



Executive Budget Hearing  
Committee on Finance

Testimony of  
Christy Parque, President and CEO  
The Coalition for Behavioral Health  
May 24, 2018

My name is Christy Parque, the President and CEO of The Coalition for Behavioral Health. The Coalition is the umbrella advocacy and training organization of New York's behavioral health community, representing over 140 non-profit community-based agencies that serve more than 450,000 consumers. Our members serve the entire continuum of behavioral health care in every neighborhood of New York City.

We would like to thank the City Council for its support of the behavioral health community and especially for the Mental Health Services Initiatives that the City Council has supported with discretionary funds.

**MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES INITIATIVE:**

The health profession is increasingly understanding the relationship between good health and the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH). Broadly defined as the "conditions in the social, physical and economic environment in which people are born, live, work and age" (Healthy People 2020, July 11, 2010) they are "the complex, integrated and overlapping structures and economic system that are responsible for most health inequities" (Commission on Social Determinants of Health, World Health Organization, 2008). Examples include access to education and employment opportunities, housing, safety from exposure to crime and violence, and positive (or negative) social norms and attitudes. The intersection of behavioral health problems with poverty, race and ethnicity is indisputable.

The Mental Health Services Initiatives were conceived to help address these shortcomings. The initiatives provide a much needed system of services aimed to alleviate the behavioral health care gaps experienced by vulnerable populations, ranging from Children Under Five to Geriatric Mental Health. They include:

- Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations
- Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative
- Medicaid Redesign Transition
- Geriatric Mental Health
- Children Under Five
- Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health Services
- Autism Awareness

Each initiative targets a specific highly vulnerable segment of the population, spans life cycles and ages, or other identifying or defining characteristics. New Yorkers have come to rely on these trusted resources, culturally competent and linguistically appropriate, and an essential and integrated part of the scarce resources available in their communities.

Many of the programs that comprise the Mental Health Services Initiatives have been serving their community for more than a decade. Others, like the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative, are relatively new. The innovation and evolution of programs highlights an important and distinguishing aspect of the Initiatives. The initiatives are community focused, and long embedded in communities that have come to trust, respect and rely on the organization. It is the deep and enduring relationship with the community that allows these organizations to identify changes in community needs, adopt best practices and community driven solutions, and provide cost effective behavioral health services that other funding streams do not cover.

In FY2018, 90 agencies were awarded over 108 grants totaling \$13.2M. Leaving any program unfunded would disrupt the reliable support system for fragile individuals seeking security and wellbeing. It is essential that these vital initiatives continue as they serve very specific objectives for core populations as well as emerging needs.

Five organizations, including The Coalition, Citizens Committee for Children, United Neighborhood Houses, UJA Federation of New York, and the Mental Health Association -New York City, have endorsed this comprehensive, inclusive agenda.

## **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FUNDS**

Thrive NYC and Healing NYC are welcome additions to help meet the pent-up demand for behavioral health services. Only a fraction of individuals needing services can access them. We support spending \$1.2M for an analysis of Thrive NYC and hope the data will be available to multiple researchers and other interested partners whose work would benefit from the information collected.

The Coalition agrees with the increased allocation of \$60M available under Healing NYC for treatment sites, naloxone kits and \$11.1M for a peer program for individuals who survive overdoses. We endorse the Council's

request to allocate \$4.3M for community based organizations to conduct opioid abuse prevention and treatment.

In a city where having a mental illness can be fatal, we support \$1.9 million to deepen our commitment to the Cure Violence Program.

## **INVESTMENT IN THE HUMAN SERVICES SECTOR**

We thank the City Council for its support of the investments made in the human services sector for the Fiscal Year 2018 budget and for your leadership this year in response to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. The sector needs key investments on City contracts, and we – as a unified sector – are advocating for funding parameters that set a floor of 15% for indirect in all human services contracts and are requesting a 10% increase in the portions of human services contracts covering occupancy and casualty and liability insurance to cover escalating costs in these areas. Additionally, we are asking for consideration of a 37% fringe rate in all human services contracts to reflect a generally accepted industry standard. While these priorities were not in the Mayor's FY19 Preliminary and Executive Budgets, we hope the Council will continue to support our asks.

We would ask the Council to push for an accounting of FY2018 funds which were slow to get out and for immediate remedy for these contracting delays. We greatly appreciate your continued work with us to ensure the timely disbursement of these funds, and for further investment in our communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

We cannot effectively address the needs of New Yorkers without addressing the mental health status of our community, its providers and its members. What's at stake makes it imperative that we use all possible resources and approaches. With the dramatic rise in opioid addiction and deaths, and the escalating stressors in our workplaces, schools and homes, we cannot afford to pull the rug out from under anyone already in care, and must increase access and services for those currently shut out.

Christy Parque  
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The Coalition for Behavioral Health