



Office of the County Executive

Monroe County, New York

Adam J. Bello
County Executive

August 26, 2024

Dear Partner,

Right now, in Monroe County and across the region, youth with complex intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), behavioral health, and/or mental health needs are being repeatedly hospitalized for extended periods of time, languishing on waitlists, sitting in detention, and being driven into the foster care system due to the dearth of meaningful and available community-based services and supports and lack of residential options for those who need it. The current continuum of care is not meeting the needs of youth and families.

The lack of access to the right care at the right time is causing children to have extended stays of up to [243 days in a hospital setting](#). Families can wait months to years without adequate services in place. Community service options are limited and significantly understaffed. Assistance to manage unsafe behaviors has fallen upon law enforcement and hospitals, who become involved when a young person's needs exceed the capacity of caregivers at home and in schools. When youth do not meet medical criteria, safe discharges are often not possible given the dearth of community services, resulting in lengthy hospital stays. Capable, loving families are often in the position of choosing between taking unsafe children home or risking a CPS report if they refuse. No parent should be put in the position of placing their child in foster care to access the level of care their child needs.

The reality is that foster care, as a system of last resort, is ill-equipped to adequately serve youth with complex care and I/DD needs. Youth are shuffled between hospital systems and multiple foster care placements, resulting in additional trauma for youth and families. Hospitals become holding sites for youth as there are no community services or appropriate settings available in any system. Lengthy hospital stays without medical need are inappropriate and negatively impact children's growth and development. Foster parents have little specialized training in managing IDD-related behaviors yet are being asked to accommodate youth without adequate supports and services.

Residential options for those most in need have been steadily decreasing. From 2012-2022, more than half of New York's residential treatment facility beds for children and youth closed, resulting in just 274 beds as of 2022. OPWDD has been decreasing residential beds since 1987. NYSED currently cites just 10 Children's Residential Project programs across the state. Most child welfare residential options are not equipped to treat and serve youth with complex needs. Applications for admission are routinely denied. **After months of searching, Monroe County recently placed a youth out of state, over 7 hours away from his family, at the cost of \$1000 per day.**

110 County Office Building • 39 West Main Street • Rochester, New York 14614

(585) 753-1000 • fax: (585) 753-1014 • www.monroecounty.gov • e-mail countyexecutive@monroecounty.gov

This problem is not unique to Monroe County. The issue of extended hospital stays for those with complex behavioral and medical needs has recently been highlighted by the [Healthcare Association of New York State](#). No one system can solve this complicated challenge. It is time for leaders across systems and in diverse roles, in authentic partnership with young people and families, to urgently work together to generate and follow through on implementing practical solutions that will ensure youth and families have access to safe, appropriate, effective, and compassionate care and services that are close to home.

As a key leader and partner committed to the well-being of all youth and families across the state, your active participation in this effort is essential. Leaders from Monroe County, the NYS Senate, the NYS Assembly, UR Medicine, Rochester Regional Health, and our generous hosts, Hillside Children's Center, urge you to prioritize your attendance at this important event. We have invited cross-sector leaders from OPWDD, OMH, OCFS, DOH, and SED. Join your fellow lawmakers, agency leaders, service providers, advocates, parents, and other community partners from across the Western Region and Albany in this sprint to solutions as we assess the issues, learn from other state examples, commit to shared next steps, and begin to transform the policy and practice infrastructure to improve the experiences and outcomes for youth and families with unmet complex needs.

This convening is just the start. We need attendance from individuals with the authority to commit their agency, organization, or office to action and individuals who will carry the work forward as part of a newly formed Action Team. This process will help model a way forward for urgent collective action in other jurisdictions across the state.

*** Register by 12:00PM (noon) on September 4, 2024 using [this link](#).***

If you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to reach out to Christine Caruso, Monroe County Department of Human Services at 585.753.6430 or Christine.Caruso@dfa.state.ny.us

In partnership,



Adam J. Bello
Monroe County Executive



Call to Action!
Solutions for Youth with Unmet Complex Needs

110 County Office Building • 39 West Main Street • Rochester, New York 14614
(585) 753-1000 • fax: (585) 753-1014 • www.monroecounty.gov • e-mail countyexecutive@monroecounty.gov