

Citywide savings plan scales back mental health, youth programs

Mayor Bill de Blasio on Thursday released his executive budget plan, which accounts for billions in revenue shortfalls as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The \$89.3 billion budget was crafted facing a \$7.4 billion tax revenue hit across fiscal years 2020 and 2021 and achieves an unprecedented \$2.7 billion in savings, de Blasio said. In terms of health and social services, some of those savings are tied to the city's mental health program ThriveNYC and youth services.

Savings include \$10 million from delaying a ramp up on mobile treatment teams under ThriveNYC and the Health Department due to state Medicaid cuts, the mayor's office said in an announcement. They also include more than \$2 million that was previously allocated to the school mental health consultant program and \$10 million from slowing the implementation of citywide crisis response teams.

The latter two cuts were noted to be covered by increased clinical capacity in schools and in part by increased mobile crisis teams.

Savings also include \$55 million from suspending summer youth programming due to school closures.

The newly created Campaign for Healthy Minds Healthy Kids said in a statement that it was not pleased to see profound cuts to education and youth and summer programming as more than 50% of young people are not able to access the behavioral health services they need.

"The Covid-19 pandemic only further exacerbates these issues, with children isolated from school support systems, cramped in close quarters with family and experiencing heightened fear, anxiety and the loss of loved ones," the campaign stated. "As many health care services go online, teletherapy is being used to reach children and families.

"We stand ready to support the mayor and City Council in seeking the critical resources from our state Legislature, the governor and federal delegation necessary to enable the city to respond to this crisis and begin a path toward recovery," it added.

De Blasio also noted in a statement the need for additional support from the federal government during the Covid-19 emergency and reiterated that the city's executive budget prioritizes health and safety.

"Our top priorities are simple: We will keep people safe, protect their health, make sure there is a roof over their head and that food is on their table," de Blasio said. "There is no cost too great to keeping New Yorkers protected, but Washington must also step up."