

2024-2026

NYC
HEALTH+
HOSPITALS

Behavioral Health Blueprint

Turning Crisis Into Opportunity





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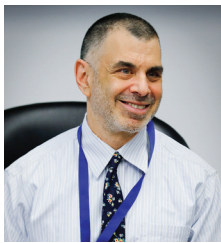
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Leadership Message

With more than 76,000 patients each year relying on our behavioral health services, NYC Health + Hospitals has an outsized role caring for New Yorkers' mental health and substance use treatment needs. Our dedicated behavioral health team includes nearly 5,000 people at 11 hospitals and over 30 community health care centers, and we provide approximately 60% of behavioral health services in New York City. We serve as the frontline response for individuals requiring emergency, inpatient and outpatient behavioral health care. Moreover, our mobile and community-based services meet people where they are, breaking down barriers to care for populations who may otherwise have difficulty accessing critical services due to transportation, time, language, housing instability, justice involvement, or disability. With a wide range of high-quality, affordable behavioral health services and programs serving children, adolescents, adults, and seniors, we serve everyone along the behavioral health spectrum. And we are privileged to do so.

As demand for our services grows, our City's behavioral health system is also confronting significant challenges, including an aging infrastructure and nationwide health care workforce shortage. The funding we need to renovate our facilities—so essential to our ability to modernize and serve more people—has been limited for years. In addition to our capital limitations, the human resources constraints, rules, and processes that are a necessary part of a complex, public system also limit our ability to move swiftly.

Yet just like the city we serve, we don't turn away in the face of challenges, we accelerate our work and deepen our resolve. This Blueprint outlines how the health system is doubling down on our commitment to provide exceptional behavioral health care for all by making strategic investments across all areas of the care continuum to meet today's behavioral health crisis. Together, we aim to meet every need, in every setting and for every patient population. Our approach has and will always prioritize the most marginalized New Yorkers who often carry a heavy burden of complex medical, psychiatric, and social needs. We couldn't be prouder that behavioral health is at the core of the NYC Health + Hospitals mission—and we are ready to meet it once more.



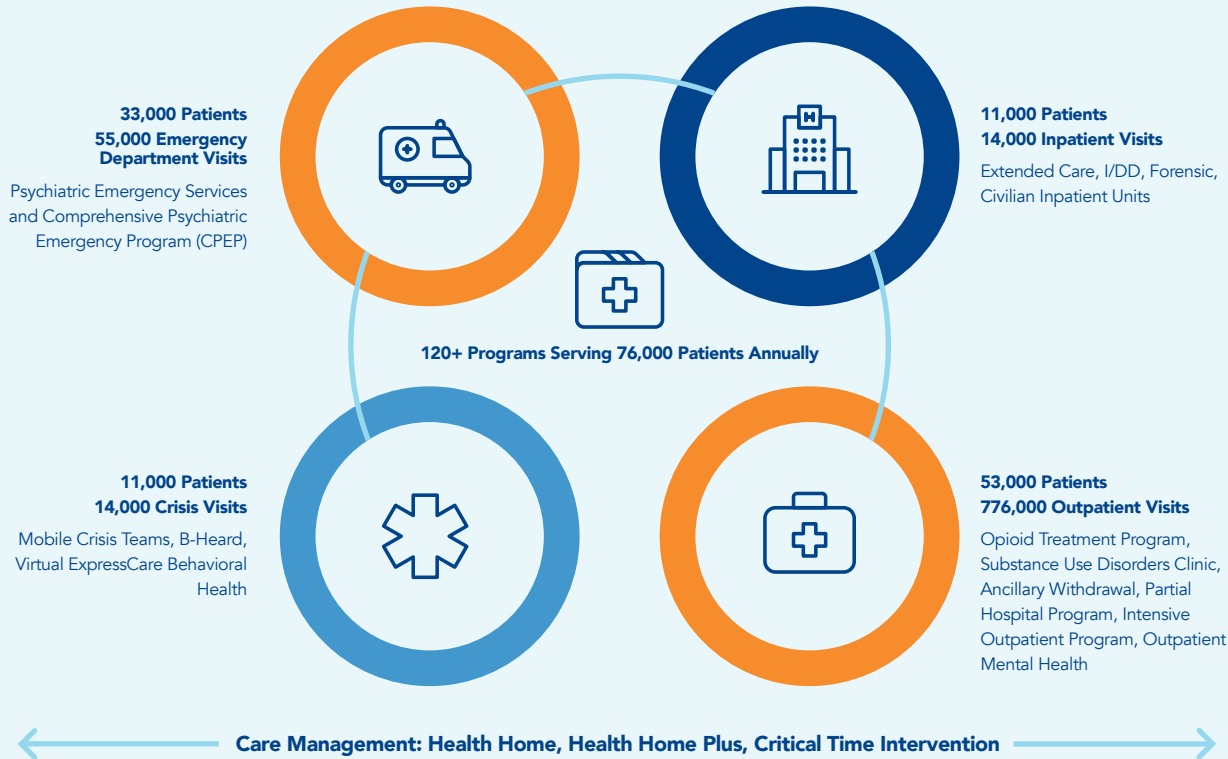
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Behavioral Health Impact: At-a-Glance in 2023

- + 120+ Programs Serving 76,000 Total Patients Annually
- + Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES), Adult & Child Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs (CPEPs)
 - 33,000 unique patients
 - 55,000 visits
- + Inpatient (Extended Care, Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (I/DD), Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Forensic, Civilian)
 - 11,000 unique patients
 - 14,000 hospitalizations
- + Crisis Services (Mobile Crisis Teams, Behavioral Health Emergency and Response Division (B-HEARD), Virtual ExpressCare Behavioral Health)
 - 11,000 unique patients
 - 17,000 visits
- + Outpatient (Methadone Maintenance, Substance Use Disorder Clinics, Ambulatory Detox, Partial Hospitalization Program, Intensive Outpatient Program/Integrated Outpatient Services, Adult and Child Mental Health Clinics.
 - 53,000 unique patients
 - 776,000 visits



Astoria
Hitmars Blvd

oney Island



Executive Summary

Behavioral health in New York City is at a critical point. The city is wrestling with a post-COVID mental health crisis, which has increased pressure on mental health systems. NYC and the nation are in the midst of a loneliness epidemic affecting all facets of society, but particularly our youth and elderly. The city is seeing skyrocketing rates of substance use and overdose deaths, a crisis that is claiming the life of a New Yorker every 4 hours. At the same time, the city and the country are facing a youth suicide crisis, leading more children and adolescents to visit emergency rooms in distress. All the while, these multiple compounding crises are disproportionately affecting communities of color. Across our city, behavioral health has arrived at a pivotal juncture, where great need and great potential meet.

Recognizing this intersectional challenge, the city has taken extraordinary effort to make behavioral health a focus and to turn the tide on the behavioral health crisis. The city's comprehensive plan, developed by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene took aim at three critical issues: child, youth and family mental health, serious mental illness, and overdose response. This blueprint builds on that work with a focus on public hospitals and community health care centers. As the behavioral health safety net of New York City, NYC Health + Hospitals is already on the front line of this crisis, providing services across the city in emergency, inpatient and outpatient settings, in patients' homes, and on the streets. However, we are energized to do more to tackle this crisis and ensure that the New Yorkers who need support the most can easily access seamless, high-quality behavioral health care.

This blueprint explains how NYC Health + Hospitals is stepping forward to meet the greater need for a coordinated approach to behavioral health service delivery. We imagine a system in which any New Yorker can receive high-quality mental health and substance use care so they can live their healthiest lives. Focusing on the challenges that are on the horizon, NYC Health + Hospitals has identified six primary core strategies for the three-year period between 2024-2026 that will guide our efforts to strengthen quality of care across the continuum, improve coordination of care, and advance innovation to move our system forward.

Highlights from the Three-Year Blueprint (2024-2026)

Strategy 1:

Restore Psychiatric Beds And Increase Inpatient Capacity

As of the beginning of 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals successfully restored all of our system's psychiatric beds that were closed to accommodate medical needs during COVID-19, reaching at least 1,000 beds that are staffed and ready to accept patients. Bringing these beds back to behavioral health use represented a complex and wide-ranging effort, requiring collaboration from facilities, human resources, finance, nursing leadership, finance, and program leaders.

- + Continue renovating behavioral health units (2024)
- + Continue staffing all inpatient beds across the system to maximize capacity (2024-2025)

Strategy 2:

Expand Outpatient Access

Over the next three years, NYC Health + Hospitals aims to increase access by growing our outpatient staff, introducing process improvements to drive productivity and quality, and expanding services.

- + Optimize outpatient workflows to ensure a more efficient utilization of behavioral health professionals' time (2024)
- + Increase the volume of patients served by a minimum of 10% (2024)

Strategy 3:

Increase Services for Special Populations

NYC Health + Hospitals works across systems of support outside of traditional health care settings to address the needs of complex populations. As NYC's public safety net system, NYC Health + Hospitals is a leader in providing services to individuals and groups that are experiencing complex psychiatric and social needs – meeting them in their communities and inside our facilities.

- + Launch a systemwide Substance Use Workforce Training Program (SUD WTP) for behavioral health and non-behavioral health providers and clinicians to support and enhance NYC Health + Hospitals' commitment to provide comprehensive, patient centered, evidence-based addiction care at the time and location that the patient needs
- + Pilot Child/Adolescent Dialectical Behavioral Therapy outpatient services

- + Open 16 School-Based Mental Health Clinics to provide additional mental health services in schools across the city and provide connections to existing outpatient clinics (2024)
- + Open a third Inpatient Psychiatric Extended Care Unit at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, based on successful models at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue and NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County to connect patients with complex needs with additional treatment and housing (2024)
- + Establish an additional Street Health Outreach and Wellness (SHOW) mobile unit at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln to provide outreach, medical, and behavioral health services to individuals experiencing street homelessness (2025)
- + Open a Family Substance Use Disorder clinic at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln (2026)

Strategy 4: Enhance Social Work, Care Management and Peer Services

Social Work, Care Management, and Peer Services, are integrated across the patient care spectrum in emergency, inpatient, and outpatient settings to support our patients' psychiatric needs and other social determinants of health, including food and housing insecurity. Social work, care management, and peer specialists are charged with ensuring the continuity of care through ongoing engagement of patients, facilitating access to appropriate health care and social services, and supporting recovery.

- + Expand our Care Management workforce, with an emphasis on supporting the social determinants of health, including food and housing insecurity, transitions of care, and deepen their training focused on behavioral health (2024)
- + Introduce a Social Work Training Academy to standardize training across the social work discipline at NYC Health + Hospitals for all 1,000+ social workers strengthening practice and patient outcomes (2024)
- + Continue to train people with lived experience with mental and substance use conditions to become peer specialists at our NYC Health + Hospitals Peer Academy (2024 and beyond)

Strategy 5: Prevent Violence and Increase Safety

NYC Health + Hospitals' systemwide workplace violence prevention program is focused on developing policy, building a culture of safety and training staff in key areas such as screening and assessment of high-risk patients, de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed approaches, implementing mock codes and simulation, and crisis situation management and prevention.

- + Engage Behavioral Health leadership in "Culture of Safety" forums to ensure staff are effectively utilizing the violence mitigation program (2024)
- + Ensure Compliance with violence mitigation training requirements across the system (2024)

Strategy 6: Develop Our Workforce

Our vision is to position NYC Health + Hospitals as the go-to place for careers in public behavioral health. For behavioral health providers and professionals motivated by mission-driven work, NYC Health + Hospitals offers an unparalleled professional opportunity to have a community impact. Our multi-faceted workforce strategy invests in recruitment, training and retention, sending a powerful message to our behavioral health workforce that we recognize, value, and reward their commitment to our health system.

- + Place psychiatric nurse practitioners in early-career fellowships to further develop foundational behavioral health skills and increase confidence in practice (Ongoing)
- + Create a Behavioral Health Nursing Career Ladder for Nursing Support and Nursing Staff that provides educational support and tuition assistance to support enrollment in nursing or psychiatric nurse practitioner degree programs in exchange for service commitment at NYC Health + Hospitals (2024)
- + Launch a new Psychiatric Physician Assistant Career Pathways Program for psychiatric physician assistants (2025)
- + Award \$4M in student debt relief to 110+ behavioral health clinicians through BH4NYC Loan Repayment Program (2026), on top of the \$1M already awarded to staff in 2023. This program is made possible thanks to the generosity of private donors who are committed to serving their City.

By investing in system capacity, access, and quality, NYC Health + Hospitals is positioning itself as the safety net system that offers patients the care they need whenever and wherever they need it.



We Meet Our Patients' Needs Wherever They Are

Even with the best of intentions, the behavioral health system can be complicated and difficult to navigate. Individuals are often left to make sense of their options for behavioral health care with little guidance. The lack of linkages between services can be enormously detrimental, and can lead to individuals dropping out of treatment or cycling through the various part of the system.

NYC Health + Hospitals is leading the way in building an integrated behavioral health system for the future that helps patients connect to high-quality coordinated care regardless of their point of entry.

Albert¹, A Patient In Crisis

- + Albert has a mental health crisis and calls 911.
- + A B-HEARD team of two Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and a social worker responds within minutes to his home. They listen to him, help him calm down, and work with him to identify his needs.
- + The B-HEARD team helps Albert find an outpatient clinic near his home where he can start seeing a therapist.
- + A mobile crisis team visits Albert a few days later to make sure he's doing ok.

Brianna, A Patient With Serious Mental Illness

- + Brianna stays in a shelter, and she starts hearing voices.
- + She is taken to the hospital and is seen at the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP), where a clinical team evaluates her and starts her on medications.
- + Brianna is then admitted to the inpatient Extended Care Unit, where she stays for 3 months. In addition to medication and therapy, Brianna participates in rehabilitative activities like music, art therapy, and exercise. She also meets with the NYC Health + Hospitals Housing for Health team, who help her assemble the documents she needs to apply for supportive housing.
- + While staying on the Extended Care Unit she is connected to the Housing for Health team and is placed in permanent supportive housing.

¹ Facts and names of patients were changed to protect patient privacy.

Charles, A Patient With Substance Use Disorder

- + Charles uses heroin. He sees a Street Health Outreach & Wellness (SHOW) van down the block and goes to check it out.
- + The SHOW team give Charles naloxone, which can reverse an overdose from opioids like heroin, and they make sure he knows how to use it. They let him know about xylazine, or “tranq,” which is in the drug supply and can cause severe wounds. They also speak to him about initiating buprenorphine and provide him information about how to get started.
- + The SHOW team also schedules an appointment for Charles to meet with a primary care doctor, so he can get an annual physical.
- + After seeing a primary care doc, Charles is connected to Care Management services to receive long-term primary care treatment, connection to substance use treatment through an outpatient clinic, and coordination with social services.

Deidre, An Adolescent Patient With Mental Health Needs

- + Deirdre is a freshman in high school in Manhattan, and she is in severe distress. She goes to her school’s clinic and the nurse decides, with parental consent, that she should go to the hospital.
- + At the hospital Deirdre is seen at the Child and Adolescent Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (Child CPEP), where the clinical team evaluates her, starts a medication, and begins teaching her coping skills.
- + After 24 hours, Deirdre is discharged to her home. The hospital team enrolls her in the Partial Hospitalization Program, where she attends therapy three times per week and continues learning coping skills to help her as she transitions back to her regular life.



The Blueprint

This three-year blueprint captures the course NYC Health + Hospitals will be taking to strengthen and expand access to inpatient and outpatient services, develop innovative programs, modernize environments of care, improve quality and safety, and build our workforce. This effort represents a coordinated and fiscally-responsible approach to serving the mental health and substance use treatment needs of New Yorkers within our system and in the community. It lays out a framework for how to comprehensively serve New Yorkers in the hospital, in the community, and in non-traditional settings.

In the next three years, transformative investments in the behavioral health system will help us scale quickly and effectively to meet the need. In addition to billing revenue, our health system's vision to rebuild, develop, and enhance core acute and outpatient services will be powered by funding through the Behavioral Health Centers of Excellence, a strategic New York State investment to rebuild, develop, and enhance core acute and outpatient behavioral health services, in line with the State's quality goals, targeting high risk individuals enrolled in New York State Medicaid Managed Care. NYC Health + Hospitals also leverages other diverse funding sources -including City funding, State grants, and federal funds, and generous donations from philanthropy - to achieve its goals of quality behavioral health care for all who need it. Meanwhile, cross-sector partnerships with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York State, community-based organizations, managed care organizations and academic partners, help NYC Health + Hospitals to expand its reach outside inside and outside of its facilities.

All of this work is building towards a cohesive system – from the moment a New Yorker enters into NYC Health + Hospitals care to discharge – that works in unison across all patient care settings.

Strategy 1: Restore Psychiatric Beds and Increase Inpatient Capacity

Our hospital-based, inpatient programs include psychiatric, medical, nursing, and social services for New Yorkers whose acute psychiatric needs cannot be adequately served in the community. We cared for nearly 11,000 New Yorkers in 2023 who needed inpatient behavioral health care.

As of the beginning of 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals achieved its ambitious goals of restoring all psychiatric beds that were closed to accommodate medical needs during COVID-19 bringing the system's inpatient capacity to over 1000 beds that are staffed and ready to accept patients, ensuring our ability to meet demand as measured by daily census, admission and discharge rates. Restoring beds represented a complex and wide-ranging effort, requiring system-wide collaboration from NYC Health + Hospitals leadership, acute care facilities, human resources, nursing leadership, finance and program leaders.

To achieve our reopening goals, we have innovated our staffing models to build capacity. A new comprehensive model positions all providers to practice at the top of their license, by including multidisciplinary teams to support patients with richer staff-to-patient ratios. In promoting safety and quality through this model, we anticipate that the changes will have the added value of attracting candidates who can help fill our inpatient vacancies.

NYC Health + Hospitals is also integrating telepsychiatry through the existing Virtual ExpressCare-Behavioral Health infrastructure via a hub-and-spoke model that connects hospitalized patients to virtual psychiatrists. This innovative service will enable us to tap into the economy of scale at NYC Health + Hospitals, maximizing psychiatrist time, mitigating the burden on overtaxed inpatient providers, and reducing reliance on difficult-to-recruit in-person psychiatrists. The service expansion will have a positive impact on patient care by reducing wait times and rapid stabilization, in addition to building our system capacity to care for even more New Yorkers in need.

Finally, investments in our facilities, systems and technology are essential to accommodate increased patient volume and reflect changing regulations. While we have worked hard to maintain decades-old infrastructure over the years, we are now in the process of a systemwide modernization that will improve our patient care environments and technological capabilities, driving access, safety and productivity. Improvements range from interior remodeling, to replacing roofs, to conducting ligature removals that reduce the risk of suicide and meet recent changes to safety regulations. Even after restoring inpatient beds closed during COVID-19, NYC Health + Hospitals will continue to modernize inpatient units and will continue to seek support to do so.

Strategy 1 Highlights:

- + Continue renovating behavioral health units (Ongoing)
- + Continue staffing all inpatient beds across the system to maximize capacity (Ongoing)

Strategy 2: Expand Outpatient Access

Outpatient behavioral health programs serve as the backbone of behavioral health infrastructure for the City of New York. They provide an array of treatment services including medication management and individual and group therapy, for patients with all levels of need. This includes serving everyone from children and adolescents to adults and from people experiencing mild to moderate behavioral health needs, to people experiencing a substance use disorder, to those with serious mental illness, and those who are experiencing homelessness.

By 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals aims to increase outpatient clinic capacity by growing our outpatient staff, introducing process improvements to drive productivity and quality, and expanding services.

NYC Health + Hospitals recognizes that access to care hinges on the availability of providers and the efficiency of our processes in connecting them to patients. We have improved our outpatient system to measure productivity in new ways with standardized metrics (i.e. panel size, case load, fill rate, etc.); maximize the functionality of our electronic health records and e-consult mechanisms; and employ new dashboards with modern reporting tools. By applying this methodology of streamlining administrative tasks to multiple disciplines, we have already maximized providers' time with patients. In a six-month pilot, our providers were able to spend nearly 100% of their designated work hours providing care to patients, rather than on administrative tasks.

Alongside process improvements, NYC Health + Hospitals is also strategically expanding services both within and beyond the walls of its hospitals and community health sites. In doing so, we aim to create more access for individuals with significant and growing needs that mitigate barriers to access such as transportation, distance, language access to name a few. Below are some programs that we are actively initiating or enhancing:

- + A new **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)** program will launch making intensive treatment and support available to children and adolescents experiencing high-risk behaviors, such as suicidal thinking and acting, self-harm, substance use or risky interpersonal relationships.

- + **Child Crisis Intervention Specialists** will be expanded to operate 7 days per week, 12 hours a day to meet the increased demand in young people presenting in crisis to our emergency rooms and outpatient programs.
- + **Mental Health Services at Domestic Violence Shelters** recently launched to provide screening for adults and children upon arrival in domestic violence shelters, in addition to on-site services including individual and group therapy and medication management. All services are free to patients, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive. In addition to services for clients, NYC Health + Hospitals is developing and delivering an extensive training curriculum for domestic violence shelter staff on mental health and trauma. The program will ultimately train nearly 500 staff members by the end of 2025. Services in 55 shelters will open by the end of 2025, serving more than 10,000 adults and children in the domestic violence shelter system.
- + **Virtual ExpressCare-Behavioral Health** launched in January 2022 as a convenient, on-demand urgent care service that enables equitable access to 24/7 telepsychiatry and social services navigation over phone or video in 200+ languages. The service providers around-the-clock care for patients' urgent mental, emotional, and substance use treatment needs. Connections to Virtual ExpressCare-Behavioral Health are being facilitated for vulnerable populations via two mobile street outreach clinics, in the NYC Department of Homelessness shelter system, and at city-run migrant shelters, and through domestic violence shelter programming.

STORY: A Bengali-speaking client was struggling to reach out to for treatment due to language barriers and cultural stigmatization. The client had a history of severe anxiety and depression in the context of a trauma history. When they reached out to Virtual ExpressCare-Behavioral Health, the client was able to quickly connect to a provider who spoke Bengali. The client was relieved to have finally made a connection with someone who spoke and understood her language and cultural context. This interaction fostered trust between the client and the provider.

Strategy 2 Highlights:

- + Optimize outpatient workflows to ensure a more efficient utilization of behavioral health professionals' time (2024)
- + Increase the volume of patients served by a minimum of 10% (2024)

Strategy 3: Increase Services for Special Populations

Underlying all our efforts is a focus on high-risk and hard-to-reach populations who often have cross-cutting psychiatric and social needs - such as substance use disorders, homelessness and mental health crises. As NYC's public safety net system, NYC Health + Hospitals is a leader in providing services to individuals and groups that are experiencing complex needs meeting them wherever they are - inside our facilities and outside of traditional health care settings.

People Experiencing Psychiatric Emergencies:

The Emergency Department (ED) is often the first place that individuals in crisis show up, yet traditional medical ED models are not designed to handle behavioral health emergencies. Citywide, NYC Health + Hospitals offers points of entry for psychiatric emergencies at all of our hospitals to ensure that all patients who enter the ED get the appropriate level of psychiatric assessment. This includes 3 Psychiatric EDs and 8 CPEP programs, which together generate 55,000 visits annually. Notably, our system has the only dedicated Child CPEP in the State.

NYC Health + Hospitals also recognizes the importance of keeping individuals out of emergency rooms and hospitals whenever possible, which is why it has partnered with FDNY/EMS to bring a health-centered response into communities. The **Behavioral Health Emergency Assessment Response Division (B-HEARD)** is the City's health-centered response for individuals experiencing a mental health emergency. B-HEARD pairs two EMTs/paramedics with a NYC Health + Hospitals mental health professional to respond to 911 emergency mental health calls. Upon arrival, the team conducts physical and mental health assessments and can provide a range of on-site assistance, including connecting the person to their existing providers, offering crisis counseling, and connecting them with follow-up services. If the person requires emergency services, the team can respond with medical and psychiatric care in real time or call for EMS to transport the patient to the hospital. B-HEARD currently operates 7 days a week, 16 hours a day, in 31 precincts across 4 boroughs.



SHOW

**Street Health
Outreach + We**



People Experiencing Homelessness:

Two thirds of New Yorkers who experience homelessness also experience a mental illness. NYC Health + Hospitals has developed several unique interventions in the community and within its facilities that cater to the unique needs of this population. In addition to these interventions, NYC Health + Hospitals providers support this population by integrating health care services with other city programs, housing providers, and community-based mental health services to provide holistic, intensive and ongoing care after discharge from the hospital. This includes working closely with NYC Department of Homeless Services shelters and homeless outreach teams, New York State Office of Mental Hygiene Street Option Support (SOS) teams, and supportive housing providers across the city. Recognizing the longer-term needs within this population, NYC Health + Hospitals has also created specialized programming such as Extended Care Units and Street Health Outreach & Wellness (SHOW) mobile units to serve New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

The **Extended Care Units (ECU)** at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue and NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County are an innovative model of inpatient care that provide care for patients with serious mental illness who have been historically disconnected from health and social services. For these New Yorkers, our ECUs provide more intensive inpatient treatment coupled with social learning, behavioral paradigms, and person-centered rehabilitation. In the ECU, patients access psychopharmacological treatment, rehabilitative activities including music and art therapy, reading, and various exercises for up to 120 days, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. Within the ECU there is a focus on comprehensive discharge and aftercare planning, with the patient's own goals informing treatment and maximizing opportunities to use new skills for meaningful community reintegration.

Following a stay in the ECU, 50% of patients are connected to permanent housing within 6 months. Additionally, individuals see a 54% reduction in ED visits and inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations within the same period. Building on the success of our two initial ECUs, NYC Health + Hospitals will open a third ECU at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst in Queens in 2024.

The **Street Health Outreach & Wellness (SHOW) Mobile Units** offer a new model of care that includes testing and vaccinations, wound care, the provision of basic material necessities, and harm reduction services to New Yorkers who are unsheltered. Harm reduction services equip SHOW vans with staff who specialize in treatment of substance use disorders, and provision of overdose prevention supplies such as naloxone, fentanyl test strips, and xylazine test strips. Behavioral health staff including social workers, addiction counselors and peers canvas the streets in high-need areas of the city providing brief counseling and referral to treatment, and helping street homeless patients to access shelter, housing, and benefits. To date, NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, Woodhull,

Lincoln, and Elmhurst have affiliated SHOW mobile units within each hospital's catchment area.

STORY: Mr. Smith arrived at one of the SHOW mobile units after his wife had passed away. He was unhoused and disconnected from services. The SHOW team developed a relationship with him and connected him to HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) services including transportation. Mr. Smith is now housed, connected to benefits and engaged in detox and rehab at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center. He continues to engage with the SHOW team, and he recently began his first step into long-term substance use disorder treatment with an intake appointment at NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull's outpatient program.

Children & Adolescents:

NYC Health + Hospitals serves thousands of children and adolescents each year through inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services at its acute care facilities, in addition to offering innovative mental health programs in schools and in the community.

- + The system of care for children and adolescents includes 12 clinics across our acute care and community-based facilities to provide general outpatient care, in addition to 9 **school-based mental health clinics** (Article 31) operating in tandem with facilities in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens.
- + For patients with more acute mental health symptoms, the **Child and Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP)** provides a structured program of outpatient psychiatric services to stabilize patients through individualized treatment that focuses on preparing the patients to function outside of the hospital setting. Our PHP at Elmhurst Hospital successfully linked 98% of its patients to long-term aftercare after stabilization.
- + **OnTrack NY**, a program supported by 3 NYC Health + Hospitals facilities (Bellevue, Elmhurst and Kings County), provides recovery-oriented care for New Yorkers ages 16-30 experiencing newly emergent non-affective psychotic disorders, providing both mental health services and support remaining engaged in education or employment.

- + To support children and adolescents in crisis, we have integrated **Child Crisis Intervention Specialists** at our 11 acute care facilities to support assessment and linkage of services for children and adolescents who are presenting in a crisis to the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs, Emergency Department, and outpatient care.
- + The **Child Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program** at Bellevue is New York State’s only psychiatric emergency care dedicated solely to the care of children and adolescents, which provides immediate crisis intervention services and linkages to inpatient care, when appropriate.
- + In 2026, we plan to open a dedicated **Extended Care Unit** for Children and Adolescents NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue to fill a critical gap in access by providing a first-of-its kind extended stay option for youth who face significant behavioral challenges.

In addition to the programming imbedded in our acute care facilities, NYC Health + Hospitals also has specialty programming across the system and in the community:

- + Launched in 2023, the **Mental Health Continuum Program** works to increase access of mental health care for students across the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn (encompassing 50 schools) through expedited referrals to outpatient clinics at our hospitals. In addition, NYC Health + Hospitals is opening new School Based Satellite Mental Health Clinics at 16 of these schools.
- + The **Caring Transitions Hospital Pilot** places Suicide Prevention Teams (comprised of peer and family advocates, social workers, transition coordinators, and a Medical Director) in the Emergency Department and inpatient units to engage individuals during intake and treatment, and after discharge to ensure appropriate care and follow-up in Queens and the Bronx.
- + The **3-2-1 IMPACT** Program integrates mental health, pediatrics, and women’s health to deliver a two-generation approach that connects the family to critical health care and educational resources. Staff evaluate potential risk factors through maternal depression screening and child social-emotional/behavioral health screening and connect families to care when needed.

“The stress, isolation, and anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic pushed mental health to the forefront of the conversation for so many of us,” said Mayor Adams. “By investing in student mental health and delivering services right where young people need them most — in our public schools — we are building upstream solutions that will help us build a healthier city.”

People with Substance Use Disorders (SUD):

NYC Health + Hospitals has always been at the forefront of delivering innovative substance use treatment services in order to serve the needs of some of New York City's most vulnerable communities. To do so, we emphasize systemwide access; a culturally responsive approach to wellness; comprehensive substance use care for more acute or complex needs; demonstrated outcomes; and financially viable service. In addition, training and education of both SUD and non-SUD staff is essential to developing the next generation of addiction champions, and substantively addressing substance use-related stigma. SUD patients can receive services through many outpatient points to our system:

- + At NYC Health + Hospitals' 10 outpatient **SUD Clinics**, a cadre of services are offered which includes medication-assisted treatment (MAT), group, individual, and vocational counseling. Additionally, acupuncture is offered at select sites. In 2023, our SUD clinics has 7,000 encounters.
- + **Ancillary Withdrawal** is also available at five outpatient SUD Clinics, addressing mild to moderate withdrawal from alcohol and opioid use. These clinics operate on a walk-in basis, allowing patients to receive same day assessment and treatment without an appointment.
- + At NYC Health + Hospitals four **Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs)** a cadre of services are offered which includes MAT for Opioid Use Disorder (methadone and buprenorphine), group, individual, and vocational counseling. In 2023, our OTPs had 250,000+ encounters.

Within our acute care facilities, we have a number of interventions to support patients in the emergency department and inpatient:

- + **Emergency Department Leads (ED Leads)** consists of licensed clinicians and peer counselors who identify patients at risk for SUD, offering screening, brief intervention, referral to treatment, and peer counseling services. Patients are also offered harm reduction resources including, overdose education prevention, naloxone kits, and fentanyl/xylazine test strips. In 2023, there were 22,500+ ED Leads encounters with 4,200 referrals to outpatient (19%) and 1,850 naloxone kits provided (8%).
- + At NYC Health + Hospitals' nine **Consult for Addiction Treatment and Care in Hospital (CATCH)** teams serve inpatient medical and surgical patients who exhibit symptoms of SUD. Consisting of medical providers with addiction medicine expertise, licensed clinicians, and peer counselors, these teams provide SUD evaluation, diagnosis and assessment, MAT, individual and peer counseling, and harm reduction resources including, overdose education prevention, naloxone kits, and fentanyl/xylazine test strips. Additionally, teams offer post-discharge follow-up via bridge clinic services. In 2023, there were over 10,000 CATCH encounters.



- + Earlier this year, the City announced plans to open a **Family Substance Use Disorder clinic** at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln. The goal of the program is not only to provide an early intervention for the gestating fetus, but to also interrupt the intergenerational pattern of substance use and dependency. The 6,500 square foot space, expected to open in 2026, will serve approximately 200 families per year and will be located at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln in the Bronx — the borough with the highest rate of opioid overdose death in New York City. In addition to substance use support, patients will also be able to access connections to community-based organizations for other critical services supporting recovery, such as housing, food, and employment.

People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:

NYC Health + Hospitals recognizes that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities often have behavioral health issues that add to their distress and behavioral challenges. Having an intellectual or developmental disability also creates a disparity in health care access and quality.

With the support of the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), and Department of Health (DOH) – NYC Health + Hospitals championed and launched the **Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities + Mental Illness/Behavioral Health Specialty Unit** at Kings County Hospital in 2020. The unique, state-of-the-art inpatient unit offers 12 specialty beds and enhanced specialty staffing ratios; single rooms; extensive use of Licensed Creative Art Therapists; and staff with expertise in behavior, speech and language, occupational therapy and other resources. To date, the unit has evaluated and stabilized (175) of the most complex, high utilizers in New York City, and discharges to two closely affiliated resources: a 12-bed step-down unit at the Bernard Fineson campus and NY AHRC’s 5 community crisis transitional beds to support individuals with greater behavioral health and social service needs.



Looking ahead, NYC Health + Hospitals is also building the continuum of services that support patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities across their lifespan, bridging crisis response and prevention, consultation, early evaluation and multidisciplinary clinics that combines primary care, behavioral health, and extensive case management.

“[My daughter] arrived on 5 West earlier this year after multiple hospitalizations in other psychiatric facilities, with a severe persistent mental illness that seemed destined to defeat all efforts to treat it. The team on 5 West has performed a miracle. Through their patient, dedicated and highly skilled therapeutic work, they have restored my daughter to the best level of functioning she has experienced in years. My daughter is clinically stable, she is hopeful, she is looking forward to her future.”

Strategy 3 Highlights:

- + Launch a systemwide Substance Use Workforce Training Program (SUD WTP) for behavioral health and non-behavioral health providers and clinicians to support and enhance NYC Health + Hospitals’ commitment to provide comprehensive, patient centered, evidence-based addiction care at the time and location that the patient needs
- + Introduce Child/Adolescent Dialectical Behavioral Therapy outpatient services (2024)
- + Open 16 School-Based Mental Health Clinics to provide additional mental health services in schools across the city and provide connections to existing outpatient clinics (2024)
- + Open a third Inpatient Psychiatric Extended Care Unit at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, based on successful models at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue and NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County to connect patients with complex needs with additional treatment and housing (2024)
- + Establish an additional Street Health Outreach and Wellness (SHOW) mobile unit at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln to provide outreach, medical, and behavioral health services to individuals experiencing street homelessness (2025)
- + Open a Family Substance Use Disorder clinic at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln (2026)

Strategy 4: Enhance Social Work, Care Management and Peer Services

Social Work, Care Management and Peer Services are integrated across the patient care spectrum from emergency, to inpatient, to outpatient settings – to support our patients psychiatric needs and other social determinants of health, including food and housing insecurity. Social work, care management and peer staff are charged with ensuring the continuity of care through ongoing engagement of patients, facilitating access to appropriate health care and social services, and supporting recovery.

Social Workers provide key services across many setting types and models of care throughout our system. Launching in 2024, the NYC Health + Hospitals Social Work Training Academy will provide all 1,000+ social workers at NYC Health + Hospitals the opportunity to enhance their skill set and knowledge of evidence-based practices in social work. The Academy will serve social workers at all points along the career spectrum by centralizing clinical internship placement and orientation offerings for behavioral health; offering an evidence-based practice training program for established system social workers; providing ongoing continuing education; and supporting social workers in earning their licensure and moving into leadership roles.

Care Management staff offer patient-centered services to bridge care gaps and support resource navigation. Services are integrated across the patient care spectrum, from the moment a patient is admitted, to helping with discharge, to providing care after someone is released from the hospital. In 2024, building on our experience with current dedicated follow-up workers, we are doubling the size of our Care Management workforce, who fulfill a number of functions to support comprehensive engagement and strengthen access to outpatient and community-based services: assessing social determinants of health and care gaps, checking eligibility for social services and housing, liaising with community-based agencies, and collaborating with peers. Altogether, the changes in care management models aim to strengthen our follow-up after hospitalization 7- and 30-day outcomes, reduce 30-day readmission rates and increase Health Home Plus enrollment, particularly among high-risk and special populations. We also provide Critical Time Intervention (CTI) care management services for our high-risk patients.

Peer counselors are an important and growing occupation in the behavioral health field and they are uniquely positioned to serve patients presenting with complex and co-morbid mental health and substance use disorder needs. Peers connect with traditionally hard-to-reach patients by sharing their lived experience to support recovery. The **NYC Health + Hospitals Peer Academy** trains students who have lived experience with mental illness or substance use disorders who may have very limited work histories. NYC Health + Hospitals is also proud to offer stipends to peers who successfully complete the program,

recognizing the significant time investment of a three-month training program. Graduates of our training program often become full-time employees in our system, building patient-centered capacity to care for the whole patient's behavioral, emotional and social needs.

Strategy 4 Highlights

- + Expand our Care Management workforce, with an emphasis on supporting the social determinants of health, including food and housing insecurity for behavioral health patients (2024)
- + Introduce a Social Work Training Academy to standardize training across the social work discipline at NYC Health + Hospitals for all 1,000+ social workers strengthening practice and patient outcomes (2024)
- + Continue to train people with lived experience with mental and substance use conditions to become peer specialists at our NYC Health + Hospital Peer Academy (2024 and beyond)

Strategy 5: Prevent Violence and Increase Safety Within Our System

Improving workplace safety to prevent patient injuries and promote employee wellbeing in psychiatric settings is a systemwide priority. Nationally, a survey found that over 30% of hospital staff who treat psychiatric patients have been victims of assault, and the number of violent incidents is rising. Violence prevention programs have demonstrated the ability to increase both patient safety and employee satisfaction, while also having the added benefit of serving as a driver of staff retention.

NYC Health + Hospitals' systemwide behavioral health workplace violence prevention strategy is focused on developing systemwide policy, building a culture of safety and training staff in key areas such as screening and assessment of high-risk patients, de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed approaches, implementing mock codes and simulation, and crisis situation management and prevention.

Our system-wide trainings focused on violence prevention have reached almost 600 new and incumbent staff in 2023, who play a leadership role bringing evidence-based violence prevention practices into our facilities and to develop a culture of safety.

- + In partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals Nursing leadership, the **Behavioral Health Associates Academy** provides 150 hours of trauma-informed clinical and classroom training to prevent and de-escalate violence through standardized patient engagement strategies. The Academy was born out of a clinical need to care for patients at risk for violence in a compassionate way, and aims to maintain a safe and therapeutic environment for patients, families, and staff.
- + **Preventing and Managing Crisis Situations (PMCS)/Therapeutic Relationships and Universal Safety Training (TRUST) Train the Trainer** Program is designed to produce violence prevention certified trainers who in turn can train staff throughout the system. These violence prevention trainings are designed by the New York State Office of Mental Health that aims to enhance the safety of both staff and patients in a crisis situation. The training focuses on prevention and staff competencies to improve day-to-day interactions with patients. The training is offered to new staff when they onboard and as an annual refresher course.

Strategy 5 Highlights

- + Engage Behavioral Health leadership in “Culture of Safety” forums to ensure staff are effectively utilizing the program. (2024)
- + Ensure violence mitigation training compliance across the system (2024)

Strategy 6: Develop Our Workforce

NYC Health + Hospitals service expansion relies on highly-trained, mission-driven teams of providers and staff who are willing to go above and beyond every day to serve the behavioral health needs of New Yorkers. Our ability to build access to critical services is hampered by a variety of intersectional workforce development challenges. NYC Health + Hospital’s current behavioral health vacancy rate of approximately 30%, is consistent with the national average, which hovers between 30-35%. Turnover in behavioral health settings make it difficult to maintain adequate staffing and can be disruptive to patient care. Our hiring challenges are further compounded by other factors, such as local shortages of behavioral health professionals; limited numbers of providers who are trained and interested in serving marginalized patients with complex needs; and competition from the private sector and telehealth, which offer higher pay and greater flexibility.



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Our vision is to position NYC Health + Hospitals as the go-to place for careers in public behavioral health. For behavioral health providers and professionals motivated by mission-driven work, NYC Health + Hospitals offers an unparalleled professional opportunity to have a community impact. Our multi-faceted workforce strategy invests in recruitment, training and retention, sending a powerful message to our behavioral health workforce that we recognize, value, and reward their commitment to our health system:

1. Implement short- and long-term recruitment strategies to be competitive

With steep competition from the private sector and the telehealth industry, we simultaneously prioritize increasing our staff capacity today, while building the future workforce. This includes launching multi-channel marketing campaigns emphasizing mission-driven opportunities in our system; expanding our in-person and digital recruitment footprint; launching career pathways programs with partners in higher education; increasing compensation and sign-on bonuses; facilitating hiring of talented, international providers; and advancing an advocacy agenda to increase scope of practice for multidisciplinary staff.

2. Provide meaningful training and intentional professional development for career growth

We recognize the critical importance of continuously reinforcing our current and prospective workforce's skills and knowledge to strengthen patient care and offer ongoing opportunities for growth. We recruit trainees to complete clinical placements and internships to develop the core skill sets needed to join our workforce. We also focus on training our current staff to build skills and confidence in practice through training programs and fellowships, in addition to motivating to join and stay with the system.

The NYC Health + Hospitals/NYU Public Psychiatry Leadership Program is a unique collaboration between NYC Health + Hospitals and New York University Graduate School of Medicine Departments of Psychiatry and Child & Adolescent Psychiatry designed to support early-career psychiatrists working in public mental health settings while preparing them on a career pathway toward leadership in the future. We welcome psychiatrists who work at NYC Health + Hospitals as well as other community agencies throughout New York City. Since its inception in 2008, the program has trained 61 psychiatrists.

3. Offer financial and non-financial incentives for retention

We currently offer financial and non-financial incentives to help retain behavioral health workforce from providers, to caregivers to nurses working in behavioral health settings. Research supports the effectiveness of financial incentives – such as support-for-service programs, scholarships, loan repayment, direct financial incentives, and resident support programs - to retain staff. In addition, non-financial incentives – such as investment in career advancement and violence prevention – are critical in creating supportive workplaces that mitigate burnout, boost morale and foster retention.

STORY: BH4NYC was initially launched in 2022 with a \$1,000,000 donation from generous New Yorkers in order to help increase access to behavioral health services. The response from our workforce in the first year was overwhelmingly positive. We received interest from nearly 100 applicants, and our funding enabled us to make awards to 28 new and existing providers who collectively serve 25,000 patients.

- “The BH4NYC award has certainly had a beneficial impact on my finances but more importantly it has provided an overall sense of validation for the work we do. As a mobile crisis social worker, I am often walking into situations where I don’t know what to expect, and using just the tools of our trade- engagement, clinical and assessments skills- I am set to navigate whatever crisis awaits me. This award has allowed me to fully reinvest myself in continuing to serve the severely mentally ill population.” **[Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Mobile Crisis Unit]**
- “The BH4NYC award provides me the opportunity to focus my energy on my patients and work in the public hospital system. This award will go a long way toward my financial stability so that I can be fully present and provide optimal care. I trained in the public system and learned so much from my patients. I’m grateful I’ll be continuing that work as an attending psychiatrist.” **[Psychiatrist, Outpatient Clinic]**

In late 2023, we are proud to have received another \$4M donation to reach an additional 110+ providers with debt relief through 2025, expanding eligibility to include all types of BH providers and nurses.

Strategy 6 Highlights

- + Place psychiatric nurse practitioners in early-career fellowships to further develop foundational behavioral health skills and increase confidence in practice (Ongoing)
- + Launch a Behavioral Health Nursing Career Ladder for Nursing Support and Nursing Staff that provides educational support and tuition assistance to support enrollment in nursing or NP degree programs in exchange for service commitment at NYC Health + Hospitals (2024)
- + Launch a new Psychiatric Physician Assistant Career Pathways Program for psychiatric physician assistants (2024)
- + Award \$4M in loan repayment to 110+ behavioral health clinicians through BH4NYC (2026), on top of the \$1M already awarded to staff in 2023

Conclusion

Our work is cut out for us: as the public health care system, we owe it to New Yorkers to put our bold strategy in motion and keep tackling the mental health crisis and opioid epidemic in New York City. We are proud of our ambitious blueprint and the significant investment we are making to tackle the behavioral health needs in New York City, in a way that only the public hospital system can. NYC Health + Hospitals is remaining focused on delivering timely, accessible, and high-quality care across the city for those who need it the most. At the same time, NYC Health + Hospitals is building the behavioral health system of the future for all New Yorkers.

Our Partners

While NYC Health + Hospitals is the largest provider of behavioral health services in NYC, it does not work alone. NYC Health + Hospitals works hand-in-hand with City, State, Federal and community-based organizations to implement its ambitious behavioral health portfolio.

As the behavioral health safety net, NYC Health + Hospitals implements a majority of its behavioral health programs designed collaboratively with its City and State partners. In addition to providing direct services on a daily basis, NYC Health + Hospitals also serves as a thought partner to government stakeholders shaping mental health policy in New York City and State. NYC Health + Hospitals also works to break down barriers to care by partnering with community-based organizations and city agencies to meet New Yorkers where



they are. This includes very close relationships with the New York State Office of Mental Health, New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports, New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and NYC Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health.

Recent collaborations include partnering with:

- + The NYC Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health and FDNY to launch the **Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division (B-HEARD)**, a health-centered response to 911 mental health calls.
- + Hunter College, New York University, Adelphi University, and Columbia University, and other higher education institutions, to introduce a new **school-to-career clinical** training and placement programs for Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, Psychiatric Physician Assistants and Social Workers.
- + The NYC Human Resources Administration to increase access to mental health services for people residing in the 55 **domestic violence shelters** citywide, and at the Family Justice Center Clinics.
- + Howie the Harp, an award-winning advocacy center, and Greater New York Hospital Association to recruit for the **Peer Academy**, which provides hospital-based peer certification and career opportunities for patients in long-term recovery.
- + 15 community-based organizations to launch **Communities Thrive**, which connects Asian American and Pacific Islander, Black, and Latinx New Yorkers to outpatient and tele-mental health services.
- + The **Community Health Network**, a leading health care non-profit, to leverage their accredited fellowship track as a recruitment and retention tool for psychiatric nurse practitioners.

Through the new Behavioral Health Centers of Excellence program, NYC Health + Hospitals is partnering with Medicaid managed care organizations and providers to address critical gaps in inpatient, outpatient, and care management services. Finally, NYC Health + Hospitals also pursue partnerships with academic institutions – such as CUNY and NYU – to develop programs focused on educational and professional development in behavioral health.







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