

Trauma: Helping communities cope after mass violence

OMH webinar series part of program to help mental health providers after recent mass shootings

Mass shootings during the past several weeks in Buffalo and elsewhere have traumatized communities throughout the state and prompted an unprecedented response in crisis services by mental health professionals.

OMH and New York State have responded with extensive public outreach, state aid to communities, coordination of care resources, and valuable information and resources on addressing trauma.

Impact of Hate-Based Violence

- Hate-based violence threatens or harms the victims, and also is intended to send a message to the entire community to which the victims belong.
- The traumatic effect is compounded for the group, in this case Black and African Americans, and related groups, in this case other racial, ethnic, and religious minority groups.
- For Black communities and communities of color, hate-based violence exacerbates ongoing racial trauma in the historical context of enslavement, structural inequity, historical and ongoing racial violence, and staggering loss.
- There are higher barriers to accessing treatment.

NEW YORK STATE Office of Mental Health

Above: Panelists for the webinar series, from top left: Steven Moskowitz, Sarah Kuriakose, Keith A. Alford, and Sidney Hankerson. Presenting is Matthew Canuteson, moderator.

“The tragedy in Buffalo comes at a time when New York’s communities of color are already living through disproportionate effects of racism, violence, poverty and COVID-19 death and infection rates,” said **OMH Commissioner Ann Sullivan, MD**. “The effects of events like this run deep and well beyond the City of Buffalo and Erie County. The threat of violence, discrimination and racist rhetoric all have a strong, negative impact on a person’s emotional and mental health.”

Webinar series addressing trauma

OMH conducted a statewide webinar on May 18, focusing on helping community leaders – such as clergy, education officials, local government, public safety leads, and behavioral health providers - with understanding how to assist individuals/families/youth coping with the grief and trauma caused by this horrific event.

The presentation, and a second one on May 25, provided general information about the mental health effects of racism and violence, crisis response, and helping others cope with grief and trauma. Specific information focused on children and youth. While it discussed the impact of the tragic event in Buffalo, the focus was statewide.

A third webinar on May 25 addressed the specific needs of parents, educators and other systems and programs that serve children and youth – such as pediatric primary care, afterschool and summer programs, faith-based organizations, and child welfare and juvenile justice. Topics included understanding common reactions in children and youth, supporting immediate and long-term needs, and helping parents and caregivers support themselves.

Panelists for the series:

- **Steven Moskowitz** OMH Bureau of Emergency Preparedness and Response.
- **Sarah Kuriakose**, PhD, BCBA-D, OMH Associate Commissioner, Division of Integrated Community Services for Children and Families.
- **Keith A. Alford**, PhD, ACSW, Dean and Professor of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work.
- **Sidney Hankerson**, MD, MBA, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Associate Professor and Vice Chair, Department of Psychiatry, Director, Mental Health Equity Research, Department of Population Health.

Moderator for the series was **Matthew Canuteson**, MA, OMH Chief Diversity Officer.



Memorial of flowers and dove cut-outs with the names of the victims of the May 14, 2022, mass shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo. Val Dunne Photography/Shutterstock.

State resources for communities

Meanwhile, **Governor Kathy Hochul** made available resources to support the Buffalo community, including additional state investments, rides to local grocery stores, and funding to cover funeral expenses for victims.

The Governor directed that \$2.8 million in federal and state funding be available to provide additional services and support to individuals and families affected by the shooting. The state Office of Victim Services (OVS) will administer the funding from the state Division of Criminal Justice Services, and the state's Community Violence Intervention Act, which annually designates a portion of the state's federal Victims of Crime Act funding for programs serving communities hardest hit by gun violence.

OVS staff went to Buffalo to help victims and families obtain financial assistance and provide information about how service providers can access the additional funding to expand services and support for victims of violence. OVS staff will be set up in a closed location accessible only to victims and their families in order to protect victims' privacy and preserve confidentiality. The agency provides a critical safety net and can pay for expenses resulting from a crime when individuals have no other way to pay for them, including funeral and burial expenses, medical and counseling costs, among other expenses, and can assist victims and families with lost wages and loss of support.

The Office of Victim Services can cover funeral and burial expenses up to \$6,000. National Action Network has offered to cover any additional funeral expenses for the families of the victims of the shooting and New York State is closely coordinating to ensure that the money is getting to those who need it.

Additionally, Governor arranged for a partnership with ride-share companies Lyft and Uber to provide rides to-and-from local grocery stores. The site of the shooting was located in a so-called "food desert" and served as the lone supermarket within walking distance for many Buffalonians. Riders in the zip codes 14208 and 14209 can receive a ride to and from two local grocery stores: Tops Friendly Markets (425 Niagara Street, Buffalo) and Price Rite (250 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo). Lyft riders can use the code 'BuffaloLyftUp' for up to \$25 in the Lyft app. Uber riders can use the code 'SHOPBUF' in the Uber app for up to \$20 off a ride, with a maximum of eight rides per customer.

Recordings and slides of the webinars and other emergency mental health resources are available on the OMH its website at: https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/disaster_resources/emergency-mental-health-resources.html.

OMH provides funding for NY State initiatives

Grants to provide vital support on the local level

This spring OMH issued a series of grants to support initiatives to expand the outreach of mental health services throughout the state. Last month, OMH awarded \$1 million to the **Mental Health Association in New York State** (MHANYS) to conduct Youth Mental Health First Aid training to adults who regularly interact with young people - including healthcare providers, teachers, clergy, parents, and first responders. Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches participants how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among children and adolescents. Training focuses on how to best help young people who may be experiencing a mental health issue or a substance abuse problem. Studies show that those who trained in Mental Health First Aid have greater confidence in providing help to others, greater likelihood of advising people to seek professional help, improved concordance with health professionals about treatments, and decreased stigmatizing attitudes.



MHANYS plans to conduct 40 in-person training sessions and 120 virtual sessions to train about 3,600 participants. It will also provide instruction to individuals who wish to deliver Youth Mental Health First Aid training themselves. MHANYS will host two “Train the Trainer” sessions, which will prepare up to 32 people to become Youth Mental Health First Aid trainers. Funding for the award was provided through expansion of the federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grant, which is administered by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (SAMHSA).

Reducing stigma

OMH awarded seven grants totaling \$105,000 to support community-based organizations in their efforts to address and reduce the stigma often associated with mental illness. Funding was provided through the voluntary tax check-off program launched in 2016, which allows taxpayers to contribute easily to the “**Mental Illness Anti-Stigma Fund**” when filing their New York State taxes. Awardees include:

- **Yates Community Services**
- **United Way of Dutchess-Orange Region**
- **Integrated Community Alternatives Network**
- **Special Treatment and Research Program/ SUNY Downstate**
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness - NYC**
- **Montefiore and Adelphi University**
- **Hands Across Long Island**



Each agency has experience serving persons with mental illness and are recognized for their work serving underserved, under-represented and/or minority populations. To be considered, projects need to address one or more of these goals:

- **Educational Activities** - Anti-stigma activities taking place in educational institutions, including colleges and universities, some of which deny admission to people due to their mental health histories. This includes the creation of materials to correct inaccurate depictions of mental illness, which can prevent students with mental illness from fully participating in the educational experience.
- **Underserved Populations** - Activities that provide innovative, culturally relevant approaches to reducing stigma in underserved populations.
- **Housing** - Activities intended to combat stigma and discrimination in housing which prevent people with mental illness from obtaining and maintaining safe and affordable housing. Targeted audiences may include landlords, homeowners, management companies serving landlords and owners, building superintends and billing/rent collection personnel.
- **Employment** - Activities intended to combat stigma and discrimination in the workplace which make it difficult for people living with mental illness to find and keep meaningful jobs. Targeted audiences may include corporate employers, Department of Labor representatives and employment/staffing agencies.
- **Parenting** - Activities intended to combat the stigma and discrimination experienced by individuals with mental illness who are also parents.

- **Media** - Activities intended to combat the stigma, discrimination, and negative stereotypes in the media. This could also include social media.
- **Health Care** - Activities intended to combat stigma and discrimination in the health care system that leads to people with mental illness not receiving the health care they need.

Activities that agencies can conduct include targeted messaging and advertising, production of printed materials, speakers, training, contact with people with lived experience, and multimedia productions. Funding cannot be used to cover the cost of food, conference travel, or other purchases precluded by law or regulation.

Addiction and mental health services training

New law provides support for first responders



Legislation signed June by **Governor Kathy Hochul** provides training for addiction and mental health services -- including crisis intervention team training, mental health first aid, implicit bias and naloxone training, to firefighters and emergency medical services personnel in regions where crisis stabilization centers are located. This law will ensure that the appropriate emergency services personnel complete the most up-to-date training in issues related to addiction and mental health issues. This training is needed to address the growing mental health crisis and will be especially necessary in catchment areas of crisis stabilization centers.

According to the National Council for Behavioral Health, drug overdoses and suicides have overtaken traffic accidents as the two leading causes of death among Americans ages 25 to 44. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention also states that suicide is the 12th leading cause of death in New York. In 2020, for every 100,000 New Yorkers, approximately eight people lost their life to suicide; it is the second leading cause of death for people between the ages of 10 and 34 years old; and for individuals between the ages of 35 and 54, suicide is the fourth leading cause of death.

Over the past several years, New York State has developed a comprehensive mental health crisis response system, which includes short term crisis residences, crisis respite services, comprehensive psychiatric emergency programs, mobile crisis teams, and crisis intervention training. Last year's State Budget authorized the establishment of crisis stabilization centers to divert individuals away from hospitalization if they are experiencing or at risk of a mental health crisis, including through the voluntary transport of individuals by law enforcement and emergency medical services. The training required by this bill is a critical tool in ensuring crisis stabilization centers are fully utilized.

Supportive housing

Two developments are completed, one is underway

For people living with and recovering from mental illness, supportive housing plays a crucial role. A safe and stable home, with access to appropriate services, promotes resilience and provides a foundation that allows people with mental illness to live successfully in their own community. OMH recently part in the grand opening of two housing projects and the groundbreaking for another.

Landy Court in Yonkers

OMH Commissioner Ann Sullivan, MD (second from right), at the ribbon-cutting for **Landy Court**, a complex that replaces vacant land and abandoned buildings in downtown Yonkers with a seven-story residence that includes 80 affordable apartment and include homes reserved for formerly unhoused residents who will have access to on-site supportive services. The project will provide 48 individuals and families. It consists of 80 apartments for households earning at or below 60 percent of the Area Median Income.



Residents of the supportive apartments will receive services through **St. Joseph's Medical Center** – including individual case management, educational services, employment assistance, psychiatric and behavioral health coordination and substance abuse support, along with referral services with the hospital's in-network array of programs. Residential amenities include a community room with a kitchen, staff offices, an exercise room, a library, laundry facilities, and a rooftop garden. The development also includes 2,200 square feet for social services office space to be used by St. Joseph's and 34 parking spaces. Landy Court is located within walking distance of shopping, restaurants, bus lines, parks, municipal services, and the St. Joseph's main hospital campus. Financing for the development came through HCR, OTDA, and OMH. OMH also provided funding for rental subsidies and supportive services.

West End Heights in Ithaca

Christopher W. Smith, PhD (far left), OMH Associate Commissioner, Adult Community Care Group, Division of Adult Services, took part in the ribbon-cutting for **West End Heights**, an affordable and supportive housing development in Ithaca. The project is a five-story, elevator building with 60 one-bedroom apartments adjacent to Washington Park. Five aging buildings were demolished to clear the site for the new building, which also contains ground floor office space for the developer and supportive service provider, Lakeview Health Services, Inc.



Fifty-four of the apartments are for households earning at or below 50 percent of the Area Median Income and six apartments are reserved for those making at or below 60 percent AMI. Twenty apartments are set aside for people who will have access to rental subsidies and supportive services funded by OMH. An additional 18 apartments funded through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative will serve formerly homeless individuals who will receive rental subsidies and tailored services, such as counseling and trauma recovery, administered by OMH. Amenities include laundry facilities, a community room, a lounge area on each floor, courtyard, and 24-hour secured entrance. The development is in a walkable neighborhood and near public bus lines, including ADA Paratransit, and shopping. State funding came from **New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR)**, **Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)**, **New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)**, the **Community Preservation Corporation**, and the **Tompkins County Community Housing Development Fund**. This project is part of "**Southern Tier Soaring**," the region's comprehensive blueprint to generate economic growth and community development. The regionally designed plan focuses on attracting a talented workforce, growing business, and driving innovation.

Moyer Carriage Lofts in Syracuse

Greg Redmond (fourth from the left), Mental Health Program Specialist from the OMH Central New York Field Office, joined in the groundbreaking for the **Moyer Carriage Lofts**, an affordable and supportive housing development in Syracuse. This project will convert the historic four-building Moyer Factory complex into 128 apartments and ground floor commercial space, with 50 homes reserved for individuals and families in need of supportive services.



Four interconnected buildings will undergo a gut rehabilitation, but exterior architectural details will remain intact. The project marks a historic transformation for the Moyer Factory complex, which was built in 1881 but has been vacant since 2005. All apartments will be affordable to households earning at or below 60 percent of the Area Median Income. 50 apartments will be designated as supportive units, where residents will have access to on-site services funded through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative and administered by OMH. Supportive services will include counseling and case management. Residential amenities will include a landscaped private courtyard, laundry room, secure entrance community room, program offices, and off-street parking. State financing will be from HCR, the **New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation**, **Department of Environmental Conservation**, OMH and the **city of Syracuse**. The development team is a joint venture between **Housing Visions** and **Redev CNY LLC**. The project is part of "**CNY Rising**," the region's comprehensive blueprint to generate economic growth and community development that focuses on capitalizing on global market opportunities, strengthening entrepreneurship and creating an inclusive economy.

These projects are part of Governor Hochul's statewide plan to make housing more affordable, equitable, and stable. In the 2022-23 State Budget, the Governor secured a new \$25 billion, five-year, comprehensive housing plan that will increase housing supply by creating or preserving 100,000 affordable homes across New York, including 10,000 with support services for vulnerable populations, plus the electrification of an additional 50,000 homes.

Commissioner's Community Care Awards

Recognizing OMH's partners who are making a difference

OMH honored the work of four individuals and organizations in June with its annual **Commissioner's Community Care Awards**. The awards recognize the extraordinary achievements of individuals and organizations who have furthered the OMH mission and made a positive contribution to the mental health system in their communities. "OMH has many great partners who are critical to the success of our efforts to increase access to community-based services and improve health outcomes for people living with mental illness," said Commissioner Sullivan. "Each of these recipients have been extraordinary advocates and partners are doing great work for the people in their community, for which we are extremely grateful."

This year's honorees



Jason Gamble, Program Manager 2 for Supportive Housing for DePaul Community Services. Gamble is responsible for the oversight of the DePaul Supportive Housing designated site, which includes managing all aspects of the program, including ensuring quality care for the tenants, the effective supervision of staff and completing the necessary reporting requirements. He has been the primary marketer of the program and has been responsible for creating and maintaining relationships with all referral agencies. He has offered advice to program applicants regarding financial applications or recertifications and has taken the lead on social activities that are available to both program and community tenants. Gamble has distinguished himself as a tireless advocate for the people he serves, finding creative ways to reach people who have been resistant to treatment.



Dr. Don Kamin, a clinical psychologist who collaborates with law enforcement, mental health system representatives, and other community partners to address the needs of individuals with mental illness and their family members through system reform and training initiatives. Kamin serves as the Senior Advisor on Mental Health and Criminal Justice for the Monroe County Office of Mental Health, is a Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Rochester Medical Center and an adjunct Professor of Criminal Justice at Roberts Wesleyan College and is on the Board of Directors of CIT International. As Director of the Institute for Police, Mental Health and Community Collaboration, he's working closely with the OMH to develop Crisis Intervention Team programs throughout

the state. Dr. Kamin also coordinates a telehealth project that connects police intervening with individuals in crisis to mental health professionals via iPads. A former Police Academy Instructor, Dr. Kamin assisted in the development of the first CIT program in New York in Rochester in 2004.



Nancy Manigat, Chief Operating Officer of CN Guidance and Counseling. Manigat has helped CN Guidance and Counseling to grow in scope and quality of services. The agency offers an array of comprehensive mental health services, as well as services for individuals with co-occurring disorders. The agency has teamed up with OMH to develop one of the first Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams in the nation to focus specifically on youth. These teams reach out to and engage vulnerable children with mental illness who have had difficulty using services provided by traditional treatment providers in the past. CN Guidance also offers congregate, apartment treatment and supportive housing and clinic services. It is the first demonstration project on Long Island to offer Certified Community Behavioral Health Services.

Baltic Street AEH, Inc. and **Community Access**, two agencies that offer evidence-based peer support services that foster positive relationships with Adult Home residents based on empathy, trust, hope and health. The agencies are working with OMH to provide Adult Home residents in New York City with appropriate housing alternatives, providing outreach, engagement, wellness planning, and transitional and community support and community adjustment services. The agencies are an integral part of the success in helping nearly 1,200 Adult Home residents make the transition to supported housing in the community.



OMH's Community Care Awards were created in 2019 to highlight OMH's partners and stakeholders in local communities throughout the state that are helping to identify and eliminate gaps in services and are working to build strong community-based behavioral healthcare systems. Input from these local partners helps OMH better understand regional needs and implement programs that will help people on the road to recovery from mental illness live their lives with a greater degree of independence and dignity.

Systems of Care Summit

Highlighting collaboration on behalf of children and families



OMH was one of the organizers of the 2022 **Systems of Care Summit** June 14 and 15 in Albany. Taking part were representatives from 39 counties, six state agencies, advocacy and member organizations focused on children, and family members and youth. Participants shared best practices and took part in planning strategies to strengthen collaboration.

The "systems of care" service approach builds partnerships to create a broad, integrated process for meeting families' multiple needs. Many children and youth in the child welfare system and those at-risk of abuse and neglect have a variety of physical, mental, social, emotional, educational, and developmental needs, according to the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau**. Child welfare professionals have worked with their counterparts in other agencies for years to piece together the services available for these children and youth and their families.

The New York State Systems of Care program is a partnership between OMH and other state child-serving agencies to:

- Lead the implementation and strengthening of the Systems of Care framework throughout New York State.
- Create capacity for the statewide provision of High-Fidelity Wraparound within Health Homes Serving Children.
- Support school district mental health systems' improvement and connection to the local System of Care.
- Ensure that family- and youth-driven practices are integrated across all services



Angela Keller, Systems of Care Project Director for OMH, opening the conference.



First-day keynote speaker **Gary Blau**, PhD, Senior Advisor for Children, Youth and Families at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, giving an update on his agency's activities.



Second-day keynote speaker **Jody Levison-Johnson**, PhD, President and CEO of Social Current, discussing how her organization works to activate the power of the social sector to create a unified, intrepid, just, and purposeful network so that all people can thrive.

Summit on Mental Wellness in Construction

OMH's Suicide Prevention Center hosts first-ever event



Construction companies and labor unions from throughout New York State recently gathered in Albany for the first-ever New York State Mental Wellness in Construction Summit, hosted by OMH's Suicide Prevention Center (SPCNY).

United Suicide Survivors International's **Sally Spencer-Thomas, PsyD**, and author and speaker **Sarah Gaer, MA**, provided an engaging and in-depth presentation on strategies for suicide prevention in the construction industry. They also discussed the many ways to better promote mental wellness at attendee's respective organizations.

"Americans spend much of their lives connected to work," said **Jay Carruthers, MD**, SPCNY Director. "Creating a culture of workplace caring and wellness is essential, and the construction organizations participating in today's summit are leading the way. Today's speakers did an excellent job raising awareness and facilitating an open and honest discussion around the many factors that impact the mental wellness of construction workers."

Carruthers said that now is the time to take concrete actions toward supporting mental wellness and preventing suicide in the construction industry – an industry with one of the highest suicide rates in the nation. New York State data suggests construction workers die by suicide at a rate that is six-times greater than the general population. Research suggests a construction worker is five-times more likely to die by suicide than die on the job.

"We need to address this disparity," he added. "It's time for action and we're confident that the attendees will take some of what they learned at the summit back to their organizations to help lay the groundwork to improve employee mental wellness and promote psychological safety."

A small group of organizations that attended the summit will be selected to complete a Helping Our People Elevate Through Tough Times (H.O.P.E.) Certificate, a six-month certification process to be one of the first "suicide-informed" organizations in the United States.

988 is Almost Here!

New Suicide and Crisis Lifeline coming July 16

988 is the new FCC-designated three-digit number that connects people to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. It will be available nationwide for people to call, chat, or text on July 16, 2022.

What is 988?

988 is more than just a number. It is a direct connection to compassionate and accessible care. When you call, text, or chat 988 you are connected to trained counselors that are part of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network.

People can contact 988 for support with many things: substance use, depression, emotional distress, anxiety, stress caused by financial worries, relationships, sexual identity, abuse, mental and physical illness, and loneliness, to name a few.

New York's 988 Coalition

Over the past year, New York has been working with a large coalition of community stakeholders to plan for launch of 988 in July 2022. Our coalition members represent New York's diverse population. The group of individuals represented in the Statewide Coalition, comprised of state agencies, peers, counties, advocates, vulnerable populations, law enforcement, 911 representatives, emergency services, and more, have contributed their expertise and commitment to this planning and implementation. Their ongoing commitment, collaboration, and dedication to this groundbreaking work will make New York's implementation of 988 a success.

Learn More About 988

Want to learn more about 988? You can [sign up for the 988 Updates and Education Listserv](#) where we'll be releasing regular newsletters (preview at right) and providing updates about 988 in New York State. [Check out the first edition of the 988 Updates and Education Letter here.](#)

You can also learn more about 988 by visiting [OMH's 988 webpage](#) or [SAMHSA's 988 webpage](#).

