources at existing, specialized New York City Department of Homeless Services shelter locations, such as "Welcome Centers," that are designed to serve unsheltered New Yorkers, especially those leaving the subway system.

Creating opportunities for growth and recovery

- **New clubhouses and Youth Safe Spaces** - \$8 million to establish up to five new clubhouses and four Youth Safe Spaces. Clubhouses are member-driven programs that provide individuals with serious mental health conditions access to social support, life skills training, employment resources, and a sense of community, and Safe Spaces provide a place for young people to access behavioral health wellness resources, foster positive relationships with their peers, and receive support in a comfortable setting.
- **Street medicine and street psychiatry to SOS Teams** - \$1.4 million for OMH to add street medicine and street psychiatry to Safe Options Support teams, allowing them to provide immediate medical and psychiatric care to homeless individuals. With 28 teams across the state, the SOS program has now helped [permanently house more than 1,000 individuals](#), including 147 in OMH-licensed housing.
- **Teen Mental Health First Aid** - \$1.5 million to expand Teen Mental Health First Aid for high school students, training both teens and adults who work with teens to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges.
- **Expanding access to peer support services** - An additional \$2 million into creating a hospital-based 'peer bridge' program to help transition individuals leaving inpatient care back into the community and expanding Intensive and Sustained Engagement Teams (INSET) to provide peer-led support to individuals during their recovery journeys and help service recipients manage crucial transitions of care.

Safe Options Support

Program reaches benchmark, housing more than 1,000

As of April, the Safe Options Support program has found stable housing for more than 1,000 New Yorkers experiencing chronic homelessness.

Administered by OMH, the program has now helped permanently house 1,008 individuals, including 147 in OMH-licensed housing. The program has found permanent housing for 723 individuals in New York City and 285 individuals in areas of the state outside of the five boroughs, including Long Island and upstate.

“From the initial contact on the street through when that individual is permanently housed, the SOS teams offer compassionate, holistic care that is designed to build trust and provide critical support,” Commissioner Sullivan said. “These teams are building trust among New Yorkers with complex issues and helping them to thrive in their communities.”

The first teams launched in Spring 2022. The SOS program now has teams canvassing all five boroughs of New York City, both counties on Long Island, and 19 additional counties throughout the state.

A new SOS team has been established to help older adults and individuals with chronic medical conditions in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens or the Bronx. Launched last month by the Bridge, this new team provides specialized support to individuals aged 51 and older and those with existing chronic medical conditions who are already enrolled in the SOS program.

The SOS program now supports 28 teams statewide, including 17 based in New York City, 10 located in areas upstate and one on Long Island. In addition to providing coverage in all five boroughs, the program also supports a targeted response team dedicated to providing outreach in the Times Square area of Manhattan.

OMH is also expected to launch two new teams focused on young adults in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn. Operated by ACMH, these new teams will focus on individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, providing them with developmentally appropriate support and skill building that will help them thrive in the community.

The SOS program uses Critical Time Intervention, an evidence-based practice that helps connect vulnerable individuals in crisis to housing and supports, including critical mental health services. Teams work with individuals experiencing homelessness to strengthen their skills and support network so that they can be successfully housed, and their care can be transferred to community-based providers.

Services are provided for up to 12 months, pre- and post-housing placement, with an intensive initial outreach and engagement period that includes multiple visits per week. OMH coordinates with local mental health and social services departments, mass transit, and other organizations to identify priority areas based upon reported density and level of need.

The SOS program was initially provided \$21.5 million in the 2023 State Budget. Governor Hochul then expanded funding for the SOS teams to nearly \$30.1 million in the 2024 budget, \$35.2 million last year, and \$32.9 million in the 2026 fiscal year.

In addition to this funding, the 2026 Executive Budget includes \$2.8 million to add street medicine and street psychiatry to SOS teams statewide. This funding will allow teams to provide immediate medical and psychiatric care to unsheltered individuals, improving the effectiveness and timeliness of outreach services.



Commissioner Sullivan, visiting in February with members of the **Breaking Ground Safe Options Support Team** at the St. George Terminal of the Staten Island Ferry.

“The Safe Options Support program has brought new hope and lasting stability to unsheltered New Yorkers, including many who have spent months and even years living on the streets.”

- Governor Kathy Hochul

Bronx Wellness Center

New recovery hub to help meet the community's mental health needs

In March, OMH showcased a newly renovated 17,000-square-foot community wellness space on the campus of the Bronx Psychiatric Center.

The Wellness Center is envisioned as a resource for individuals living with a variety of different mental health conditions, including those making the transition back into the community from inpatient and residential settings, or otherwise lacking a connection to their community.

“Being part of a community is important and especially for individuals recovering from mental illness,” said Commissioner Sullivan. “The Wellness Center will provide a diverse and inclusive environment for individuals receiving services at the Bronx Psychiatric Center and offer residents of the community a place to come together in an inclusive and wellness-focused manner.”

OMH held an open house to cultivate interest in running the center and providing skill development services for people residing in the community. OMH will issue a request for proposals later this spring. The event featured demonstrations and exhibits to showcase the renovated space for members of the Greater Bronx community and prospective operators.

The center is intended to address the social drivers of health within the greater Bronx community, including its financial, occupational, and intellectual needs. The selected operator will be expected to build positive relationships and coalitions with community providers, businesses, and organizations; facilitate and support peer leadership roles; and practice person-centered recovery models.

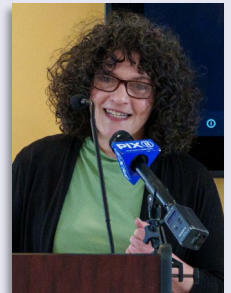
The facility is envisioned as a place that will host wellness services, community activities, skills development programming, personal enrichment classes, and other support. Likewise, the facility will promote mental and physical wellness and foster interpersonal connections aimed at bringing together individuals from widely varying backgrounds – something that will help reduce the stigma often associated with mental illness.

Originally known as the Bronx Ginsberg Clinic, the facility was overhauled in 2019 and now offers office space, a computer room, training rooms, a commercial kitchen with center island for teaching space, a full-service health suite, and a large greenhouse.

OMH conducted extensive discussions and visioning workshops to determine the best uses for the resulting center. It then developed a list of guiding principles to provide direction for future activities at the wellness center, including empowering the Bronx community and being inclusive; being adaptable and flexible, providing on- and off-site programming; having a holistic approach to health with offerings that meet the needs of Bronx residents; and leveraging the strength and expertise of existing integrative wellness practitioners and organizations.



*Commissioner Sullivan and Executive Deputy Commissioner **Moira Tashjian, MPA**, joined leaders from Bronx Psychiatric Center, state legislators, and local officials in touring the new facility on March 27.*



CARES UP

Providing grants for trauma and mental wellness training for veteran, first-responder, and corrections organizations

New York State has awarded 18 grants to expand resiliency and suicide prevention efforts among military veterans and uniformed personnel, including law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical service personnel, correction officers and emergency dispatchers.

Administered through OMH's Suicide Prevention Center of New York, the CARES UP initiative will provide \$60,000 over two years to four law enforcement agencies, three fire departments, three EMS services, three emergency communications organizations, two corrections agencies, and three organizations serving veterans.

"New York's first responders and uniformed personnel routinely go above and beyond the call of duty, and often at great personal expense," Governor Hochul said. "This funding will ensure these organizations and agencies are better equipped to cultivate resilience and mental wellness among their ranks to help properly address stress and trauma they encounter in the line of duty."

In addition, OMH also provided awards of \$40,000 over two years to 11 organizations previously funded through CARES UP to sustain their mental health and wellness initiatives. These sustainability awards were made possible after Governor Hochul successfully increased funding for the program in the 2025 State Budget to \$3 million annually.

The CARES UP program provides organizations with \$30,000 annually to increase suicide prevention efforts and wellness programming in their agencies. First responder agencies work closely with the Suicide Prevention Center to receive training from national subject matter experts on topics such as resiliency, mental health and wellness, suicide prevention, and peer support and implement agency-specific actions to address their unique needs.

The initiative also provides these grants to support veterans' organizations via Onward Ops. Recipient organizations use the funding to promote social welfare of service members transitioning back to their communities after their tour of duty ends.

"It's important to recognize the stress and cumulative trauma first responders and veterans experience as they do their jobs and the toll that this can take on their mental health," Commissioner Sullivan said. "CARES UP works with their organizations to mitigate this stress, build resilience and support mental well-being."

Studies have shown the cumulative stress and trauma are common in uniformed personnel professions and have placed these individuals at greater risk of suicide. To better understand the mental health-related challenges facing individuals working in public safety fields, the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services partnered with SUNY New Paltz's Institute for Disaster Mental Health to complete a first responder needs assessment survey of more than 6,000 individuals in law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire services, emergency communications, and emergency management from every region.

The assessment showed more than half of the participants experience high levels of stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression related to their jobs, and that they may not seek help due to their fear of facing stigma. Thoughts of suicide were reported by 16 percent of respondents — a level four times higher than the general population of the state. Likewise, New York veterans die by suicide at a rate nearly two times higher than civilians — a rate that has remained relatively unchanged since 2012. Veterans under the age of 55 consistently experience the highest rates of suicide in New York.



Children's Mental Health

'What's Great in Our State' focuses on awareness

OMH held the 16th edition of its 'What's Great in Our State' celebration on May 6 in Albany, recognizing the work that New York programs, schools, providers, and individuals do every day to improve the lives of our children and youth.



Welcoming attendees were Executive Deputy Commissioner Tashjian and **Sarah Kuriakose, PhD, BCBA, OMH Associate Commissioner, Division of Integrated Community Services for Children and Families.**



A full house was in attendance to hear keynote speaker **Ross W. Greene, PhD, clinical psychologist and originator of Collaborative and Proactive Solutions**, discuss innovative approaches for working with youth.



The celebration honored the exceptional work of six programs and individuals for their innovation and ability to engage youth. Awards were presented by Executive Deputy Commissioner Tashjian and **Robert Moon, LMSW, Deputy Commissioner, Community Program Policy and Management.** Unable to attend was Family/Caregiver Honoree **Jennifer Thompson.**



Taylor Locke -
Youth/Young Adult



HEARTT of Clinton County
- Systems of Care



Deirdre Sferrazza
- Lifetime Honoree



Middleburgh Central School District -
School/School District



Wayne County Community Schools - Organization/
Community Group



An afternoon panel discussion featured reflections and insight from past honorees **Michael Orth, Nivea Jackson, Jennifer Fuchs, and Haley Amering.**

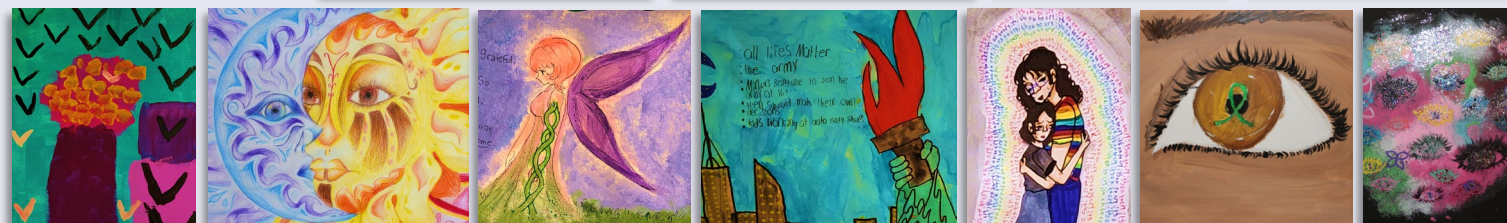
Moon and Tashjian with a proclamation by Governor **Kathy Hochul** of Children's Mental Health Week.



Concurrent workshops offered information on best practices and research.



Below: Some of the youth artwork on display.



Expanding ACT

\$4.5 Million to fund services for children and youth living with mental illness

New York State has awarded \$4.5 million to establish 10 new Youth Assertive Community Treatment teams, including five in New York City, two on Long Island, and three in areas north of the metropolitan area.

Administered by OMH, the new multidisciplinary teams will support 360 additional youth with serious emotional disturbances who are either at risk of entering, or are returning home from high-intensity services, such as inpatient settings or residential services.

Children and youth living with mental illness sometimes require additional care to remain at home or return to the community. Expanding the Youth ACT program will help provide more families with this critical support and the services they can rely on to bring their child home after inpatient care or from a residential facility.

OMH provided \$450,000 in one-time start-up funding to 10 service providers to establish the new teams, with each serving up to 36 children between the ages of 10 and 21.

In addition to announcing the awards, Governor Hochul also issued a proclamation designating [Children's Mental Health Awareness Week](#) in New York State. The proclamation was presented during the annual 'What's Great in Our State' Celebration of Children's Mental Health event in Albany (see page six), which recognizes individuals and programs successfully advancing the cause of children's mental health.

With the first teams established in 2022, New York was the first state nationally to adapt the successful Assertive Community Treatment model to serve youth and young adults. The state now hosts 20 Youth ACT teams in 27 counties, providing services including youth and family therapy, medication management, family and peer supports, and skill-building.

Youth ACT teams include mental health clinicians and psychiatric prescribers, peer advocates, and clinical support staff, offering 24-hour support, seven days per week. These teams are focused on improving or ameliorating the significant functional impairments and severe symptomatology experienced by the youth due to mental illness or serious emotional disturbance.

Clinical and rehabilitative interventions are also focused on enhancing family functioning to foster wellbeing, stability, and re-integration. Services are delivered using a family-driven, youth-guided, and developmentally appropriate approach that comprehensively addresses the needs of the youth.

Last year, Governor Hochul established the Youth Mental Health Advisory Board, a 30-member advisory board that includes youth between the ages of 11 and 17. The advisory board convenes quarterly and is designed to ensure that youth-informed best practices continue to be incorporated in developing behavioral health programs and policies.

New York also now supports more than 1,200 school-based mental health clinic satellites to provide mental health services at districts statewide. These clinics bring a licensed mental health care provider to school campuses, allowing students to access these services in a familiar stigma-free setting.

Under Governor Hochul's leadership, the state has also significantly expanded HealthySteps, an innovative program that supports young families with high-quality care for mental and physical health development for children three years old or younger. New York now supports 125 sites in 35 counties statewide.

Additionally, the state continues to expand Home-Based Crisis Intervention teams, which provide critical mental health services so that at-risk children and youth can avoid psychiatric hospitalization. The state now funds 55 teams, which have the capacity to assist 3,500 families annually.

Award recipients

- *Access Supports for Living Inc., serving Westchester County*
- *Central Nassau Guidance and Counseling, serving Suffolk County*
- *Child and Family Services of Erie County, serving Erie County*
- *Children's Home of Wyoming Conference, serving Chenango County*
- *Interborough Developmental & Consultation Center, serving Brooklyn*
- *Jewish Child Care Association of NY, serving the Bronx*
- *Richmond University Medical Center, serving Staten Island*
- *The Charles Evans Center, serving Nassau County*
- *The Child Center of NY, two teams serving Manhattan and Queens*

On the road



Mental Health Matters

Commissioner Sullivan discussed Governor Hochul's recent mental health investments and initiatives during Mental Health Matters Day in March at the Empire State Plaza. The event is organized each year by the Mental Health Association in New York State. In the photo at right are, from left: **John Richter**, MHANYS Director of Public Policy; **Glenn Liebman**, MHANYS Chief Executive Officer; Commissioner Sullivan; and **Bill Gettman**, MHANYS Board of Directors Vice-Chair and Northern Rivers CEO.

Meeting with stakeholders

Executive Deputy Commissioner Tashjian joined service providers and stakeholders from around the Mohawk Valley in March to discuss Governor Hochul's 2026 fiscal year Executive Budget and its proposals related to mental health.

The event at the North Utica Community Center also included a discussion about the roughly \$2 billion in investments made to expand mental health services and supports in the 2024 and 2025 state budgets.



House of the Good Shepherd

Executive Deputy Commissioner Tashjian also joined Central New York Field Office Director **Mark Thayer** on a tour of The House of the Good Shepherd's residential treatment facility in Utica. Licensed by OMH, this facility provides around-the-clock mental health and psychiatric services to youth between the ages of 12 and 16, preparing them to return home to their families. Many of these youth also attend the adjacent Tilton School.

Safety training for HHC staff

Staff from OMH's **Bureau of Education and Workforce Development** conducted a training this past winter for NYC Health + Hospitals employees in the Therapeutic Communication and Universal Safety Training train-the-trainer program.

Held at Westchester Medical Center, sessions included training on therapeutic communication, trauma-informed practice, de-escalation, and physical intervention. This is just one piece of OMH's commitment to support the non-state workforce. OMH has added five staff over the last several months specifically to increase its capacity to provide such support.



Weill Cornell seminar

In March, Commissioner Sullivan gave a presentation at the Rogers Colloquium Seminar at Weill Cornell Medicine in Manhattan.

The Commissioner discussed Governor Hochul's historic investments in mental health care and OMH's multi-faceted approach to helping unsheltered individuals with serious mental illness.

With the Commissioner is Dr. **Beth McGinty, Livingston Farrand**, Professor of Population Health Sciences at Weill Cornell Medical College.

Nurse Residency Program graduates

May is also National Nurses Month, and at right are the most recent graduates of OMH's Nurse Residency Program, this group being from Central New York Psychiatric Center.

The Nurse Residency Program provides new graduate nurses with the support, training, and the mentorship they need to make the transition into mental health practice. The program includes a combination of clinical rotations, mentorship from experienced nurses, and potentially specialized coursework or seminars focused on mental health nursing.

The program aims to enhance the skills, confidence, and job satisfaction of new nurses, contributing to better patient care and reduced staff turnover within OMH facilities. For information, visit [OMH's website](#).



Resources

OMH Mental Health Awareness Month Toolkit

Our Mental Health Awareness Month Toolkit uses information and tips from OMH's new *Be Well* campaign to remind New Yorkers that mental health is part of everyday life. Each message offers simple, inclusive ways to feel more grounded and connected.

The goal is to spark reflection, offer encouragement, and help people know they're not alone. Small actions can make a big difference, and together we can make space for healing, growth, and hope.

What is *Be Well*?

The *Be Well* public awareness campaign helps people understand the importance of mental wellness and the impacts of stress and trauma. The *Be Well* website gives New Yorkers accessible mental health tips and free ways to improve their well-being.

Visit BeWell.ny.gov to:

- Use breathing to calm your mind and reset.
- Practice mindfulness and gratitude.
- Build resilience.
- Find strategies to cope.
- Understand how stress and trauma affect us.
- Learn ways to connect with your community.

The site is user-friendly, available in multiple languages, and provides direct links to immediate crisis supports. It's also inclusive of all populations across New York State, regardless of age, background, or specific mental health needs.

Be Well ads are running in English and Spanish on social media, digital platforms, public transit, billboards, geofencing, radio, and on television – both cable and streaming services.

In addition to this toolkit, you can find more helpful graphics and printables such as the images at right. You can download, print, and share with others to spread healthy wellness practices.

If you are interested in ordering printed versions of these materials free of charge, please fill out this [form](#).

