



Office of  
Mental Health

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## NEWS RELEASE

### NEW YORK STATE AWARDS \$6 MILLION TO FUND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS

*Funding to Help Urban, Suburban, and Rural Communities Statewide to Establish Health-Led Crisis Response Services for Behavioral Health Emergencies*

*Pilot Programs to Incorporate Trained Behavioral Health Professionals and Peers into Crisis Response*

The New York State Office of Mental Health today announced the conditional award of \$6 million to fund pilot programs in three communities across the state to ensure that crisis response systems prioritize a health-led response to behavioral health crisis. The funding will provide \$2 million each to the city of Rochester, Central Nassau Guidance & Counseling Services, and Children's Home of Jefferson County to provide a safe, compassionate response for New Yorkers in crisis.

"By establishing a health-led system of response, communities can safely, effectively, and compassionately respond to individuals who experience a behavioral health crisis," **OMH Commissioner Dr. Ann Sullivan said.** "These pilot programs, in conjunction with our Technical Assistance Center, will provide a roadmap for other communities across the State to develop a health-led behavioral health crisis response system."

"Ensuring that individuals in a behavioral health crisis have immediate access to help and support can save their life and is often the first step they take towards recovery," **OASAS Commissioner Dr. Chinazo Cunningham said.** "With this innovative pilot program, the expansion of these teams will connect more people to services, furthering the strong system of support in communities across New York State."

The funding will allow recipients to use teams with trained behavioral health professionals and include peer support staff in their crisis response system. The resulting system will be trauma-informed, community-based, and prioritize racial equity, cultural humility, and harm reduction for New Yorkers across their lifespan.

The city of Rochester will use the funding to expand its [Person In Crisis](#) team, which operates around the clock, is dispatched through 911, 988, and 211, and responds to calls without law enforcement. The city's pilot will include peer navigators to provide in-

person responses to support engagement, instill hope, and coordinate with the emergency response social workers to provide follow-up services to individuals, their families, and caregivers.

Children's Home of Jefferson County was awarded funding to address service gaps and reduce reliance on law enforcement as primary responders in Jefferson and Lewis counties. This model will incorporate certified peer specialists to accompany licensed clinicians in responding to crisis calls, providing around-the-clock coverage for the geographically dispersed rural communities in this area, and ensuring linkages are made for ongoing care.

Central Nassau Guidance will collaborate with community partners and stakeholders to implement a health-lead crisis response that will build upon existing Mobile Crisis Teams to include clinicians and peers responding together to in-person crisis needs. This model will elevate the role of peers, integrate co-occurring disorder crisis response, update protocols, and provide education within the suburban communities of Suffolk County.

In addition, OMH and the state Office of Addiction Services and Supports have established the Behavioral Health Crisis Technical Assistance Center, which will be housed at OMH and funded with \$2 million in the FY 2026 budget. This center will develop and support the implementation of standardized protocols for community-based, public health-led response to behavioral health emergencies and provide training and technical assistance to localities on their crisis plans.

OMH also collaborated with OASAS to assemble an Advisory Council of key stakeholders, which convened for the first time in January 2026 and will advise and review the work of the center. The members include advocates, clinicians, emergency responders, law enforcement, and others, with a majority of members having lived experience with mental health or substance use challenges.

The pilot programs, Behavioral Health Crisis Technical Assistance Center and Advisory Council were all created upon the recommendation of the Daniel's Law Task Force. The Task Force was charged with developing recommendations to guide behavioral health crisis response and exploring avenues for related diversion services.

**Senator Samra Brouk said,** "The statewide enthusiasm for creating non-police, peer-led compassionate responses to individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis is encouraging, and we must build upon this momentum by ensuring we secure an additional \$8 million in the state budget this legislative session for more pilots and sustainable funding. I am grateful that the city of Rochester was selected as a recipient of this award and has the opportunity to prevent tragedies like the loss of Daniel Prude's life. Thank you to the Prude family, Assemblymember Bronson, the Office of Mental Health, and our fellow advocates for looking for innovative ways to address our statewide mental health crisis with action rooted in safety, compassion, and dignity for all."

**Assemblyman Harry Bronson said,** "Having Rochester's Person in Crisis receive this funding and participate in this pilot program will help it expand services and give the state feedback on best practices so we can move away from a response based in force and control to one of compassion and care. This announcement is made in honor of Daniel Prude, whose life was taken from him due to failures of a traditional emergency response system. We're here today, and we've been here for the past six years, fighting to ensure that tragedy never happens again."

**Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon said,** "When people experience a mental health crisis, they are frequently met by law enforcement, which has too often escalated the situation. These pilot programs are an essential step towards a smarter, safer model that puts

trained behavioral health professionals and peers on the front lines and defuses the crisis by centering compassion. I commend the New York State Office of Mental Health for driving this work forward and setting a strong statewide standard for a health-led crisis response system.”

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