

# Behavioral Health Blueprint in Action: 2024 Progress & Impact

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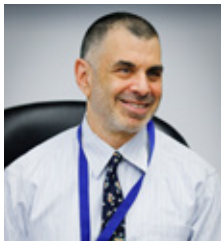
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## A Message from Leadership

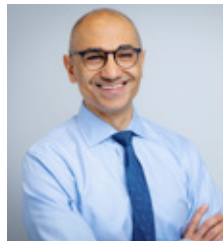
At NYC Health + Hospitals, we are committed to delivering high-quality, equitable behavioral health care to all New Yorkers. As we move forward in our three-year [Behavioral Health Blueprint](#), 2024 marks a pivotal year of progress and impact. This report highlights the strides we have made in **strengthening our workforce, expanding access, and enhancing care for our most vulnerable populations.**

As the largest provider of behavioral health services in the city, serving over 78,000 patients annually, we recognize that transformation requires **innovation, collaboration, and unwavering dedication.** From **restoring inpatient capacity to expanding outpatient services and pioneering new crisis response models,** this report captures how we are turning strategy into action.

We are incredibly proud of our teams across the system for their commitment to this mission. Their work ensures that NYC Health + Hospitals remains a **national leader in public behavioral health**—advancing care, improving lives, and shaping a healthier future for our city.

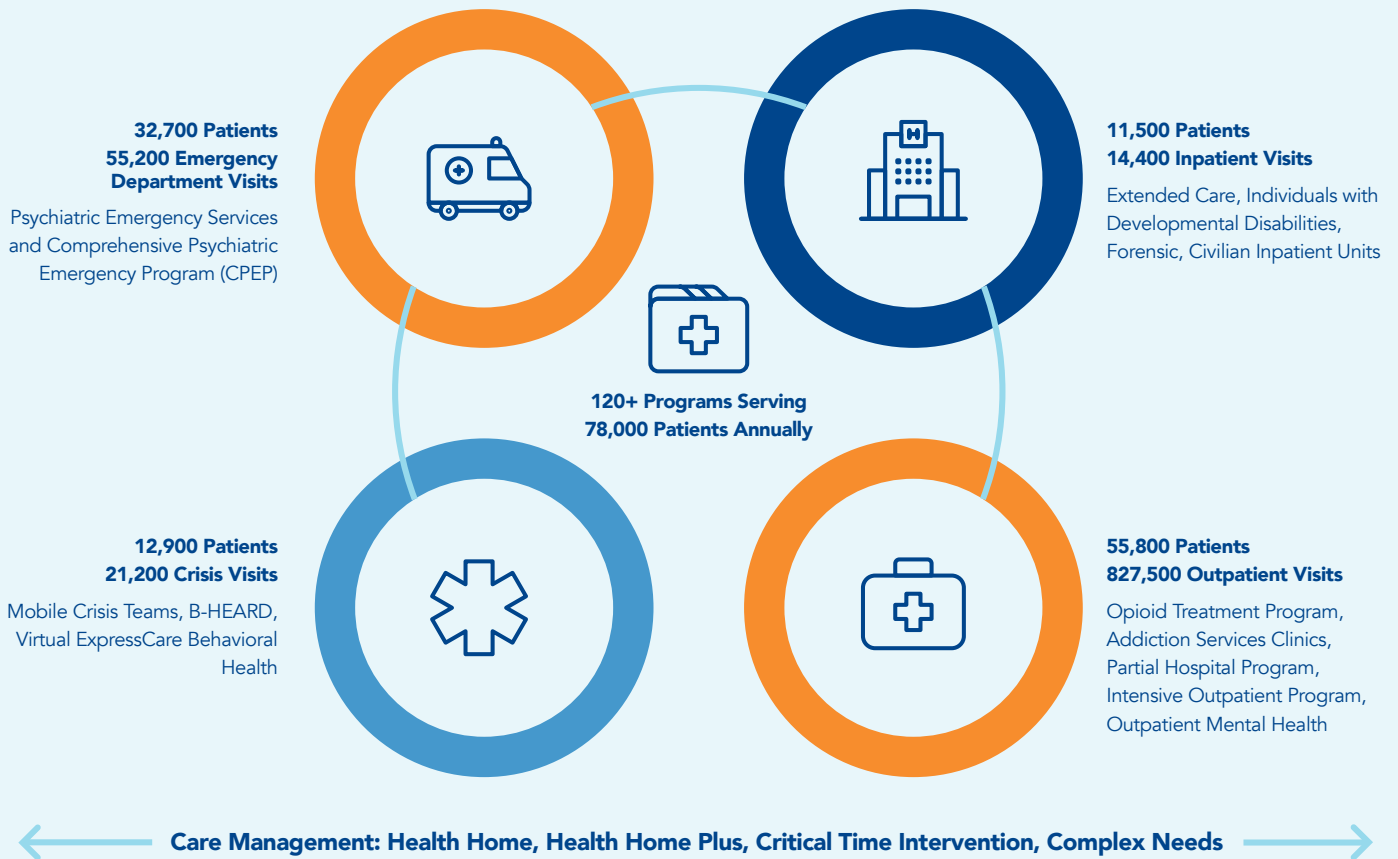


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## 2024 Behavioral Health Impact At a Glance





## **Strategy 1: Restore Psychiatric Beds and Increase Inpatient Capacity**

Our hospital-based, inpatient programs include multidisciplinary services for New Yorkers whose acute psychiatric needs cannot be adequately served in the community. We cared for 11,500 New Yorkers in 2024 who needed inpatient behavioral health care compared to 11,000 patients in 2023.

### **Restoring Inpatient Psychiatric Beds**

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. By the end of 2024, we reached a total of approximately 1,000 psychiatric beds that were online and ready to serve patients across the system. From January 2024 to January 2025, the number of psychiatric beds online and our average daily census both increased by 6%. Currently there are a total of 1,060 online psychiatric beds across the system and our psychiatric inpatient census has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

To achieve our reopening goals, we developed an innovative, comprehensive staffing model to expand capacity. This model ensures that all providers can practice at the top of their license by incorporating multidisciplinary teams and includes richer staff-to-patient ratio and enhanced support for patients. In 2024, we added several hundred psychiatric staff lines to inpatient units systemwide.

Funding for inpatient units at NYC Health + Hospitals included over \$33 million dollars through New York State's Behavioral Health Centers of Excellence, with \$28 million dedicated to enhancing staffing, and more than \$5 million in capital investment for inpatient units systemwide. During 2024, we renovated seven inpatient behavioral health units, which included a total of 163 beds. The renovations ensured that these units meet the highest level of patient safety required by recent State regulations. Moreover, systemwide modernization of our facilities improve our patient care environments and technological capabilities, driving access, safety, and productivity. We remain on-track with continuing to renovate and modernize our behavioral health units.

### **Expanding Extended Care Units**

In December 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals opened a new 20-bed Extended Care Unit (ECU) at Elmhurst Hospital. This is the third ECU in the system and builds on the success of our two initial ECUs. The first opened at Bellevue in 2020 and has served nearly 250 patients since launch. The second opened at Kings County in 2023 and has served about 40 patients since launch.

Extended Care Units offer psychopharmacological treatment and rehabilitative activities including music and art therapy. 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. Staff also assist patients who are experiencing homelessness with securing housing upon discharge.

On average, patients stay in the Extended Care Unit for 90 days, compared to an average 21-day stay for patients in acute psychiatric inpatient care. 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.





## Strategy 2: Expand Outpatient Access

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

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 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals increased Adult Mental Health outpatient access by adding over 70 staff lines, which has resulted in 88% overall patient satisfaction, 84% satisfaction regarding access to outpatient behavioral health services, and 87% satisfaction related to patient care.

We remain on-track with optimizing our providers' outpatient workflows to ensure a more efficient utilization of behavioral health professionals' time. This is evidenced by the significant increases in scheduled visits, average monthly intakes, and completed monthly intakes that we observed in our adult and child/adolescent outpatients in 2024.

In 2024, the percentage of overall adult outpatient visits increased by 12% compared to the previous year. Additionally, the percentage of average monthly intakes scheduled for adult outpatients rose by 48%, while completed intakes increased by 21%.

Similarly, in 2024, child/adolescent outpatient visits increased by 19% compared to the previous year. The percentage of average monthly intakes scheduled for child/adolescent outpatients increased by 14%, while completed intakes rose by 21%.

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

## 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 (SUD), homelessness, and mental health conditions. As New York City’s public safety net system, NYC Health + Hospitals is a leader in providing services to individuals and groups that are experiencing complex needs and meeting them wherever they are – inside our facilities and outside of traditional health care settings.

### Individuals with Substance Use Disorders

NYC Health + Hospitals has always been at the forefront of delivering innovative addiction services in order to meet 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 sustainable services. In addition, training and education of both addiction service and non-addiction service staff is essential to developing the next generation of addiction champions, and substantively addressing substance use-related stigma. Patients experiencing SUD can receive care in emergency department, inpatient, and outpatient settings.

Since 2018, NYC Health + Hospitals has integrated addiction services known as ED Leads in the medical Emergency Department (ED) at all 11 acute care facilities. These teams provide patients with SUD, many of whom have co-occurring mental health and housing needs, with screenings, brief interventions, individual counseling, and referrals to addiction services and medication-assisted treatment (MAT). ED Leads teams consist of Social Workers/Licensed Counselors and Peer Counselors who engage ED patients at risk for SUD. Additionally, the teams provide patients with harm reduction supplies and education, including naloxone kits and fentanyl and xylazine test strips. In 2024, there were over 24,000 ED Leads encounters with 4,600 referrals to outpatient services (19%) and 1,800 naloxone kits provided (8%).

A key development is the **ED Buprenorphine Project** (“ED Bupe Project”), a multi-pronged approach ensuring that patients with opioid use disorder (OUD) who seek care in the emergency department (ED) are offered life-saving buprenorphine treatment. Supported systemwide, the initiative works on multiple levels to ensure that eligible patients receive buprenorphine as a critical intervention. Additionally, patient education materials are translated into the most commonly spoken languages to improve harm reduction, medication knowledge, overdose prevention, urgent care access, and outpatient follow-up.

To strengthen workforce capacity, the system introduced the **Addiction Services Workforce Training Program (WTP)**, the first-ever systemwide behavioral



health training focused on substance use disorders (SUDs). This program includes opioid overdose simulations for Emergency Department providers and Behavioral Health Nursing Support. The WTP is designed to transform the approach to SUD care by addressing stigma, improving communication and referral strategies, and enhancing expertise in treatment modalities. Upon full implementation, at least 3,000 NYC Health + Hospitals staff will be trained to:

- Achieve systemic culture change in how people with SUD are treated,
- Facilitate appropriate SUD care management, and
- Enhance the use of technology to improve coordination of patient care, reporting, and responsiveness.

In a major policy initiative, **New York City has allocated funding for addiction counselors** to support peri-natal patients with SUD in birthing units across all 11 public hospitals. This critical initiative will provide much-needed support for expecting families at a high-risk time and aligns with the administration's broader goals to decrease maternal mortality.

The City also announced the launch of **Addiction Response Teams (ART)** at NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem, Jacobi, and Queens. This new model expands addiction services by enabling the rapid delivery of medication-assisted treatment in emergency rooms and inpatient units while ensuring immediate access to ongoing outpatient addiction services.

To further enhance addiction care, a **new Ancillary Withdrawal program** has been introduced at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue. Ancillary Withdrawal services are also available at five outpatient Addiction Clinics, supporting individuals experiencing 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.

Additionally, NYC Health + Hospitals has completed **renovations to key addiction treatment facilities**. A newly renovated **Addiction Clinic at NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull** has opened, along with an upgraded space for the **Addiction Clinic at NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health**. These state-certified outpatient substance use programs continue to provide essential support, helping individuals with SUD lead healthier lives.

## **Children and Adolescents**

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

NYC Health + Hospitals continues to enhance its mental health services for children and adolescents, addressing critical gaps in crisis intervention, outpatient care, and school-based support.

To provide immediate crisis support, the **Caring Transitions Program** was launched in June 2024 in Queens as a suicide prevention and intervention program for youth. This initiative ensures that young patients who present to Emergency Departments or inpatient units following a suicide attempt or serious suicidal behavior receive wrap-around services for up to 90 days post-discharge. The multidisciplinary teams—composed of a Medical Director, peer and family advocates, social workers, and a transition coordinator—help facilitate continued care and follow-up. Plans are underway to expand the program to the Bronx in April 2025.

Building on efforts to expand access to mental health care for students, the **Mental Health Continuum Program**—launched in 2023—established an expedited referral pathway to child outpatient clinics at three acute care hospitals and two Gotham facilities. This initiative connects students from 50 New York City public schools to timely mental health care. In addition, by March 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals opened **16 new Article 31 School-Based Satellite Clinics**, offering on-site clinical treatment directly in school buildings, making mental health services more accessible to children and adolescents.

For children experiencing acute mental health crises, NYC Health + Hospitals has expanded its **Child Emergency Department Telepsychiatry Consults** service to three facilities, ensuring that children in distress receive timely psychiatric evaluations and interventions.

To provide specialized outpatient care for youth with high-risk behaviors, NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue launched a **Child/Adolescent Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)** outpatient program within its Intensive Outpatient Program. This evidence-based treatment model supports children and adolescents struggling with suicidal thoughts, self-harm, substance use, and interpersonal challenges.

Finally, to improve crisis response across the system, **Child Crisis Intervention Specialists (CCIS)** have been integrated into all 11 acute care facilities. These specialists assist in assessing children and adolescents presenting in crisis to Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs (CPEPs), Emergency Departments, and outpatient care settings. In 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals standardized and expanded the CCIS program with State funding, ensuring stronger connections to outpatient services for children in need.

## **People Experiencing Psychiatric Emergencies**

NYC Health + Hospitals also recognizes the importance of keeping individuals out of emergency rooms and hospitals whenever possible, which is why in 2021 it partnered with the FDNY/EMS to bring a health-centered 911 response into



communities. The Behavioral Health Emergency Assessment Response Division (B-HEARD) is the City's health-centered response to 911 mental health calls. In areas where B-HEARD operates, 911 call operators dispatch B-HEARD Units – FDNY Emergency Medical Technicians teamed with licensed mental health professionals from NYC Health + Hospitals – as first responders to people experiencing a mental health emergency in instances that are not identified as involving a weapon or imminent risk of violence.

During the first three years of operation, B-HEARD Units responded to over 24,000 calls. In Fiscal Year 2024, 29% of 911 mental health calls in the pilot area received a B-HEARD response, which is an increase from 21% in Fiscal Year 2023 and 18% in Fiscal Year 2022. In Fiscal Year 2024, 43% of patients who received a mental health assessment by the NYC Health + Hospitals clinician were served in the community instead of being transported to the hospital. Each encounter with a B-HEARD team means the City is providing a more appropriate response and better care to an individual experiencing a mental health crisis.

Finally, NYC Health + Hospitals conducts patient experience surveys for those who accepted services from the B-HEARD Mental Health Clinician. In Fiscal Year 2024, of the patients surveyed by NYC Health + Hospitals: 96% felt B-HEARD helped them, 98% felt B-HEARD treated them with courtesy and respect, and 94% of those who received an EMS response in the past felt that the B-HEARD response was more appropriate for their needs.

### **Survivors of Gender-Based Violence**

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.

Finally, in 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals opened two Domestic Violence clinics at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County and Lincoln.

## 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. These teams 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 Work

In 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals successfully launched multi-channel marketing campaigns that emphasized mission-driven opportunities in our system. Our social worker recruitment campaign highlighted the impact that our providers have on New Yorkers by using images and videos that capture their compassion and expertise. This allowed us to attract exceptional talent to better serve New Yorkers in need and resulted in more than 100 new social workers being hired at our health system in just six months of running the campaign. As a result, our social work vacancy rate dropped to 8%.



Additionally, in May 2024, we launched the Social Work Training Academy to standardize training across the social work discipline at NYC Health + Hospitals for the more than 1,000 social workers, strengthening practice and patient outcomes. The Social Work Training Academy provides all social workers at the health system the opportunity to enhance their skill set and knowledge of evidence-based practices. The Academy serves social workers at all points along their career spectrum by streamlining clinical internship placement and orientation offerings for behavioral health; offering and 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

We are on-track with expanding our Care Management workforce, with an emphasis on supporting the social determinants of health, including food and housing insecurity; transitions of care; and deepening their training focused on behavioral health. For example, in 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals expanded our Community Health Workers (CHWs) to provide support to our inpatient behavioral health units and CPEP services. We also provided more training opportunities to our CHWs to upscale their skills to support patient care for our complex needs population.

## Critical Time Intervention Teams

In 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals was awarded State funding to launch five new Critical Time Intervention (CTI) teams. These teams will provide outreach, engagement, and intensive care coordination for individuals with mental illness who have struggled to connect with services after discharge from CPEP or mental health inpatient care. The teams are slated to begin accepting patients into the program in 2025.

## Peer Services

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-engage 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.

In December 2024, the Peer Academy reached two notable milestones of having over 100 graduates as well as 50% of the Peer Academy graduates being placed in full-time employment positions at NYC Health + Hospitals since launch. In 2024 alone, we hired more than 30 new peer counselors across the system.

Relatedly, in 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals signed a contract with a community-based organization, Howie the Harp, to streamline Peer Counselor internships. This will serve as a pipeline for future employees to join our system.

## **Strategy 5: Prevent Violence and Increase Safety**

NYC Health + Hospitals' systemwide behavioral health workplace violence prevention strategy builds a culture of safety by developing systemwide policy, training staff in trauma-informed approaches to violence risk assessment and de-escalation techniques, and implementing mock codes and simulation-based learning to prevent and manage behavioral crises.

In 2024, we trained a total of 1,300 staff members system-wide in violence prevention interventions, including screening and assessment of high-risk patients, de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed approaches, and how violence prevention contributes to a culture of safety. As OMH-designed programs, the curricula focus on improving staff competencies in day-to-day interactions with patients, which can translate into reductions in violent incidents.

NYC Health + Hospitals remains on-track with engaging Behavioral Health leadership in quarterly "Culture of Safety" forums to ensure staff are effectively utilizing the violence mitigation program, and in partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals Institute for Medical Simulation and Advanced Learning (IMSAL), developing a simulation-based violence prevention and safety training program, scheduled to launch in 2025.

## **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 multifaceted 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.

NYC Health + Hospitals has launched a range of initiatives to grow and support

the behavioral health workforce. In 2024, we have:

- **Welcomed 61 Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner** students for clinical placements in psychiatry. This cohort also attended a biweekly didactic program to strengthen their knowledge and support their recruitment into our system.
- **Expanded our partnership with the Community Health Network (CHN)** to support early-career Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners in developing foundational behavioral health skills and increasing confidence in practice. Since launching in 2023, 21 participants have benefited from this opportunity.
- **Established the Psychiatric Physician Assistant Career Pathways Program**, allowing PA students to rotate through behavioral health clinical placements and didactics, fostering interest in the field. In 2025, we will welcome the first cohort of seven **Psychiatric PA Fellows** for a 12-month fellowship that combines clinical work, didactics, mentorship, and a capstone project. The program is funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health Centers of Excellence and the Mother Cabrini Foundation with approximately **\$3.6 million in financial support**.
- **Introduced the NextGen Public Psychiatry Leadership Program**, a new initiative for third-year Psychiatry Residents to enhance their training through mentorship, lectures, and site visits—nurturing long-term interest in public sector psychiatry.
- **Implemented multi-channel recruitment campaigns** targeting high-need disciplines based on vacancy data, leading to a successful recruitment season and **over 330 new behavioral health hires**.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect our deep commitment to fostering a strong and sustainable behavioral health workforce.

In 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals also launched new initiatives to retain our behavioral health workforce. Thanks to the generosity of private donors, we were able to award \$4 million in student debt relief to nearly 150 behavioral health clinicians employed in our system through our **BH4NYC Loan Repayment Program**. This was on top of the \$1 million already awarded to staff in 2023. As of December 2024, our BH4NYC Loan Repayment Program provided student debt relief to 33 new staff and 109 incumbent staff who collectively reach about 88,000 patients annually.

Since implementing our workforce development strategy in mid-2023, we have seen a significant decrease in turnover across the behavioral health workforce within our system. In 2022, NYC Health + Hospitals' turnover rate was 18% and this decreased to 15% in 2023 and 13% in 2024.





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