



Oversite-Preliminary Budget Hearing
Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction

Committee on Mental Health Disabilities and Addiction
The Honorable Diana Ayala, Chair

Testimony of
Christy Parque, President and CEO
The Coalition for Behavioral Health
March 20, 2018

My name is Christy Parque, and I am President and CEO of The Coalition for Behavioral Health (The Coalition). I am here to represent our member agencies that provide behavioral health services in the communities where New Yorkers live and work. We are grateful for this opportunity to offer our thoughts on the fiscal 2019 Preliminary Budget as it pertains to behavioral health services in New York City and how the New York City Council can continue as they have so graciously done in past years to support the efforts of providers on the front lines.

The Coalition is the umbrella advocacy and training organization of New York's behavioral health community, representing over 140 non-profit community-based agencies that serve more than 450,000 consumers. Our members serve the entire continuum of behavioral health care in every neighborhood of New York City. Coalition members provide access to the range of outpatient mental health and substance use services, supportive housing, crisis intervention, peer support services, employment readiness, Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS), Club Houses, education and nutritional services, as well as many other supports that promote recovery. The Coalition also trains on average 3,500 human services providers annually on cutting edge and proven clinical and best business practices through generous support from the New York City Council, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), and in conjunction with foundations and leaders from the behavioral health sector.

The Coalition, founded in 1972, has struggled to provide comprehensive high quality mental health and substance use services to affected individuals and their families for almost 50 years. Yet, although we find ourselves in the midst of a transformation that places a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of people in their communities, at the same time it also seeks to improve efficiencies and outcomes in the delivery of Medicaid services by implementing a value based payment system (VBP). Medicaid is the primary revenue for most of our sector and while we agree with the goals of VBP introducing a new, and complicated payment system increases risk in an already challenging time for the behavioral health sector. The Coalition thoroughly embraces innovation and is an active partner with the City, and State in ensuring that this is accomplished in a manner that enhances community stability and protects the viability of clinics and other service providers. Our members comprise an intricate network of safety-net providers throughout the neighborhoods they serve, caring for the most vulnerable among us. It is critical that this network remain strong and intact if it is to reach these goals.

The Coalition's budget priorities reflect this reality. We strongly support measures that preserve and strengthen community-based mental health and substance use programs through the reinvestment of resources in community-based services, the preservation of a sustainable workforce and the promotion of policies that prioritize consumers and through partnership with Thrive NYC and Healing NYC, New York City's laudable addition to mental health and substance use programs.

THRIVE NYC AND HEAL NYC:

We are grateful for the opportunity to offer our thoughts on Thrive NYC and Healing NYC, the two packages of multiple initiatives that comprise the first comprehensive compendium of municipal funded programs not only in New York City, but in the nation. We are pleased to report many members are participating in these programs to great success.

Firstly, we welcome the addition of new behavioral resources and the increase in access to behavioral health services for New Yorkers. For too long, too many people have gone without having their behavioral health needs met. Both Thrive NYC and Healing NYC rightly focus on getting more people into care by reducing and eliminating the stigma that accompanies mental illness and substance use and partnering with community resources where vulnerable people are more likely to access services.

One of our member agencies, Catholic Charities Neighborhood Services has contracted with Voces Latina, a community based organization assisting survivors of domestic violence. Catholic Charities provides supervision, oversight and has

introduced skills sets and knowledge of mental health modalities to the organization's staff, greatly increasing Voces Latina ability to effectively help their clients and expand services.

Another member agency, Jewish Association of Services for the Aged (JASA), was able to identify, select and gain entry to Senior Centers, introducing much needed behavioral health services to a very underserved population at high risk for behavioral health problems.

We laud Thrive NYC and Healing NYC for its strong grounding in data to drive the identification of the needs and the development of appropriate services to create strong and healthy individuals and communities. As providers, we understand how to improve and ensure the quality of our services through using outcomes data, and how important good data is for the imminent changes (VBP) to reimbursement for our services. Yet, we have heard that the reporting requirements can be extensive and reporting timelines inconsistent with effective reporting.

The Mental Health Service Corps helps fill yet another much needed resource to our sector which is experiencing a severe workforce shortage. Through Thrive NYC, Visiting Nurse Service (VNS) describes the Corps as a win-win. VNS has placed Corps members in communities where hiring is otherwise very difficult. The Corps members whose skills are developing in a real world context are fully integrated into VNS's caseloads. VNS prospectively views the experience as developing future employees and the bilingual requirement allows VNS to better serve immigrant communities.

We have heard from providers, however, that design and implementation of programs would have benefited from better planning and involvement of participating community providers to achieve full integration of new staff.

COMBATTING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC IN NEW YORK CITY

Recent, staggering reports on the numbers of New Yorkers dying from overdoses among the general population and among our most vulnerable subpopulations including young people and people who are homeless, are of grave concern. We are fortunate to have the leadership expressed by of Mayor Bill de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray in Healing NYC, the substance use counterpart of Thrive NYC. We are also grateful for the leadership Speaker Corey Johnson and Councilmember Diane Ayala, Chair of the Mental Health, Developmental Disability and Addiction Committee. The recent hearing called by Councilmember Ayala and Councilmember Steven Levin, Chair of the Committee on General Welfare focused on overdoses among NYC's Homeless population. Despite its singular focus, the hearing served as an example of the extent and urgency of the Opioid epidemic.

The Coalition is pleased that several bills are being considered by the NYC Council. While we will not go into detail on the individual bills, we do want to recognize and commend the NYC Council for all its efforts to focus on educating and steering primary resources to help individuals in crisis and for promoting de-stigmatizing those who use substances.

The Coalition also appreciates the increased allocation of \$38M available under Healing NYC for treatment sites, naloxone kits and establishing a peer program for individuals who survive overdoses. Peer support is a long established best practice of mental health providers. **The Coalition believes the appropriate and effective focus to reduce the epidemic should be on prevention and treatment.**

NON PROFIT WORKFORCE

Underlying the ability of community behavioral health to deliver comprehensive high quality services to every New Yorker in need is the strength of our workforce. The Coalition firmly believes the non-profit human services sector plays an essential role to ensure resilient individuals and healthy communities. The mental health community must offer a richness of programs, provided by a robust, stable community of providers. Yet, many organizations are underfunded and staff underpaid which negatively impacts recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

Unfortunately, there are not enough behavioral health providers to serve them. In NYC generally, there are 82 full time equivalent behavioral health professional in designated behavioral health shortage areas although only 30% of the total NYC population resides in designated behavioral health shortage areas. Estimates are that 118 more full time equivalent behavioral health professionals are needed to meet the demand.

Our staff are the heart and soul of the work of non-profits yet we do not compensate them for their value and professionalism because of inadequately funded government contracts and insufficient reimbursement rates.

We urge the City Council and the Mayor to come together to invest in the safety net of New York and supports the principles of the Human Services Advancement Strategy Group to stabilize the nonprofit human services sector.

- City agencies should allow contracted providers to suggest spending modifications in line with their budgets on a case-by- case basis.
- Agencies should actively communicate with providers whenever necessary in order to understand the methodology behind every model budget process.

- Increase City agency responsiveness to help contracted providers meet the needs of people and communities they serve.
- City agencies must provide reasonable timelines to providers as to when they may expect to receive funds throughout the model budget process and with all future human service contracts.

Financially stable organizations serve their communities and clients better. The City can begin to level the playing field and ensure a vital, vibrant safety net by enacting the following:

- Including trend factor/cost escalation formula in all new procurements for the duration of the contract, and developing a formula to increase existing contracts up to the following minimum:
 - ✓ 15% indirect cost rate
 - ✓ 37% fringe rate
 - ✓ 10% increase to occupancy cost
 - ✓ 15% increase to health insurance
 - ✓ 10% increase to casualty and liability insurance.

NYC COUNCIL DISCRETIONARY FUNDED MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

The Coalition is grateful for the longstanding support of the NY City Council through a suite of initiatives that create and perpetuate much needed system of services aimed to alleviate the behavioral health care gaps experienced by vulnerable people. Several of the original initiatives were base-lined during the previous administration, underlining the enduring need and importance of the initiatives to meet these needs. It is essential that the surviving initiatives continue as they serve very specific objectives for core populations as well as emerging needs.

These initiatives existed long before the current and valued initiatives by the administration. They are complementary to each other, and given the rising tides of threatened individuals and communities, it would be a mistake to cut, rather than add to the City's arsenal of measures aimed at reducing suffering.

The NYC Council Mental Health Initiatives received \$13,291,776. in fiscal 2018. The Coalition, along with our members and endorsers, request reinvestment and a funding increase to \$16,500,000.

The following is a list of and description of the people who rely on the community services of the MH Initiatives and our funding requests for fiscal 2019.

- Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations
- Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative
- Medicaid Redesign Transition
- Geriatric Mental Health
- Children Under Five
- Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health Services
- Autism Awareness

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS: We recommend an increase to \$2,000,000 from \$1,218,000 in fiscal 2018

CBOs and Advocacy Networks provide mental health programs, services, and referrals to the most difficult to serve, and clinical and practice management trainings to their providers.

COURT INVOLVED YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE: We recommend an increase to \$2,500,000 from \$2,050, 000 in fiscal 2018

The initiative’s goal is to keep youth out of the criminal justice system, help them to better understand their motivators and effectively turn their lives around before the negative life altering impact of incarceration. The initiative supports the Cross-over Youth Practice Model, a cross sector model developed for youth who are involved with both the courts and with other city agencies such as foster care.

MEDICAID REDESIGN: We recommend an increase to \$1,000,000 from \$500,00 in fiscal 2018.

The transformation of New York’s Medicaid program was designed to improve the delivery and funding of health services to the Medicaid population resulting in higher quality care, healthy populations and less costly care consistent with The Affordable Care Act. Among the changes to achieve the Triple Aim is the integration of behavioral and physical health care, and value based payment. This fund supports community-based organizations to enact changes to meet the laudable goals of Medicaid Redesign.

GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH: We recommend an increase to \$2,500,000 from \$1,905,540 in fiscal 2018

A disproportionate number of seniors and elderly people suffer from depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses. Further, many seniors find themselves increasingly isolated because of physical degeneration and the difficulties getting around the City. This initiative offers a wide range of services, including outreach, education, depression and substance use screening, assessment, individual and group counseling, referral to treatment and support for family caregivers in “non-clinical settings,” such as senior centers, drop-in centers, religious institutions, social clubs, homeless prevention programs, and individual homes.

CHILDREN UNDER FIVE: We recommend and increase to \$2,000,000 from \$1,002,000 in fiscal 2018

Left untreated, children's mental health issues are likely to worsen with serious ramifications on future development. This initiative funds community-based outpatient mental health clinics throughout the City to provide mental health treatment to children aged five years and younger who may lack the verbalization skills to speak about their experiences. Mental health treatment activities include screening and clinical evaluation; individual, small group, and child-parent psychotherapy; consultation with pediatricians, preschool teachers, and child welfare workers; and trauma-informed interventions including cutting edge treatment modalities, such as dance, art and movement therapy.

DEVELOPMENTAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES: We recommend and increase to \$2,500,000 from 2179390 in fiscal 2018

This initiative supports a range of programs and services targeted to individuals with chemical dependencies, developmental disabilities and serious mental illnesses as well as their families and caregivers. Funding is used for medically supervised outpatient services, transition management programs, Article 16 clinics, psychological clubs, and recreation programs.

AUTISM AWARENESS: We recommend an increase to \$4,000,000 from \$3,236,846 in fiscal 2018

Autism Awareness supports after school programming for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, including social skill development, weekend programming, and supportive services for families and caregivers. These programs fill crucial gaps, including services for people who have aged out of State funded programs.

REQUESTS FOR THE COALITION FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:

The Coalition gratefully acknowledges the discretionary funding it receives through the City Council's Mental Health Initiatives. For more than a decade, The Coalition has been able to help clinicians and administrators keep pace with change in the delivery and financing behavioral health care. We ask for your continued support.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATION INITIATIVE

One of the most important services that The Coalition provides is the Professional Learning Center funded through the Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Population Initiative. **It is through the City Council's support that The Coalition has been able to provide critical education, technical assistance and training – unique learning opportunities – for staff and leadership of publically funded behavioral health agencies.**

The Coalition for Behavioral Health's Professional Learning Center (PLC) educates behavioral health providers on cutting edge clinical and business practices to advance service delivery, improve health outcomes, and increase the fiscal viability of community-based organizations. **Most of the trainings offer Continuing Education credits for Social Workers and other licensed professionals.** Each year, we train nearly 600 health care providers in 20 different subject areas and expect to maintain this trend going forward. Our comprehensive training package is targeted to multiple levels of the behavioral health workforce, from practitioners to executives, to facilitate a top down and bottom up approach to system transformation.

Application Reference: 61373

COURT-INVOLVED YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

This funding supports programs that assess juveniles in the arrest process for mental health concerns and provide family counseling and respite services. **The initiative also supports efforts to connect court-involved youth to other CBO's familiar with the Courts, and other City and State agencies.**

The Coalition has provided technical assistance and training to the 15 agencies designated to receive funds under the CIY Initiative. The Coalition has trained nearly 560 individuals on 23 different subject areas in fiscal 2017 and plans to continue to deliver services to the CIY agency cohort. We are also expanding the services to providers who display an interest in working with justice-involved youth.

We believe that our assistance to designated agencies, in providing better access to mental health care for young people and their families, will result in a better quality of life for those served and reduce recidivism.

Application Reference: 61551

CONCLUSION:

The link between mental illness and substance use is incontestable. We cannot effectively address the opioid and heroin epidemic or the use of other substances, as well as other scourges, including homelessness, that plague our City, without addressing the mental health status of our community and its members. What's at stake makes it imperative that we use all possible resources and approaches. We must gather together in unison, utilize and support all of the resources available in our communities if we hope to achieve the goal of a healthy and well NYC.

The Coalition and its member agencies stand ready to continue partnering with the the NYC Council, and we again thank you for this opportunity.

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