
4 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING TO STRENGTHEN THE STATE'S MENTAL HEALTH PEER WORKFORCE

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Rita Cronise <rmc277@shp.rutgers.edu>

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To: "academy.virtual.community" <academy.virtual.community@gmail.com>



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GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

GOVERNOR HOCHUL ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF \$4 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING TO STRENGTHEN THE STATE'S MENTAL HEALTH PEER WORKFORCE

Funding Will Support Increase in Treatment Options and Expansion of Workforce

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced that the New York State Office of Mental Health has secured \$4 million in workforce recruitment and retention funds that will help strengthen the state's mental health system by increasing access to peer services that support individuals and families in a wide array of treatment and service options.

"Mental health matters, and I want every New Yorker to know that they are not alone," **Governor Hochul said**. "We will continue to strengthen our state's mental health services to meet the needs of New Yorkers as part of our recovery from the pandemic."

The Federal funding was secured through time-limited expansions of the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant and the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage share of funds for Medicaid programs.

OMH Licensed, Funded, and Designated Programs are eligible to receive funding to expand access to youth, family and adult peer support services provided by the Certified and Credentialed Mental Health Peer Workforce. These funds will expand access to evidenced based Peer Services in a way that promotes demographically, linguistically, and culturally appropriate connections.

Funding can be used for recruitment and retention incentives to support and expand the Certified and Credentialed Mental Health Peer Workforce, including New York Certified Peer Specialists, Credentialed Youth Peer Advocates and Credentialed Family Peer Advocates to better serve the needs of New Yorkers who utilize mental health services from OMH.

OMH Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan said, "Peer support workers are individuals who have lived experience with mental illness or are family members caring for youth with mental illness. They have had success in recovery, and use their experience, skills and training to support others in their recovery journey. Peers are known to be highly effective in helping individuals living with mental illness reach their own goals and live full lives in their communities. This additional funding

is wonderful news for so many individuals and families, as it will dramatically expand and increase access to peer programs across the state."

Representative Yvette Clarke said, "The \$4 million federal funding, secured today by Governor Kathy Hochul, to uphold our state's mental health workforce is welcome news. This critical funding is exactly what my colleagues and I have been fighting for in Congress. Funding to support the New York State Office of Mental Health has been desperately needed and will restore faith in an overworked and underpaid mental health workforce. The onslaught of COVID-19 and its continued impact in the state, and especially in my district, continues to be felt, and this announcement is the relief we've been pleading for. Mental health workers are vital to our underserved communities that are in need of support and federal resources. This funding will undoubtedly make a difference in the lives of the people counting on it, and we are grateful for it because it is paramount to keep New York's Mental Health services functioning."

Representative Paul Tonko said, "During this ongoing pandemic, the mental health needs of our communities have skyrocketed. Expanding treatment options and building out our mental health workforce is essential to providing the support Americans need, which is why I pushed in Congress to deliver these federal resources in our COVID response and other legislation. I'm thankful to the Governor for supporting this critical effort to improve and expand mental health services for New Yorkers."

Representative Kathleen Rice said, "The COVID-19 pandemic has taken an immense toll on New Yorkers struggling with mental illness. This federal funding will serve these populations by strengthening peer services and ensuring that accessible support is available at a time when it is needed more than ever. I thank Governor Hochul for making this issue a priority."

Representative Adriano Espaillat said, "Even before COVID-19 brought on unparalleled stressors, we were facing a mental health crisis. The pandemic continues to reveal deep cracks in America's foundations - including our mental health system. I commend Governor Hochul for her continued efforts and leadership addressing the mental health and wellness of individuals and families throughout the State of New York and allocating this additional federal funding to strengthen the state's mental health programs. As communities continue to rebuild, it is critical that mental health and wellness remain at the forefront of our efforts to help get residents back on track."

State Senator Samra Brouk said, "As Chair of the Senate Committee on Mental Health, I cannot overstate the importance of the additional funds being invested in the development of a Mental Health Peer Workforce. As communities across New York State work to rebound from the pandemic, the need for a robust, qualified, and culturally-competent mental health workforce could not be more vital. We know that peer counseling and advocacy is one of the most effective ways to support individuals and families who are struggling with mental health, and I am appreciative that Governor Hochul recognizes this need and I look forward to continued investments in the future."

State Assemblymember Aileen Gunther said, "Peer services are the foundation for successful mental health treatment for so many people in New York State. This additional funding will be a tremendous help to the hardworking men and women who provide these invaluable services. I want to thank Governor Hochul for making this funding available."

CEO of Mental Health Empowerment Project Amy Colesante said, "Mental Health Empowerment Project is very pleased to see the Office of Mental Health honor peer support by funding efforts to expand the profession throughout New York State."

CEO of Families Together in New York State Paige Pierce said, "Decades ago, the family peer support movement was born from the understanding that families with lived experience navigating

systems alongside their children and youth comes with its own unique set of challenges. "I've been there" are powerful words for a parent to hear as they cope with a sense of frustration, isolation, judgment, and grief they feel while coming to terms with their child's diagnosis and navigating the service system. On behalf of the parents who founded Family Peer Advocacy and those who have benefited from it, we express our deepest gratitude for Governor Hochul's commitment to growing this crucial role."

CEO of New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services Harvey Rosenthal said, "Peer supporters have long played an essential role in helping a broad diversity of New Yorkers to find the hope, encouragement and example to promote their health and recovery. Great thanks are due to Governor Hochul and Commissioner Sullivan for making it possible to expand access to peer support at a time when it's never been needed more."

Director of Youth Power Tiara Springer-Love said, "Youth Peer Advocacy is a role designed by and for youth and young adults. When young people can be there to support one another, incredible things happen. This investment in the Youth Peer Advocacy Workforce will improve engagement from youth and young people transitioning into adulthood. The COVID-19 pandemic has had negative impacts on all youth and young adults. Deep, mutual connections between peers are what we need during this time in order to thrive."

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