



# New York Public Welfare Association, Inc.

*Founded in 1869*

130 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12210  
Sheila Harrigan, *Executive Director*

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November 4, 2022

Ann Marie T. Sullivan, M.D.  
Commissioner  
NYS Office for Mental Health  
44 Holland Avenue  
Albany, New York 12229

Dear Commissioner Sullivan:

We were delighted to have you join us at the state and local commissioners' convening in Lake George in October. Your remarks about OMH services were very informative. In particular, we appreciate your guidance suggesting that local commissioners direct specific issues in accessing services for individuals to the OMH field office contacts which are listed at this link: [Office of Mental Health Field Offices \(ny.gov\)](https://www.ny.gov/office-of-mental-health-field-offices)

At our NYPWA meeting yesterday, the local commissioners discussed what more would be helpful to them. They are aware of what services are identified as being statewide and yet they are often unable to obtain access to mental health services for children and adults who need assistance. Toward that end, local commissioners are requesting a list of OMH programs, the provider agencies that operate them, what counties they serve, and contact names and phone numbers. They already work closely with their local Directors of Community Services on mental health issues, and they are aware of OCFS and DOH programs but they are specifically asking for a list of OMH services in their areas.

**If we were to convey one message to you, it would be the urgency of the complex needs of children with mental health needs who are not able to access services including placement when needed.** The cross-systems issues continue to lead to children staying overnight in county office buildings, extended stays in hospitals when issues are not medical, failed foster care including relatives' placements, adults living for long periods in a temporary shelter, and children and adults ultimately ending up in the criminal justice system – all because they cannot obtain the help they desperately need. This includes supportive housing where commissioners are told by providers that they do not have the staff to provide services and treatment.

We are encouraged by all proposals that would blend state agency resources, licensing, and regulations to address these needs and by OMH's dedicated collaborations with OCFS and OPWDD. We will be sharing our comments with those agencies as well. Your strong leadership and willingness to take on the cross-systems issues for children and adults is greatly appreciated. We offer the support and expertise of local departments of social services as policy changes continue to emerge.

Sincerely:

Sheila Harrigan  
Executive Director

Cc: Commissioner Eileen Tiberio  
NYPWA President/Ontario Co. DSS