



# 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

Kerri Neifeld  
Commissioner, NYS Office for  
People with Developmental Disabilities  
44 Holland Avenue  
Albany, New York 12229

Dear Commissioner Neifeld:

It was wonderful to have you with us at the state and local commissioners' convening in Warren County last week. Your remarks about OPWDD services were very informative. 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 OPWDD services for children and adults who need assistance. ***Toward that end, local commissioners are requesting a list of OPWDD 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 and they are aware of NYS DOH programs but they are specifically asking for a list of OPWDD 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 developmental disabilities 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. Looking back in time, OPWDD has a long history built on parents advocating for housing and support for their children with complex conditions and this assistance is still needed today.

We are encouraged by all proposals that would blend state agency resources, licensing, and regulations to address these needs and by OPWDD's dedicated collaborations with OCFS and OMH. 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