



Brett R. Friedman, New York State Medicaid Director  
NYS Department of Health – Office of Health Insurance Programs  
99 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY

**January 27, 2022**

Dear Director Friedman:

On behalf of the 107 members of the New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, I want to *thank you* for your continued leadership and dedication to New Yorkers facing mental health and/or substance use disorder challenges.

I am writing today seeking your assistance on a critical matter that is time sensitive and of great importance to the individuals with behavioral health challenges we serve.

At the present time, 13 organizations around the state are participating in a federal Demonstration Program – the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Program (CCBHC) that expands states' capacity to provide access to integrated, evidence-based services for New Yorkers including rapid response to address behavioral crises and state of the art Medication Assisted Treatment.

In addition to the 13 CCBHC Demo agencies, several years ago SAMHSA initiated a direct contract grant program allowing provider agencies that want to organize their programs and services according to the CCBHC model and standards to compete for grant –funded resources that help them offer care in a like manner to the CCBHC Demonstration model. These agencies have set up new programs and services and hope ultimately to be designated as a CCBHC Demo agency. At the present time, there are approximately 128 SAMHSA 'Expansion Grant' agencies across the country whose current SAMHSA grants are set to expire on **4/30/22** unless SAMHSA issues an RFP and makes awards almost immediately. The RFP is now two months late.

Across New York, there are 30 SAMHSA Expansion Grants set to expire on **4/30/22**. I am aware of several individuals who have spoken with SAMHSA representatives who say there is currently **no date certain for release of the RFP**.

I am writing today to request your immediate assistance to ensure that thousands of New Yorkers who are currently receiving integrated, evidence-based mental health and substance use disorder services across the state via CCBHC Expansion Grant agencies will not experience disruptions in care due to a significant delay in the SAMSHA Expansion Grant awards process. As you know, there are long wait lists for Outpatient Clinic and other service across the state. Any delay or denial of care for those already being served by a CCBHC Expansion Grant program would jeopardize continuity of care, disrupt access to life saving Medication Assisted Treatment, and jeopardize the recovery of many vulnerable New Yorkers.

Yesterday, the members of the NYS Council came together for our weekly Member Support call. We were fortunate to be joined by Emil Slane from OMH. One of our members brought up the situation facing her agency that must now make plans to close a CCBHC Expansion Grant Program, effective 4/30. They must issue termination notices to valued staff in less than two months. In doing so, they risk losing staff in the middle of a serious workforce shortage. They must also try to find alternative services for the individuals they currently serve, but knowing this is highly unlikely given their own agency wait list and severely limited capacity in their region

When we spoke with Emil, we requested immediate assistance from the Office of Mental Health. We know Commissioner Sullivan and her staff are deeply committed to the objectives of the CCBHC Program, however we let Emil know we would be seeking assistance from the Department of Health. It is our hope OMH has already reached out to you, but our members wanted me to contact you today to inform you of this crisis and request your help.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you at your earliest convenience. We stand ready to assist OMH, OASAS and DoH in any way possible.

Respectfully,  
Lauri Cole, Executive Director

cc: Dr. Ann Marie Sullivan  
Dr. Chinazo Cunningham