

February 7, 2024

James V. McDonald MD, MPH
Commissioner
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12237

Ann Marie T. Sullivan, MD
Commissioner
New York State Office of Mental Health
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, NY 12229

Kerri E. Neifeld
Commissioner
New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, NY 12229

Chinazo O. Cunningham, MD, MS
Commissioner
Office of Addiction Services and Supports
1450 Western Avenue
Albany, NY 12203

Dear Commissioners McDonald, Sullivan, Neifeld and Cunningham:

Eleven associations representing a diverse range of healthcare providers statewide, including local mental hygiene directors, write to express our ongoing concern with complex case discharge delays and offer policy recommendations to begin addressing this growing issue.

New Yorkers with complex care needs face increasing delays in access to care — often caught in limbo in hospitals for weeks, months or even years after they are ready for discharge. These delays are devastating for patients and their loved ones and disrupt access to care for others at a tremendous, avoidable cost to the entire system.

We have worked with a broad group of statewide associations to develop recommendations aimed at creating a more person-centered, equitable healthcare system designed to serve children and adults living with complex care needs as the expectation, rather than the exception. Our recommendations focus on creating and sustaining adequate care options, eliminating payment obstacles and advancing ways to more easily navigate multi-agency services.

The reasons for care delays are diverse and complex, and we strongly urge the state to increase visibility of the issue and advance coordinated solutions.

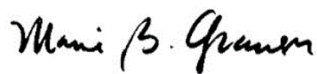
We recommend the following actions be prioritized:

- **Crisis respite transition programs:** Children and adults living with intellectual/developmental disability, regardless of their enrollment in Office for People with Developmental Disability services, should be able to readily access essential care as they wait for OPWDD eligibility applications to be processed and services to become available. NYC Health + Hospitals and NYC ARC have piloted such a program with demonstrated success. We urge the state to support the expansion of crisis respite transition programs, including programs for children and adolescents, in regions statewide.
- **Sustainable reimbursement models:** Outdated payment rates have not kept up with rising costs, putting care across the continuum in jeopardy. State policymakers should update and maintain Medicaid rates that are adequate to cover the cost of care for residential and community-based services.
- **Formalized multi-agency processes:** Healthcare providers continue to report major delays in securing services for children and adults with co-occurring conditions, especially for individuals living with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. State policymakers should establish formal agency-neutral guidelines to escalate coordination of services for individuals and families whose care needs may require multi-agency involvement. This coordination should occur within a set timeframe, with oversight by executive-level staff and consistent with the goals and treatment preferences of those being served.

We appreciate your offices' continued engagement in discussing solutions and exploring new initiatives. We welcome the opportunity to review our recommendations in further detail and stand fully committed to partnering with your offices to develop and implement solutions.

Should you have any questions about complex case discharge delays or our recommendations, please contact Sarah DuVall, director, behavioral health, Healthcare Association of New York State, at 518.431.7769 or sduvall@hanys.org.

Sincerely,



Bea Grause, RN, JD
President, Healthcare Association of New York State



Mike Alvaro
President and Chief Executive Officer, Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State, Inc.



Lisa Newcomb
Executive Director, Empire State Association of Assisted Living

Al Cardillo

Al Cardillo
President and Chief Executive Officer, Home Care Association of New York State

James W. Clyne Jr.

James W. Clyne Jr.
President and Chief Executive Officer, LeadingAge New York

Glenn Liebman

Glenn Liebman
Chief Executive Officer, Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

Michael Seereiter

Michael Seereiter
President and Chief Executive Officer, New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation

Kayleigh Zaloga

Kayleigh Zaloga
President and Chief Executive Officer, NYS Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health

Courtney L. David

Courtney L. David
Executive Director, NYS Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, Inc.

Lauri Cole

Lauri Cole, LMSW
Executive Director, NYS Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare

Stephen B. Hanse

Stephen B. Hanse, Esq.
President and Chief Executive Officer, NYS Health Facilities Association | NYS Center for Assisted Living

Cc:
Vanessa Threatte
Suzanne Miles-Gustave, Esq.
Greg Olsen