



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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**MAYOR'S FUND TO ADVANCE NEW YORK CITY RELEASES REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FROM COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Connections to Care program seeks organizations that serve new parents, "out-of-work, out-of-school" youth and unemployed adults

NEW YORK—The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, in coordination with the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, today announced the opening of a competitive Request for Proposals from community-based organizations across New York City to establish and operate the Connections to Care program, a \$30 million public-private partnership to integrate mental health services into selected programs serving low-income communities. Connections to Care is a program of the federal Social Innovation Fund. Applications are available on the Mayor's Fund's website at nyc.gov/fund. The deadline for submitting an application is October 19, 2015.

The Connections to Care program is part of a larger effort, led by Mayor's Fund Chair Chirlane McCray and Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives Richard Buery, to implement reforms in mental health care delivery. In May, the de Blasio administration announced \$78.3 million in new budget funding for mental health services. Just last month, Mayor de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray, who chairs the Mayor's Fund Board, launched NYC Safe, an initiative to support the narrow population of New Yorkers with untreated, serious mental illness who pose a concern for violent behavior. This fall, the administration will release a Mental Health Roadmap to lay out a bold vision for addressing the mental health crisis.

"Everyone has the power to be a healer. Training staff in places where New Yorkers live, work and study just makes sense," said **First Lady and Chair of the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City Chirlane McCray**. "People who work at community-based organizations are already confronting mental health challenges. This program creates a model that gives staff the tools they need to support wellness and help their clients thrive."

"We are thrilled that the Social Innovation Fund can support Connections to Care, a program that will ensure more New Yorkers gain access to the mental health services they need," said **Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service**, the federal agency that administers the Social Innovation Fund. "I am proud that CNCS and the Social Innovation Fund are helping to usher in this new era by supporting this project, that will take an inventive approach to one of today's most pressing social problems – an accessible mental health system. We encourage all eligible community organizations to apply to participate so that the Social Innovation Fund can invest in their success, and help more New Yorkers lead healthier, happier lives."

"Untreated mental health conditions make it difficult for New Yorkers to work, do well in school and maintain healthy relationships. In short, unaddressed mental health needs keep New Yorkers from being well and contributing fully to our city," said, **Gabrielle Fialkoff, Senior Advisor to the Mayor, Director of the Office of Strategic Partnerships and Vice-Chair of the Mayor's Fund**. "This partnership will target community-based organizations working with populations who have the fewest resources – like new parents or young people seeking job assistance. Determining the most effective way get these vulnerable communities the mental health services they need will make our city more accessible and equal."

“The Connections to Care program embodies an important aspect of our ongoing work to advance mental health reform – ensuring every New Yorker can obtain access to effective support,” said **Deputy Mayor Richard Buery**. “By working with organizations serving at-risk New Yorkers to test how to treat conditions as early as possible, Connections to Care is making clear progress toward our goal of addressing the inequality of mental health care.”

“Neighborhood-based mental health services, such as the model the Connections to Care program will fund, will certainly provide a critical link for those in need,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “This effort, coupled with the First Lady’s forthcoming Mental Health Roadmap, will strengthen a system that has long needed significant investment and attention.”

“Recognition by the Social Innovation Fund is a tremendous validation,” said **Mindy Tarlow, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Operations**. “It can help catalyze the growth of nonprofit organizations, and I know will help bring attention to the issues nonprofits are addressing throughout the city.”

“As many as one in five New Yorkers struggle with mental health issues, and this initiative will offer them some much needed assistance,” said **Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “The Council looks forward to reviewing proposals for this public-private partnership and playing a role in finding the best plans to improve mental health services across the city. I thank the Mayor’s Fund for their commitment to serving New Yorkers in need and making our city a better place for all to live.”

“Too often, individuals go untreated for common mental health issues because of the stigma attached to mental illness and lack of visibility and access to easy treatments. By partnering with organizations already working within our communities, we will ensure that New Yorkers are able to obtain the counseling and support they need and deserve. We must work together to make all New Yorkers feel accepted and supported, no matter the status of their mental health,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**.

“I encourage community-based organizations across Brooklyn to apply for the Connections to Care RFP, an important initiative that prioritizes mental health services for underserved and at-risk populations. We have a responsibility to not only shatter the stigma of seeking mental health services, but also to shatter the barriers that have historically put quality care out of reach,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

“Connections to Care gets at the heart of our mission at the Mayor’s Fund: To foster meaningful collaborations between city agencies and nonprofit partners to make tangible gains in the lives of New Yorkers,” said **Darren Bloch, Executive Director of the Mayor’s Fund**. “We urge any community-based organization that meets Connections to Care’s criteria to apply to participate and join our effort to test this new model to expand mental health support across our city.”

“Through both programmatic work and research, the Center for Economic Opportunity has seen how mental health conditions prevent too many New Yorkers from achieving their goals,” said **Matt Klein, Executive Director of the Center for Economic Opportunity**. “Connections to Care is designed to empower program staff with promising practices for addressing mental health conditions, and we expect it to produce lessons that will inform systems citywide.”

“I applaud the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City for creating the Connection to Care Program. Access to adequate mental health care is one of the greatest challenges, and I am pleased to see an effort like this taking place in New York City. The opening of the Request for Proposals brings us one step closer to ensuring that everyone has access to culturally competent mental health services,” said **Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick**.

“Our most vulnerable New Yorkers are often the hardest to reach,” said **Council Member Corey Johnson**. “This initiative will help community-based organizations reach those in need and connect them with crucial mental health services. Delivering these services at a young age can prevent a lifetime of difficulties. I applaud

the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, under the leadership of First Lady Chirlane McCray, for initiating this important program”

Mental illness is pervasive, and far too many New Yorkers are unable to get the treatment they need. DOHMH estimates that 34,000 adults experience serious psychological distress every month, with higher prevalence among low income individuals, the uninsured, and those receiving public insurance. Those populations also seek and receive care at lower rates. The United States Surgeon General reports that the unmet need for mental health services is greatest among minorities and low income people. One in five New Yorkers with serious psychological distress have reported a time in the prior year when they needed mental health treatment but did not receive it.

Unmet mental health needs also reduce the effectiveness of social services. Substantial evidence shows good mental health helps people reach higher educational levels, maximize their work and earnings, develop strong interpersonal relationships, and maintain their physical health. Yet, social service clients often do not access traditional mental health services for a variety of reasons, including a perceived a stigma to mental health counseling, unaffordability and a mistrust of unfamiliar mental health providers.

In July, the Mayor’s Fund and the Corporation for National and Community Service’s Social Innovation Fund launched the \$30 million Connections to Care public-private partnership, a five-year program that aims to expand access to mental health services by integrating evidence-based mental health services into community-based organizations that are already serving these low-income, at-risk populations.

Research suggests that non-mental health workers can successfully provide support for common mental health conditions. Connections to Care will give staff at community-based organizations serving at-risk populations the training to provide this support, including screenings for common mental health and substance use disorders; motivational interviewing, or treatment that facilitates changes in behaviors that impact mental health; mental health first aid, which teaches the skills to respond to the signs of mental illness and substance abuse; and psycho-education, which provides individuals with a mental health condition and their families with information to understand and deal with the condition.

The Mayor’s Fund, in collaboration with the Center for Economic Opportunity and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, will choose about a dozen community-based organizations to implement the Connections to Care program. In order to be participate in the program, community-based organizations must be a 501(c) (3) nonprofit operating in New York City, and must partner with a mental health provider – such as a hospital or mental health clinic – that can assist with the integration of services, ongoing staff training and coaching and the provision of direct care to clients with more serious mental health conditions.

Applicants must provide services to:

1. Expectant parents and/or parents of children under the age of four (i.e. day care centers or family shelters);
2. “Out of school, out of work” young adults ages 16 to 24 (i.e. education and internship programs);
3. And/or unemployed low-income working-aged adults ages 18 and over (i.e. job placement or training programs).

Evidence suggests that a failure to address the mental health needs of these three populations can have lifelong implications.

Community-based organizations selected to participate in Connections to Care will receive funding to help to support the program operations, including the hiring of additional staff members, training expenses, ongoing coaching by the mental health provider partner, and more.

By increasing access to mental health services over the next five years, Connections to Care aims to improve the mental health of participants, and in turn, increase participants' success with other social services provided by their community-based organization. For example, Connections to Care may track:

- How many participants continue with prescribed psychotropic medications and/or therapy;
- How much interventions reduce self-reported mental health-related symptoms such as depression, anxiety, reactivity, and substance abuse
- Reduction in hospitalizations and emergency room use
- Improvements in self-reported quality of life and/or social and family relationships;
- How much participant perception of stigma in accessing mental health services decreases;
- And improved outcomes for participants in specific social services:
 - **For expectant mothers and parents of children under the age of four:** Improvement in parent-child interactions; health social and emotional development in young children; and improvement in maternal depression.
 - **For “out of school, out of work” youth ages 16 to 24:** Improved job placement rates, retention, and earnings; and reconnection with school, grade gains, high school equivalency attainment, and postsecondary enrollment.
 - **For unemployed low-income working-age adults age 18 to 64:** Positive employment outcomes, including job placement rates, retention, and earnings.

About the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City

The Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, chaired by First Lady Chirlane McCray, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization committed to promoting partnerships between the City and the private sector in support of high-impact public programs. The Mayor’s Fund is focused on serving as a vehicle for the generous business and philanthropic communities to contribute to City programs and enhance the lives of New Yorkers in areas ranging from mental health, to youth workforce development to immigration and citizenship. To learn more about the Mayor’s Fund, visit nyc.gov/fund.

About the Center for Economic Opportunity

The Center for Economic Opportunity works to reduce poverty and advance evidence-based policy in New York City through research, program design, monitoring and evaluation. Part of the Mayor’s Office of Operations, CEO manages a dedicated annual Innovation Fund and works collaboratively with City agencies and other partners to create, implement, and oversee a range of anti-poverty programs, policies, and research projects. CEO’s in-house evaluation team works with nationally recognized, independent evaluation firms and City agencies to rigorously measure program impacts and provide objective evidence to inform decisions of whether to replicate, eliminate, or scale up programs. CEO oversees implementation and evaluation of New York City’s 2010-2015 SIF grant.

About the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

The mission of DOHMH is to protect and promote the health of all New Yorkers. DOHMH has the overall responsibility for the health of the residents of New York City. It also acts as an oversight agency to monitor various healthcare related operations within NYC.

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