

Council seeks additional \$225M for mental health funding in budget response

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Council Speaker Adrienne Adams announced the preliminary budget response at City Hall Monday.

The City Council is pushing Mayor Eric Adams to include \$225 million in additional funding for mental health services in the city's final fiscal 2025 budget to ensure New Yorkers can get preventive care before a crisis.

The Council's preliminary budget response, released Monday, aims to restore Adams' cuts to services and agencies since last year, including mental health programs. The lawmakers found more than \$6 billion in additional dollars to put toward undoing Adams' spending slashes and further investing in underfunded programs thanks to a [rosier financial forecast](#) for the city.

So far this year, the council has [leaned on programs for young New Yorkers](#) to address the city's growing mental health crisis. Its budget response is no exception; lawmakers called on the city to restore \$77 million, starting in fiscal 2025, for its 421 Community Schools, which offer medical, dental and mental health care. The council also wants to add \$15 million for a youth peer support program for kids ages 14-24 with mental illness, as many illnesses emerge during that time period.

Along the same lines, lawmakers also want the administration to put \$5 million in the budget for the Department of Education, New York City Health + Hospitals and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to provide in-person and virtual mental health care for students. According to Councilwoman Linda Lee, who chairs the body's committee on mental health, disabilities and addiction, if the funding were included it would be automatically part of the budget each year after fiscal 2025.

Beyond investing in children, the budget response hones in on “proven solutions” to the city’s dual crises of mental illness and recidivism, Council Speaker Adrienne Adams said Monday. The additional money aims to stop a growing trend where New Yorkers with mental illness wind up in the city’s criminal justice system and jails without treatment by investing in preventative care and housing, according to lawmakers.

“The City has relied too much on emergency and crisis responses, when a strong, community-based infrastructure of prevention is needed,” the council’s response report reads. “Supportive housing remains one of the most effective solutions to successfully address issues of mental health and homelessness.”

To that end, the council proposed adding about \$20 million to the city’s budget for the 15/15 Supportive Housing Program, which develops residences that can include connection to health care, mental health programs and job support for people with mental illness. The additional funding would allow the city to advance its goal of developing 15,000 new units and potentially work to preserve units developed before 2008, according to the council’s report.

Lee told *Crain’s* the money would also aim to create more congregate supportive housing sites, facilities which offer tenants services all in one building. The setup makes it easier for people to keep their appointments and for social workers to use their time more effectively, she said.

“If people don’t have housing, they can even think about getting a job and getting back on their feet,” she said. “There’s not enough for people that have no issues to begin with. We’re slowly getting those [inpatient psychiatric hospital beds] back up, but it’s not enough.”

Speaker Adams added Monday that housing is a lynchpin in the city’s effort to invest in programs that address mental illness and reduce recidivism. The council’s emphasis echoes Gov. Kathy Hochul’s recent focus on [mental health and housing](#) for New Yorkers.

The council also proposed adding funding to programs that provide care to individuals with serious mental illness who are involved in the city’s criminal justice system. Lawmakers called on the Adams administration to add \$7 million to the budget to expand Forensic Assertive Community Treatment teams – which provide intensive mobile mental health treatment and work with criminal justice agencies to keep people out of jails – bringing the total for the program to \$22 million.

Now that the council has responded to the mayor’s executive budget, the two parties will begin negotiations for the final budget. Lee said the success of the additional funding, if it’s awarded, will depend on the city allocating resources properly and evaluating whether its mental health initiatives already in place are [working](#).

“Having more resources is obviously great, especially on the prevention side,” she said. “Instead of creating new programs, how about reevaluating the ones that are already there? I just don’t know that those evaluation-type questions are being asked or looked at. And that really to me is the bigger picture question.”

To date, the mayor’s plan to address mental illness has helped more than 50 of the city’s most visible individuals find permanent housing, a metric Adams said shows that the city is [moving in the right direction](#). The council and the mayor must arrive at a final budget by June 30.