

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 29, 2021

**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**A RECOVERY FOR ALL OF US: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY  
ANNOUNCE MENTAL HEALTH FOR ALL**

*City launches comprehensive effort to promote universal access to mental healthcare during  
COVID-19 recovery*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor de Blasio and First Lady McCray today announced Mental Health for All, a new comprehensive plan to deliver universal access to mental health support to all New Yorkers. The plan builds on the work of ThriveNYC and other City agencies and lays out a path to ensure that mental health is a permanent part of City government response.

“In New York City, healthcare is not a privilege reserved for those who can afford it. It is a human right for all,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Mental Health For All is our commitment to every one of the 8.6 million people in our City: we will support you every step of the way in living a happy and healthy life.”

“Every new program from ThriveNYC and City agencies, every expansion of services over the past seven years, is a direct response to what we heard from New Yorkers - who asked for easier access to care, culturally competent counselors who speak their language and more coordination across government and community organizations to solve entrenched problems,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “As we emerge from COVID-19, we are building on that foundation. With this executive order and the creation of the Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health, we are ensuring this work will be a lasting contribution to New York City for years to come.”

To address widespread mental health needs, which have deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City will:

- **Begin universal mental health support at City vaccination sites.** As the City vaccinates hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in the coming weeks at City sites, new Mental Health workers will provide check-ins, mental health support, resources, and connections to care as needed.
- **Create a Community Behavioral Health Academy.** Too often, underserved communities don’t have enough behavioral health providers and professionals to support mental health needs. The City will partner with the CUNY School of Professional Studies to create a Community Behavioral Health Academy that will train more than 5,000 City agency staff and social service providers in three years to better support the mental health of the people they serve.

- **Launch a new Mental Health for All website and public education campaign** to help New Yorkers navigate all of the mental health resources available to them and find mental health and substance misuse support that meets their needs.

Mayor de Blasio also announced an Executive Order creating a **Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health** to ensure that mental health for all is a lasting part of City government and a mayoral priority into the future. The office will be charged with:

- Overseeing new investments included in the Fiscal Year 2022 Executive budget, including \$112M for citywide expansion of mental health teams that will respond to 911 mental health calls and nearly \$50M in new services for people with serious mental illness.
- Managing the \$225M in significant community-based mental health services currently supported by ThriveNYC, including services in shelters, Centers for Older Adults, Family Justice Centers, police precincts, and social service agencies.
- Developing new strategies, such as Communities Thrive, to continue closing gaps in care, providing more support right in communities, and promoting mental health for all.
- Maximizing promotion of mental health across every part of City government.

Nearly 1.6 million adult New Yorkers experience mental illness every year, and the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened and expanded mental health needs. Prior to the pandemic, approximately 9% of adult New Yorkers experienced symptoms of depression each year. At the height of the pandemic, 44% of adult New Yorkers reported symptoms of anxiety due to COVID-19, 36% reported symptoms of depression, and 35% of adults with children reported that the emotional or behavioral health of a child has been negatively affected. And even before pandemic, New Yorkers of color were at greater risk of mental health challenges yet received less mental health care than white New Yorkers – the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated these disparities.

The Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health will ensure that this commitment remains a lasting part of City government. The new Office will continue ThriveNYC’s practice of regularly publishing a [detailed programmatic budget](#) and [reach and impact data](#) for each of its programs.

The new Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health builds on the strong foundation of ThriveNYC. Since launching in 2015, ThriveNYC has launched dozens of new programs, implemented by thirteen City agencies and nearly 200 community-based organizations, reaching hundreds of thousands of people every year. For decades, uneven and insufficient federal and state funding for mental health services left hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers without care. ThriveNYC represented the first investment in New York City’s history to close gaps in services, expand where, when and how we deliver mental health support, and work toward a system that reaches all New Yorkers.

“For more than five years, ThriveNYC has added innovative mental health support so more New Yorkers can get the care they need, whenever, wherever, and however they need it,” said **Susan Herman, the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health**. “Building on this strong foundation, the new Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health will continue to invest in community-based strategies that demonstrate the City’s commitment to mental health for all.

“Mental health resources have never been more important or urgent,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “We have proven what works and we now have an opportunity to give these services the resources they need to reach all New Yorkers.”

“NYC Health + Hospitals is honored to provide more than 50 percent of the critical mental health care in the City, regardless of ability to pay, immigration status, and other demographics that often make people feel excluded from comprehensive, culturally sensitive care,” said **NYC Health + Hospitals President and CEO Mitchell Katz, MD**. “Over the years, the City’s public health system has worked tirelessly to ensure that every door remains open for New Yorkers suffering from mental health issues to substance use disorders and more have the affordable access they need to live healthy and full lives. We look forward to continuing this important work with our sister agencies and make sure this crucial work grows and impacts people’s lives.”

“Providing critically needed services to families is part of ACS’ mission in keeping children safe and families supported, and that’s why we are so supportive of the Mental Health for All initiative,” said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. “I applaud Mayor de Blasio and First Lady McCray for this work, which will positively impact the lives of many New Yorkers.”

"The Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity is thrilled to partner with CUNY's School of Professional Studies to launch the Community Behavioral Health Academy," said **Matthew Klein, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity**. “Community-based organizations have long been on the frontlines of the fight to improve mental health. The Academy builds on NYC Opportunity's evaluation findings to equip them with the skills and tools they need to help us respond to the lasting impacts of COVID-19 and the long history of structural racism, discrimination, and disinvestment."

"Our city's COVID-19 response and recovery is three-fold – mental, physical, and economic. Today's announcement shifts the focus onto the biggest challenge that we face even prior to the pandemic, ensuring that mental health support is accessible to all New Yorkers – particularly in Black and Brown communities that have been disproportionately affected by violence, health disparities, the loss of loved ones and housing instability. By centralizing mental health resources and providers while creating a pipeline for providers, we are putting our best forward amid a crisis that has taken a devastating toll on New Yorkers of all ages and professions," said **Council Member Farah N. Louis, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addictions**.

“CUNY SPS is very excited to be a part of the development of the Community Behavioral Health Academy,” said **John Mogulescu, Dean of the CUNY School of Professional Studies**. “Particularly after last year, when COVID-19 stormed the city, the need to provide New Yorkers with mental health support is more critical than ever. What we have endured as a city will be with us for many years and the Academy will serve a major role in helping us to address and recover from this trauma. We are looking forward to collaborating on this important initiative with our partners at the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity.”

"With today's actions, New York City continues to be at the forefront of integrating mental health into its COVID-19 response and recovery," said **former U.S. Rep. and founder of The**

**Kennedy Forum, Patrick J. Kennedy.** "Through their historic investments in mental health, Mayor de Blasio and First Lady McCray have strengthened the City's 'human infrastructure,' which will benefit New Yorkers for generations to come."

“Protecting and enhancing mental health is everyone’s interest. For too long, our public officials have been consumed by a focus on expensive, deep-end interventions, forgetting that every “Stage 4” crisis today could have been averted by better interventions long before stage four. Mayor de Blasio and First Lady McCray are spot on in turning our attention to the importance of mental health for all people at all stages of life, and for working to ensure that every constituent of theirs has an upstream opportunity to access the mental health services and supports they need and want,” said **Paul Gionfriddo, President and CEO of Mental Health America.**

“Continuing to raise up the importance of mental health and destigmatizing preventative services and treatment is critically important. Strengthening, adequately resourcing, and integrating the network of providers into these efforts is essential to the success of these vital efforts,” said **Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York.**

“New York City does what other governments only talk about. Mayor de Blasio and First Lady McCray use every opportunity to enhance the mental health of New Yorkers. And now they’re paving the way for the next administration to do the same. They have set the bar high and leave a legacy that we must nurture and build upon,” said **Linda Rosenberg MSW, Columbia University Department of Psychiatry.**

“The impact of COVID-19 on New York City residents will be felt for years,” said **Kimberly Williams, President & CEO of Vibrant Emotional Health.** “Providing a coordinated and city-wide effort to strengthen and increase access to mental health supports will help to ensure New Yorkers not only recover, but flourish.”

“The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) applauds the creation of the New York City Mayor’s Office of Mental Health Innovation,” said **Daniel H. Gillison Jr, NAMI CEO.** “The city is making mental health issues a priority, which shows a lasting commitment to provide mental health for all. The time is now for leaders at all levels – community, state and federal government – to follow the precedent set by New York City to ensure that mental health is front and center in COVID-19 recovery efforts to make it easier for people to find the help they need so no one feels alone in their struggle.”

###