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Crain's

City Agencies Expanded Health Care Access to More New Yorkers in Fiscal 2023, Mayor's Report Shows

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Access to health care and mental health services through New York City Health + Hospitals and the city Department of Health and Mental Hygiene grew modestly in fiscal 2023, according to Mayor Eric Adams' latest Mayor Management Report released Friday.

The MMR, which mayoral administrations have published since the 1970s, tracks whether each city agency has met multiple goals through more than 2,000 indicators in an effort to make their performances more transparent for the public.

Each health-focused organization saw small upticks across access metrics for the year, showing that they are slowly reaching more New Yorkers.

One of H+H's primary goals was ensuring more people could reach medical, mental health and substance use care regardless of their ability to pay for it. To that end, the system recorded a 5% increase in enrollment in the NYC Care program—which provides low and no-cost treatment to individuals who don't qualify for or can't afford health insurance—from 2022. NYC Care now serves more than 119,000 people.

According to the health system, new arrivals to the city and increased enrollment capacity could contribute to the program's rising numbers, which have already exceeded H+H's goal of 100,000 enrollees.

Beyond NYC Care, H+H increased patient access to primary care in fiscal 2023, enabling more people to reach what the system calls "the key to a person's overall sense of health." H+H saw more than 427,000 unique patients over the course of the year, a 3% bump. More patients sought prenatal care from H+H, as well, particularly in the third trimester of their pregnancies. The system attributed the trend to more migrants coming into the city, and more immigrant New Yorkers potentially looking for later-stage care after getting earlier treatment in their home countries.

H+H also tracked retention within certain programs that care for vulnerable New Yorkers as part of its goal to grow access. At its HIV Clinics, where the metric is reported monthly, the number of patients retained in ongoing care increased by 3% from 2022, to 85% of individuals.

"The system additionally prioritizes identifying individuals living with HIV that need additional support, allowing for improved outreach and engagement efforts and better connection to services and resources for our patients," the report reads.

Another important metric for the health system is emergency room utilization, classified under the system's goal of enhancing the system's sustainability. H+H said ER usage continues to grow "substantially" and exceed pre-pandemic levels. However, the health system reported that the number of patients who left emergency care without being seen dropped slightly in fiscal 2023, to 5%, as a result of improvement efforts such as operational changes during times when the ER is busy.

In addition to tracking progress from one fiscal year to the next, the MMR displays whether agencies meet their annual targets in certain progress areas. According to the report, H+H met its yearly targets for unique patient numbers, NYC Care enrollment, the number of people who received clinical services from

the system's Mental Health Service Corps, and the percentage of follow-up appointments patients kept after behavioral health discharges. However, the system missed its own mark on the percentage of eligible women who received a mammogram screening and how long pediatric patients typically wait for their next appointment. The target was 5 calendar days until the third next available new appointment for kids—but H+H recorded 13.

Like H+H, the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene also made gradual progress on one of its primary goals: preventing and addressing mental illness.

The report shows that use of assisted outpatient mental health treatment grew by 9% in fiscal 2023, with nearly 2,500 people taking part in programs. Utilization is recovering from a pandemic decline, the report notes, where the courts could not perform their full spectrum of duties in the assisted outpatient treatment investigation process.

Furthermore, the department also saw more New Yorkers calling the 988 mental health hotline and NYC Well. The program made more than 422,000 connections to services in 2023, up 7% from 2022, which DOHMH attributes to an “infusion of resources and attention” into the city's crisis system—including a call center.

Meanwhile, long-term mobile community-based treatment providers reached 7% more New Yorkers in 2023 than 2022—about 5,300 individuals—because the city deployed new Assertive Community Treatment teams, which support people with serious mental illness. Additionally, co-response teams, which offer pre- and post-crisis care but do not respond to 911 calls, received 15% more referrals.

The DOHMH met its fiscal 2023 targets for the number of New Yorkers receiving mobile team care and being served by co-response teams, the report shows, but the agency did not release a target number for individuals enrolled in assisted outpatient treatment programs.

Meanwhile, both H+H and the DOHMH could exceed their planned budgets for the fiscal year, according to the report. While the actual fiscal 2023 spending numbers included in the MMR are not finalized, they illustrate H+H's expenditures as \$11 billion, which would surpass its nearly \$10 billion authorized budget. Meanwhile, DOHMH expenditures are shown to be nearly \$3 billion, slightly over its authorized budget and trending upward. Final numbers for the year will be reported in the mayor's next preliminary management report.

Representatives from H+H and the DOHMH did not respond to requests for comment by publication time.