



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** July 11, 2022

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**MAYOR ADAMS APPOINTS EVA WONG AS DIRECTOR OF MAYOR'S OFFICE OF  
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH, BRIAN STETTIN AS SENIOR ADVISOR FOR  
SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS**

**NEW YORK** – New York City Mayor Eric Adams today announced the appointment of Eva Wong as director of the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH) and Brian Stettin as senior advisor for severe mental illness. Wong and Stettin will join those in the administration — including leaders in the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and at NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) — working to promote the mental health of New Yorkers every day.

“Bringing mental health care to every New Yorker who needs it, especially our most vulnerable neighbors, is more urgent than ever,” said **Mayor Adams**. “Eva’s experience and dedication to making mental health care as accessible as possible is exactly what New York City needs, and I’m confident that, in her role as OCMH director, she will coordinate with our agency and community partners to ensure people have access to quality care they need. Brian has an impressive record of helping government meet the needs of people with severe mental illness and I know he will be an invaluable leader as we build a stronger system of treatment and support. It isn’t just our responsibility to support our most vulnerable New Yorkers, but also to shatter the stigma surrounding mental health illness. With these new appointments, we will tackle this longstanding and long-ignored crisis with compassion, urgency, and forward-thinking solutions.”

Eva Wong brings over 15 years of professional experience in direct clinical services, program management and operations, and community development. Wong has a breadth of experience in advocacy and developing programs, including crisis intervention with a special focus on historically marginalized groups. As director, Wong will bring her experience in sustained, authentic conversations with New Yorkers, including young people, families, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and those hit hardest by the pandemic to lead the city’s work promoting mental health wellness, destigmatizing mental illness, and delivering equitable access to mental health services with communities of color in New York City.

Brian Stettin is a veteran of state government returning to New York after 13 years as a prominent national advocate for mental health reform. He has drafted and led successful

campaigns for improved treatment laws in numerous states and guided jurisdictions of every type and size in establishing Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) programs. Stettin will serve as a senior advisor to Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom. In this role, he will work to expand and strengthen the city's in-patient psychiatric programs, ensure the city's utilization of AOT is as effective as possible, and work with DOHMH, OCMH, and across city agencies to support New Yorkers with severe mental illness.

“Prioritizing mental health is essential to the recovery of this city,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom**. “I am confident that Eva is the right person to work collaboratively with local communities, as well as with city, state, and federal lawmakers to develop policies that improve access to mental health care in our city. For our fellow New Yorkers who suffer with serious mental illness, we must ensure they are connected to the supports they need to thrive. For years, many have been ignored and given too little too late. Brian's focus on mental health policy will bring us one step closer to bringing care and dignity to this population.”

“New Yorkers in all walks of life have endured varying degrees of anxiety, fear, trauma and loss in the past two years. While I believe wholeheartedly that New Yorkers are resilient; we are also strong enough to acknowledge that we are exhausted and in need of healing. The work of OCMH is central to the city being a leader in closing critical gaps in care and promoting access to treatment for New Yorkers with mental health needs” said **incoming OCMH Director Eva Wong**. “I feel incredibly honored and grateful for Mayor Adams and Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom's trust in me to lead this important work with the dedicated staff at OCMH. I am proud to have a continued commitment to intentionally listen to the voices and perspectives of New Yorkers, especially those from historically disinvested communities and communities of color. Together with city agencies, non-profit providers, and community groups citywide, we can effectively and equitably promote mental wellness, mental health crisis prevention, and intervention, and decrease barriers to mental health care for under-resourced communities, ensuring a safe, healthy, and resilient city.”

“Like all of us, New Yorkers with severe mental illness deserve decent places to live, health care, physical safety, and meaningful connections to others,” said **Brian Stettin, senior advisor on severe mental illness**. “By building a system of treatment and support that responds to the needs of each individual, we can disassociate severe mental illness from homelessness and criminal justice involvement, and live up to our calling as the world's greatest city. The Adams administration is committed to making this happen and I am honored by the opportunity to contribute.”

“The ‘second pandemic’ of mental health issues, arising from the last 2.5 years of COVID-19 on top of longer-term causes demands an all hands-on deck approach,” said **DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan**. “We're excited to welcome Eva and Brian to the administration to bring more hands into this fight, and to strengthen our team as we address both immediate and structural issues in our mental health system, and the underlying social and economic drivers of rising mental health needs in our city. We need everyone to step in and step up to the challenges, and we're grateful to Eva and Brian for their service at this critical time.”

“Brian's deep knowledge and track record of improving mental health systems will be great assets to New York City,” said **Dr. Mitchell Katz, president and CEO, NYC Health + Hospitals**. “I look forward to working with him to provide much-needed care for those with serious mental illness.”

“I warmly welcome the appointment of Eva Wong to be the next director of the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health,” said **New York City Council Member Linda Lee, chair, Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction**. “Eva has the experience, commitment, and determination to deliver real results for New Yorkers suffering from mental health issues. From leading evidence-based programs to promote children’s social-emotional learning and healthy development at NYU Langone Health, to providing mental health relief for victims of natural disaster and community violence, Eva has continually stepped forward when called upon. The OCMH can play a critical role in the coordination of mental health services throughout the city, and with Eva as its new director, I look forward to working with the office to implement the programs that are much needed to turn the tide of the mental health crisis New York City is currently experiencing.”

“Mental illness is a serious issue within the city, and we need a comprehensive approach to fixing it,” said **New York City Council Member Robert Holden**. “There are many gaps in the mental health system and Brian Stettin has a history of filling them in. Brian was instrumental in drafting Kendra’s Law, an essential tool in the city’s arsenal for addressing serious mental illness. Mayor Eric Adams could not have made a better hire for this position, and I look forward to working with Brian.”

“Mental health is foundational to overall health across the life span. In order to improve our city, we must have leadership invested in creating a deep and robust mental health system to support all New Yorkers, but especially the most marginalized including communities of color and those living in sustained poverty,” said **Kai-ama Hamer, associate director, ParentCorps, NYU Langone Health**. “The time is now! Eva Wong, a proud Chinese-American New Yorker, brings to this new role a wealth of experience, understanding and expertise that will allow her to lead with confidence and caring. I am excited by the possibilities and look forward to the change her leadership will bring.”

“Brian Stettin is a foremost expert on policies and programs that impact behavioral health,” said **Kathryn Wylde, president and CEO, Partnership for New York City**. “He will be an incredible resource for the city in addressing the mental health challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.”

“The Door is thrilled to support Eva Wong as the new director of OCMH,” said **Lynnette Ford, chief program officer, The Door – A Center of Alternatives**. “As a former partner of ours through our partnership with University Settlement, Eva oversaw teams that ensured New York City youth have access to quality mental health services and activities. Through our work we continuously recognize and adapt to the complex needs of New York City youth, especially LGBTQAI+ young people and we cannot think of anyone more qualified for this role. Mental health support has always been at the forefront of The Door's mission and we're fully confident

in Eva's capabilities in addressing and empowering future generations, and we look forward to working with OCMH on further developing a strength-based youth development model.”

“Throughout his 13 years of exemplary service to Treatment Advocacy Center, Brian Stettin has played an enormous role in ensuring better access to lifesaving treatment for people with severe mental illness,” said **Lisa Dailey, executive director, Treatment Advocacy Center**. “This appointment is further confirmation of what we, his colleagues, have long known: Brian Stettin is one of this nation’s most valued and respected champions in the elimination of barriers to mental health treatment. We look forward to continuing to work with Brian, Mayor Adams and other key leaders in the state to ensure that New Yorkers with serious mental illness are not left behind.”

“University Settlement's diverse communities have benefitted from Eva Wong's mental health knowledge, strategic coalition building skills, and dedication to equity over the last decade and a half,” said **Melissa Aase, CEO, University Settlement**. “Among other roles, Eva led our disaster-response after Hurricane Sandy and ensured 40,000 community members received critical and culturally responsive support. Now in this crucial moment for the city, Eva is uniquely qualified to take on the leadership of OCMH. As a leading settlement house and a community-based mental health provider since 1945, University Settlement looks forward to partnering with Eva and OCMH to help our city respond, recover and reclaim our health and vibrancy.”

“Brian Stettin has gifted insight into serving those with serious mental illness,” said **Patricia Webdale, mental health advocate and mother of Kendra Webdale (namesake of Kendra's Law)**. “His work on Kendra’s Law has saved countless lives and improved the quality of life for countless others. The Webdale family is excited for his return to New York and applaud Mayor Adams for this appointment.”

“As a principal of an elementary school in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, we aim to provide the best learning experiences to our students, and we cannot do that without also addressing their emotional and mental health needs through the lenses of equity and inclusion. Partnering with Eva over the last two years has allowed us to do wonders for our city's youngest and most vulnerable citizens and their families,” said **Cristina Gonzalez, principal, PS 94**. “Part of her work is to help us address wellness initiatives with our families in a culturally responsive and caring way. She has also joyfully and compassionately engaged with our staff to provide them with the tools necessary for addressing their own mental health as well as that of their students. Eva leads with warmth and empathy; she is persistent and authentic in building partnerships; and is strategic and effective when organizing like-minded people and developing resources to address the layered needs of our school communities despite unforeseen obstacles. I cannot be more thrilled that Mayor Adams and Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom have selected such a devoted community leader, skilled practitioner, and a champion of community mental health to lead the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health.”

### **About Eva Wong**

Eva Wong currently serves as a ParentCorps unit supervisor at the Center for Early Childhood Health and Development at NYU Langone Health. Wong leads the clinical direction of programming that reaches more than 450 pre-K programs in partnership with the New York City Department of Education and 70,000 families in New York City alone.

Previously, Wong devoted a decade to University Settlement, where she held several leadership roles. As the director of programs and engagement, Wong designed and increased access to strength-based and holistic programs for specialized populations, including older adults and youth with developmental disabilities. Under her strategic leadership as director of Project Hope in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, Wong helped deliver mental health prevention and interventions to over 40,000 New Yorkers.

Additionally, in the past, Wong has served on boards of directors for a range of nonprofits and community-wide coalitions. Wong chaired both the Lower East Side and East Harlem Community Partnership Programs, where she convened leaders and decision makers from community-based organizations, community boards, schools, local precincts, and faith-based groups to support the safety and wellbeing of children. Since 2007, Wong served as board member for various non-profits organizations focused on improving the quality of health and social services for Asian communities through interdisciplinary service coordination and culturally responsive professional development — devising creative strategies to overcome stigmatic barriers and increase mental health awareness for older adults, as well as pioneering housing and economic-empowerment solutions for survivors of trafficking to access a safe home and a safe job.

Wong has a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics with honors in Actuarial Science from the University of Waterloo and a Master of Arts degree with honors in Mental Health Counseling from Nyack College.

### **About Brian Stettin**

For the last 13 years, Brian Stettin has served as policy director for Treatment Advocacy Center, a national non-profit focused on removing barriers to the treatment of severe mental illness. In this role, Stettin drafted, advocated and marshaled support for legislation enacted federally and in numerous states to improve civil commitment laws and expand access to mental health treatment. Stettin also led the Treatment Advocacy Center's efforts to provide technical assistance to communities across the United States in the establishment and operation of AOT programs, helping individuals with severe mental illness and histories of treatment non-adherence avoid hospitalization and arrest through court-ordered treatment and monitoring.

Stettin is the lead author of a definitive white paper on AOT implementation commissioned by the American Psychiatric Association. Concurrent with his work at the Treatment Advocacy Center, Stettin served for three years as an adjunct professor at George Mason University School of Law, teaching a seminar on "Mental Illness and the Law."

Prior to joining the Treatment Advocacy Center, Stettin spent a decade in New York State government, serving as counsel to the Health Committee of the New York Assembly and as

special counsel to the New York State commissioner of criminal justice services, focusing on civil-law strategies to address neighborhood crime.

From 1999 to 2007, Stettin was an assistant attorney general in the Office of the New York Attorney General, serving in the Program Development and Public Integrity Units. In this role, Stettin drafted the original proposal of "Kendra's Law" (New York's AOT law) in 1999, as well as significant improvements enacted in 2006.

Stettin is a graduate of City College of New York and the University of Texas School of Law.

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