

Behavioral Health Blueprint In Action: 2025 Progress & Impact



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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 – without exception. As we move forward in our [three-year Behavioral Health Blueprint](#), 2025 marks another 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 patients. As the largest provider of behavioral health services in the city, serving over 82,000 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. This progress is due in part to philanthropic investment, which has enabled us to launch and expand innovative clinical programs while strengthening recruitment, retention, and career advancement across behavioral health service lines – expanding access to timely, high-quality behavioral health care. 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.

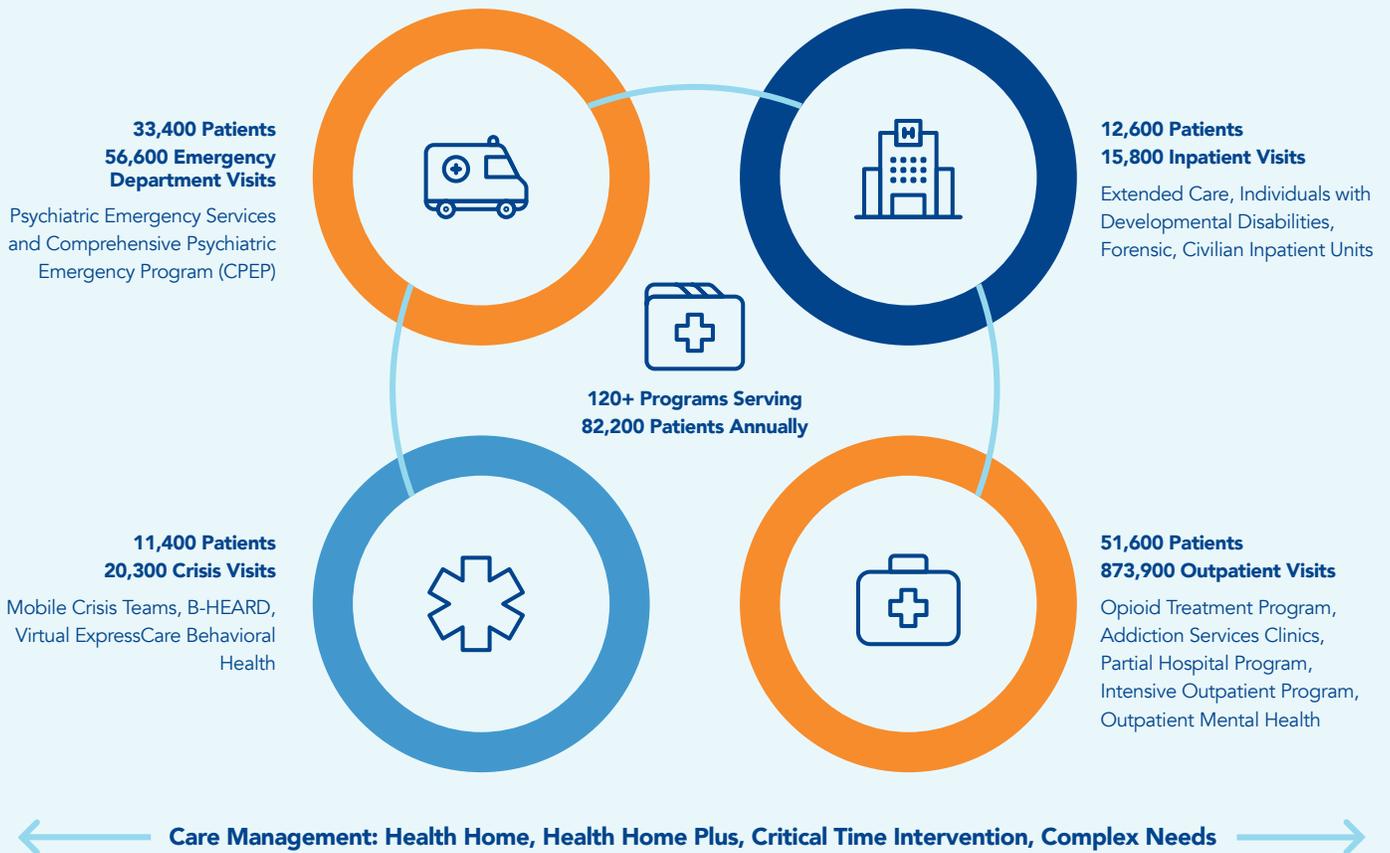


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2025 Behavioral Health Impact At a Glance





Strategy 1: 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. In 2025, we cared for over 12,600 New Yorkers who needed inpatient behavioral health care, compared to 11,500 patients in 2024.

NYC Health + Hospitals has worked closely with the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) to expand inpatient psychiatric bed capacity through the Behavioral Health Centers of Excellence (BH COE) program, in partnership with Medicaid managed care organizations. The BH COE program allows the State to address critical behavioral health system gaps and support increased inpatient psychiatric capacity, an expansion of intensive care management services, and improved access to outpatient care. Through this partnership, NYC Health + Hospitals has been able to support staffing, capital reconstruction, the rapid reopening of units closed during COVID, and workforce development initiatives.

To achieve our reopening goals post-COVID, 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 a richer staff-to-patient ratio and enhanced support for patients. Over 500 of these inpatient behavioral health staff were hired in 2025. As a result, in 2025 the system maintained an average of approximately 1,090 inpatient psychiatric beds online and available, with an average daily census of about 950 patients.

Systemwide Improvements through Better Data Management & Collaboration

In 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals created a centralized electronic data management tool to track and assess staffing-related data on a monthly basis. This tool allowed us to monitor and identify staffing needs systemwide with greater specificity in order to inform and support our workforce recruitment strategies.

Behavioral Health Transfer Unit

In February 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals expanded the operations of its existing Transfer Center to include streamlining transfers of child and adolescent behavioral health patients within the system through a Behavioral Health Transfer Unit. In May 2025, this Unit expanded to include adult behavioral health patients. By centralizing and standardizing the facility-to-facility transfer coordination for patients awaiting inpatient psychiatric admission, this initiative promotes equitable system-wide access to inpatient levels of care across all NYC Health + Hospitals facilities. As of December 2025, the Behavioral Health Transfer Unit had successfully completed more than 600 patient transfers, ensuring New Yorkers awaiting psychiatric inpatient admission received the care they needed as soon as possible.

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 individuals across the lifespan, including children and adolescents, adults, people with mild-to-moderate behavioral health needs, individuals with substance use disorders, and those living with serious mental illness.

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.

Access to outpatient behavioral health services at NYC Health + Hospitals continued to improve in 2025; overall scheduled visits with behavioral health providers increased by 12%, and completed visits with individual patients rose by 9% over the previous year. Additionally, patient satisfaction regarding access to outpatient behavioral health services remained high in 2025: 89% of our patients reporting feeling satisfied with the behavioral health care they received from NYC Health + Hospitals, and 88% of our patients indicating they would likely recommend these services to others.

Outpatient Behavioral Health Contact Center

In 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals expanded the operations of its existing Outpatient Contact Center to schedule behavioral health appointments for new and existing patients. The Contact Center is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 7:00 PM, by calling 1-844-NYC-4NYC. Our centralized scheduling system encompasses all NYC Health + Hospitals sites, which dramatically increases appointment options for new patients and lowers wait times for getting an appointment with a provider. Since the service launched in 2025, more New Yorkers have successfully accessed care, with scheduled intake appointments increasing by 53% and completed intake appointments with individual patients rising by 62% compared to the previous year.





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 who 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 to meet the needs of New Yorkers. We emphasize systemwide access, a culturally responsive approach to wellness, comprehensive substance use care for acute or complex needs, demonstrated outcomes, financially sustainable services, and a focus on meeting patients’ immediate concrete needs. In addition, training and education of both addiction and non-addiction service staff is essential to developing the next generation of addiction champions and substantively addressing substance use-related stigma. Patients experiencing substance use disorders can receive care wherever they present, whether it is in the emergency department, inpatient units, outpatient settings, or in the community.

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, 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 with or at-risk for SUD. Additionally, the teams provide patients with harm reduction supplies and education, including fentanyl and xylazine test strips and naloxone kits. In 2025, there were over 23,000 ED Leads encounters with 6,500 referrals to outpatient services and 3,600 naloxone kits provided.

The Addiction Response Teams (ART) at NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem, Jacobi, and Queens were first [announced in 2024](#) and launched in 2025. The teams have filled more than half of their staffing positions, progressing towards being fully staffed. ART expands addiction consult services by enabling the rapid delivery of withdrawal management and medication-assisted treatment in emergency rooms and inpatient units while ensuring immediate access to ongoing outpatient addiction services. Since launch, ART has reached more than 740 patients and conducted over 1,000 engagements.

The addition of addiction counselors to support peri-natal patients with SUD in birthing units across all 11 public hospitals also provides much-needed support for expecting families at a high-risk time and aligns with the HealthyNYC goals to decrease maternal mortality.

The ED Buprenorphine Project launched in 2024 with the specific goal of increasing the provision of buprenorphine, a lifesaving medication to patients presenting to the emergency department with Opioid Use Disorder, withdrawal, or overdose. Supported systemwide, the ED Buprenorphine Project provides tools and education and utilizes a data-driven approach. Additionally, patient-facing materials including information about harm reduction, medication, overdose prevention, urgent care access, and outpatient follow-up are available in the most commonly spoken languages.

Contingency Management for Individuals with Substance Use Disorder

[In a major 2025 policy initiative](#), NYC Health + Hospitals announced Track to Treatment, a program that will provide enhanced support to individuals who present to the Psychiatric Emergency Department with a substance use issue. Under the Track to Treatment model, NYC Health + Hospitals will provide this population with a structured bridge to supportive services and linkage to care for up to 90 days after hospital discharge. The program will increase access to long-acting medications for opioid and alcohol use disorder, and introduce Contingency Management to reinforce engagement during the bridge phase. Contingency Management includes small rewards for patients, which are directly tied to the achievement of predetermined patient-centered goals. The initial focus of Track to Treatment will be individuals with a substance use disorder who are removed from the community to a hospital under Section 9.58 of New York State Mental Hygiene Law. This initiative is supported by \$5.1 million in City funding.

In January 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals was awarded a grant to implement [Hotspotting](#), an innovative pilot program aimed at reducing opioid overdose deaths, nonfatal overdoses, and use of the emergency department. Hotspotting was created as a high-touch, flexible intervention to meet patients in moments of crisis, sustain engagement across settings, and bridge longstanding system gaps. Under the Hotspotting model, a dedicated team follows-up with patients for up to 12 months after discharge from the hospital, providing them with a cell phone and cell service if clinically indicated, to help them stay connected to care. The Hotspotting program launched at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln in July 2025 and engaged more than 150 patients in the ED during the first five months of operations.

The Emergency Department Opioid Use Disorder Simulation Training

The NYC Health + Hospitals Addiction Services Workforce Training Program implemented a systemwide simulation training for Emergency Department prescribers to strengthen how they engage with patients living with opioid use disorder and those at-risk of opioid overdose. The three-hour training comprises three scenarios by actors playing the role of patients experiencing consequences of opioid use, followed by a facilitated discussion to learn best clinical practices. The exercise trains providers on how to use person-centered, destigmatizing language with patients; screen patients for initiating buprenorphine, a life-saving treatment for opioid use disorder; and use tools in the electronic health record system to streamline opioid treatment throughout the patient's stay in the Emergency Department. [The Emergency Department Opioid Use Disorder Simulation Training](#) is offered at four facilities, including at the NYC Health + Hospitals state-of-the-art [Simulation Center](#), all of which provide simulation-based education to advance patient safety and quality improvement initiatives. Since launch in 2024, 350 Emergency Department prescribers have completed the Emergency Department opioid use disorder simulation training.

Children and Adolescents

NYC Health + Hospitals serves nearly 9,000 children and adolescents each year through emergency, 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. Supported by \$2.4 million from the NYC Department of Health, the program expanded in 2025 to cover all three acute facilities in the Bronx – NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi, Lincoln, and North Central Bronx – after launching at Elmhurst and Queens hospitals in 2024. Since launch, Caring Transitions served nearly 150 youth.

Building on efforts to expand access to mental health care for students, the Mental Health Continuum Program established an expedited referral pathway to child outpatient clinics at three acute care hospitals and at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, East New York. This initiative connects students from

50 New York City Public Schools to timely mental health care. This initiative has served nearly 430 students since its launch in 2023 through December 2025. The health system also opened [16 school-based mental health clinics](#), where NYC Health + Hospitals social workers bring mental health services to more than 6,000 students in New York City Public Schools across the Bronx and Central Brooklyn.

For children experiencing acute mental health crises, we expanded our Child Emergency Department Telepsychiatry Consults service to three facilities, NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem, Lincoln, and Woodhull, ensuring that children in distress receive timely psychiatric evaluations and interventions.

To address the needs of youth with high-risk behaviors, NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue launched a Child and Adolescent Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) outpatient program in 2025. The program operates as an intensive outpatient program and is approved by the New York State Office of Mental Health. This evidence-based model supports children and adolescents experiencing suicidal ideation, self-harm, substance use, and significant interpersonal challenges.

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 early 2025, 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. The goals of B-HEARD are to route 911 mental health calls to a health-centered response whenever appropriate, increase connection to community-based care, reduce unnecessary voluntary transports to hospitals, and reduce unnecessary use of police resources. B-HEARD currently operates in Northern Manhattan, all of the Bronx, Central Brooklyn and Northeastern Queens.



During the first four years of operation, B-HEARD Units responded to over 35,000 calls. In Fiscal Year 2025, 40% 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. NYC Health + Hospitals conducts patient experience surveys for those who accepted services from the B-HEARD Mental Health Clinician. In Fiscal Year 2025, of the patients surveyed by NYC Health + Hospitals: 96% felt B-HEARD helped them, 99% felt B-HEARD treated them with courtesy and respect, and 91% 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

[The Domestic Violence Shelter Mental Health Initiative](#) launched in late 2022 to provide universal screening for adults and children upon arrival in domestic violence shelters, in addition to on-site services including individual therapy, group sessions, and medication management by a multidisciplinary team of highly trained adult and child psychiatrists and social workers. All services are free to patients, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive. In addition to services for clients, NYC Health + Hospitals provides an extensive training curriculum for domestic violence shelter staff on mental health and trauma.

In 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals announced the Domestic Violence Shelter Mental Health Initiative, which continues to embed NYC Health + Hospitals psychiatrists and social workers in the city's domestic violence shelters, expanded to 41 shelters across four boroughs, successfully providing over 9,800 behavioral health appointments and serving over 1,200 unique clients, seeing clients within 10 days of a referral and often times within a day. Additionally, over 400 staff members in the city's domestic violence shelters have been trained annually on topics related to mental health and trauma.

In partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals, the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) operates the Mental Health Program at its five Family Justice Centers. ENDGBV continues to train over 100 staff annually, including case managers and attorneys, on these same topics and treated over 250 unique clients through more than 3,400 appointments in 2025.

Homeless New Yorkers with Serious Mental Illness

Over 82,000 behavioral health patients receive services annually at NYC Health + Hospitals, and nearly half of them experience homelessness. For these patients, however, recovery is often delayed due to the instability of housing.

Bridge to Home

In 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals launched [Bridge to Home](#), an innovative transitional support model for patients with serious mental illness who are clinically ready for discharge but lack stable housing. The program fills a critical gap between inpatient care and permanent housing by offering a safe, home-like setting with comprehensive on-site clinical and behavioral health services. The Midtown West facility, which welcomed its first guests in September 2025, provides up to 46 private rooms and is staffed 24/7 by a multidisciplinary team that includes psychiatric providers, nurses, social workers, and peer specialists. Services include medication management, individual and group therapy, substance use disorder treatment, housing navigation, meals, and structured therapeutic and recreational activities.

Bridge to Home is a key component of NYC Health + Hospitals' broader behavioral health continuum, complementing the system's [Extended Care Units](#) (ECUs), which provide longer-term inpatient stabilization for individuals with serious mental illness who have been historically disconnected from care. ECUs offer up to 120 days of inpatient treatment—compared to an average 21-day acute psychiatric stay—and focus on intensive engagement, treatment adherence, and discharge planning. NYC Health + Hospitals currently operates three ECUs at Bellevue Hospital (opened in 2020), Kings County Hospital (opened in 2023), and Elmhurst Hospital (opened in 2024), which together have served hundreds of high-need patients. Working in concert with ECUs and the Housing for Health program—which has housed nearly 1,500 patients—Bridge to Home provides a step-down pathway that reduces avoidable emergency and inpatient utilization while supporting successful transitions to permanent housing.



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 May 2024, NYC Health + Hospitals 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 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. Since launch, the Social Work Training Academy has trained 950 social workers.

In 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals implemented the [Social Work Clinical Licensure Training Program](#), which provides Licensed Master Social Workers (LMSWs) at NYC Health + Hospitals with training and financial support to attain their clinical licensure in exchange for a two-year commitment to the health care system. This strategic initiative helps strengthen and expand the behavioral health workforce at NYC Health + Hospitals. Participants receive free test preparation, which includes study materials and 24 hours of training, as well as reimbursement for the exam registration and licensure fees to prepare them for the Association of Social Work Boards exam and become a New York State Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). Attaining this licensure will allow them to earn higher salaries and move into supervisory social work positions in the system. The program was developed in response to exit data showing 20% of social workers who left their role at NYC Health + Hospitals did so due to a lack of career advancement opportunities. The Social Work Clinical Licensure Training Program is available to LMSWs who have worked at NYC Health + Hospitals for at least two years. Since launch, this program has supported the career mobility of more than 80 incumbent LMSW staff.

Care Management

We remain 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 to provide support to our inpatient behavioral health units and CPEP services. We also provided more training opportunities to our Community Health Workers to upscale their skills to support patient care for our complex needs population.

In 2025, this work advanced further through the expansion of Community Health Workers into outpatient Child and Adolescent clinics, Addiction Services, and specialty programs such as Critical Time Intervention (CTI) teams, Addiction Response Teams (ART), and Crisis Follow-up (CFS) services.

Community Health Worker-led Complex Care Management Pilot

NYC Health + Hospitals' Care Management also launched the Community Health Worker-led Complex Care Management pilot in August 2025, integrating Community Health Workers into outpatient behavioral health care to support high-need patients by establishing standardized documentation and operational workflows in Mental Health Outpatient Treatment and Recovery Services (ambulatory behavioral health care clinics) that integrate Community Health Workers into outpatient service delivery. For high-need behavioral health patients, the Community Health Worker-led Complex Care Management pilot expanded access to behavioral health care by filling the gap between scheduled encounters, improving patient engagement, addressing social needs, and preventing symptom escalation.

Together, these efforts strengthened the infrastructure needed to support scale and sustainability in 2026. These initiatives reflect NYC Health + Hospitals continued commitment to a skilled, integrated Care Management workforce that is equipped to address social complexity, enhance continuity of care, and advance health equity across the behavioral health continuum.

Critical Time Intervention Teams

In 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals launched new teams to support patients after they leave the hospital. The new Critical Time Intervention teams serve adults who have had multiple psychiatric hospital or emergency visits within the last year and provide follow-up care for up to nine months. Funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health, the \$32.2 million teams include nurses, social workers, care managers, mental health professionals, and peer counselors and are funded for five years. Services include accompanying patients home on discharge day, helping them access follow-up care in the community, supporting



personal goal-setting, and assisting them with securing public benefits and entitlements to address their basic needs. [Critical Time Intervention teams](#) are currently available at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, Jacobi, Kings County, Metropolitan, and Queens and are projected to serve up to 650 patients a year.

Peer Bridger Program

NYC Health + Hospitals implemented the [Peer Bridger program](#) in 2025. The Peer Bridger program pairs patients discharged from a Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP) with certified Peer Counselors to provide support for up to several months after they leave the hospital. Peer Counselors, who have lived experience with mental health or substance use challenges, help patients connect with outpatient services, psychosocial clubhouses, transportation resources, and community-based supports such as libraries, food pantries, and crisis respite programs. The Peer Bridger program is available at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, Elmhurst, Harlem, Jacobi, Kings County, North Central Bronx, Queens, and Woodhull.

Expanded Crisis Follow-up Services

NYC Health + Hospitals' Expanded Crisis Follow-up Services offers immediate proactive, preventative, and stabilizing mental health support services for complex acute patients discharged from the CPEP. These services facilitate linkage to care and reduce repeated emergency department visits or hospitalization. Crisis Follow-up Services are currently available at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, Elmhurst, Kings County, and Queens, with plans to expand to Jacobi, Woodhull, and Harlem hospitals.

Through initiatives like the Peer Bridger Program and Expanded Crisis Follow-up Services, NYC Health + Hospitals has significantly improved patient engagement, connection to care, and follow-up.

Strategy 5: Prevent Violence and Increase Safety

NYC Health + Hospitals' systemwide behavioral health workplace violence prevention strategy is designed to strengthen a culture of safety through aligned policy, workforce development, and evidence-based operational practices. The strategy integrates trauma-informed approaches to violence risk identification, de-escalation, and crisis response, supported by simulation-based learning and standardized systemwide guidance to prevent and manage behavioral health crises.

In 2025, we provided advanced training to 800 staff members system-wide in core violence-prevention interventions, including screening and assessment of high-risk patients, trauma-informed de-escalation techniques, and the role of violence prevention in advancing a culture of safety. Additionally, the violence screening rates in psychiatric emergency departments/CPEPs steadily increased over 2025, from 61% in the first quarter to 74% in the last quarter of the year. As New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) designed programs, these curricula emphasize practical, day-to-day clinical interactions that reduce escalation risk and support safer care environments.

In partnership with the Center for Practice Innovations (CPI), NYC Health + Hospitals developed two new educational modules—*Violence in Healthcare and Psychopharmacology for Agitation*—scheduled for release in early 2026. In parallel, a simulation-based violence-prevention training program launched in June 2025 and is on-track to train 500 staff in its first year. Early results show significant improvements in participant confidence and competence in de-escalation, aligning with established best practices. To ensure sustainability, trainers completed nearly two years of development and achieved New York State Office of Mental Health certification as TRUST instructor trainers. NYC Health + Hospitals also implemented a standardized Individual Behavioral Plan (IBP) template in the Epic electronic health record to strengthen systemwide identification, communication, and management of violence risk across care teams.

NYC Health + Hospitals continues to engage Behavioral Health leadership through quarterly Culture of Safety forums to ensure consistent utilization of violence-mitigation strategies. We remain on-track to develop systemwide restraints guidance, refine best practices for training behavioral health staff, and promote a more integrated, collaborative approach to safety. These efforts are intentionally aligned to reduce workforce burnout, improve coordination across traditionally siloed functions, and strengthen the system's ability to prevent and respond to violence in a holistic and sustainable manner.

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.

In 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals announced its [lowest behavioral health staff turnover and vacancy rates in recent history](#) following a suite of programs focused on recruitment, retention, training, and expanded career pathways. The health care system's behavioral health staff turnover rate is now at 8%, a significant drop from nearly 18% in 2022 and far below the national average of 31%. Additionally, vacancies across all behavioral health disciplines declined to 6%, [below the national average of 31%](#). Vacancies for social workers fell from 12% in 2024 to 5% today. In addition, vacancies for psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychologists, and behavioral health associates each fell by over 50%.

These new behavioral health hires and low turnover and vacancy rates will have a profound impact on the system and patient care. NYC Health + Hospitals has filled long-standing vacancies and advanced strategic growth, while ensuring continuity of care for patients, and reducing gaps in access to behavioral health services systemwide. These systemwide gains are a result of a suite of programs focused on recruitment, retention, training, and expanded career pathways. NYC Health + Hospitals is reshaping how care is delivered and how public service careers are perceived. Since launching its three-year workforce development strategic plan in 2024, the public health care system has made significant progress in strengthening and stabilizing its behavioral health workforce of 5,700 employees, which includes hiring nearly 1,000 behavioral health staff across behavioral health patient care settings in 2025.

NYC Health + Hospitals dramatically improved its recruitment and retention for behavioral health staff with several initiatives:

1. Recruitment Campaigns: Over the past two years, NYC Health + Hospitals ran two recruitment campaigns for behavioral health staff that ran on digital platforms, and television. The social worker recruitment campaign, [Social Workers Needed Here](#), led to nearly 55,000 clicks on digital platforms and [received a Silver Award for Purpose-Led Campaign of the Year from Modern Healthcare and Ad Age](#). The [2025 PSYCH DOCS 4 NYC campaign](#) to recruit psychiatrists and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners yielded over 75,000 clicks on the job applicant landing page.



2. Creative Sourcing for an Inclusive Workforce: The health care system's [Peer Academy](#) and Psychiatric Social Health Technician Care Corps program provide free training and internships to people with lived experience of mental health and substance use diagnoses. 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 and 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. The majority of graduates of our training program become full-time employees in our system, building patient-centered capacity to care for the patient's behavioral, emotional and social needs. As of 2025, NYC Health + Hospitals employed over 100 peer counselors across the system and continued to be one of the largest employers of peers in New York City. Nearly 70% of Peer Academy graduates are hired within 12 months or less, and 50% of Care Corps graduates secure employment within two months. Nearly 50% of the peer counselors at NYC Health + Hospitals are graduates from the Peer Academy.

- 3. Behavioral Health Physician Assistant (PA) Pipeline:** To address the gap in experience in psychiatry among new PAs, NYC Health + Hospitals created the Psychiatric Physician Assistant Fellowship with the New York State Office of Mental Health. This program provides hands-on training and helps develop experienced PAs who can mentor future clinicians.
- 4. Service Commitments and Financial Incentives:** Financial incentives have helped to stabilize and grow the behavioral health workforce at NYC Health + Hospitals. [The BH4NYC Loan Repayment Program](#) has awarded over \$6 million to 200 clinicians in exchange for a three-year service commitment, supporting over 110,000 patient visits annually. In addition the [Behavioral Health Nursing Career Ladder](#) provides staff with educational support and financial assistance to enroll in nursing school in exchange for a three-year commitment to NYC Health + Hospitals.
- 5. Career Ladders and Professional Development:** Educational programs for incumbent staff deliver contextualized training that enhances patient care while supporting provider growth and career mobility. Intensive training for Psychiatric Physician Assistants, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, and Social Workers sustains the workforce by boosting job satisfaction, reinforcing supervisory structures, and ensuring continuity of care with highly trained staff.

The gains that NYC Health + Hospitals has made in behavioral health workforce development offer a model for strengthening public service careers more broadly. This achievement is significant at a time when fewer people are staying in healthcare overall. In 2024, approximately 62 million U.S. adults (23% of all U.S. adults) had a mental illness and [nearly half of them did not receive treatment \(48%\)](#). Behavioral health services can be difficult to access due to a number of factors, including behavioral health provider shortages. The stakes are even higher for public health care systems, which face unique hurdles—like the cost of training compared to compensation, the burnout that drives people out of the field, and stiff competition from private systems or telehealth jobs that often offer more flexibility.



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