



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**ADAM J. BELLO**  
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**For Immediate Release**  
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**COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO, CITY OF ROCHESTER  
OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS RECOGNIZE MENTAL  
HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH**

*County Executive Bello highlights mental health resources available in Monroe  
County*

**ROCHESTER, NY** — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today stood with officials from the City of Rochester and community partners to recognize Mental Health Awareness Month. This year's theme is "It's OK not to be OK."

"There is nothing more important to me than the safety and wellbeing of our community," **said County Executive Bello**. "May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and it is more important than ever to remind your loved ones: it is OK not to be OK. Alongside Dr. April Aycock, director of our Office of Mental Health and our community partners, we will work tirelessly to ensure mental health services are available and easily accessible to everyone in Monroe County."

County Executive Adam Bello and community partners reminded the community of the excellent resources available for those seeking mental health services. Community partners including: The Children's Agenda, University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC), Rochester Regional Health, Hillside Family of Agencies, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes and the Villa of Hope, all provide alternatives to the emergency room for those seeking help.

"We know that Americans across the nation are struggling with mental health issues in unprecedented numbers, and we see that reflected here in Rochester too," **said Rochester Mayor Malik D. Evans**. "The City is looking at new and different ways, along with our partners at the County, various non-profits and higher education institutions, to reverse this trend and reach residents with desperately needed services to address the toll these issues can take on the individual, their family, their community and the city as a whole."

"It's okay not to be okay," **said Dr. April Aycock, director of the Monroe County Office of Mental Health**. "Mental health affects people of all ages, racial/ethnic groups, and economic and educational status. Yet, most people do not seek treatment for various reasons, such as stigma and fear, so mental health awareness is imperative to combat

stigma and improve wellness. Mental health is health and a fundamental human right. Remember, it's okay not to be okay. Call 988 because I do not want you to suffer alone.”

"Our most recent poll of Monroe County parents shows that the youth mental health crisis that intensified during the pandemic continues. Two out of five parents said at least one of their children has struggled with their emotional or mental health since going back to school in-person," **said Larry Marx, CEO of The Children's Agenda**. "Those numbers are even higher for children with disabilities, Latino children, and low and middle income children. Providing youth with a path to healing requires expanded services, strong community networks and supportive environments which protect families and prevent mental health issues. We can provide that path through policy changes for enriched school-based health care, continuous Medicaid coverage, timely early intervention services, and affordable, high quality child care for all. Parents and youth need to know help is available and our community supports you every step of the way."

"The Rochester City School District is investing in our schools' mental health infrastructure by increasing the number of school counselors, social workers, and psychologists," **said Dr. Carmine Peluso, superintendent of the Rochester City School District**. "This is essential to ensure our students receive the individualized attention they need. We are working to establish strong partnerships with mental health professionals, counseling services, and nonprofit organizations that specialize in mental health support through the expansion of school-based health and mental health clinics."

"Mental health awareness is important now more than ever," **said Patrick Seche, chief administrative officer, URM C Psychiatry**. "Families, parents, adults, children, all segments of our community must be informed about mental health and how to seek help early before reaching a point of crisis."

"Our Behavioral Health Access and Crisis Center (BHACC) may be an alternative to busy and stressful Emergency Departments for those who need mental health help, **said Mandy Teeter, vice president of Rochester Regional Health Behavioral Health Department**. "Adults can walk in to the BHACC, no appointment necessary and in minutes begin talking to a provider in a welcoming and safe space. Now that we've been designated as the state Crisis Stabilization Center for the Finger Lakes Region, BHACC will be adding more clinicians and expanding our hours to see adults, children and adolescents experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder crisis."

"Hillside is committed to solutions that increase access to much-needed mental health treatment for countless children, adults and families in the communities we serve," **said Maria Cristalli, president and CEO of Hillside**. "We believe investing in our workforce is a priority toward that goal; highly qualified staff are essential to provide the services and support that make a meaningful difference in the lives of vulnerable individuals and families."

"Mental Health Awareness month provides an opportunity to normalize the fact that in the US one in five adults and one in six youth experience mental illness each year," **said**

**Jennifer Lake, president and CEO of Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, which operates 211 Lifeline and 988 locally.** “Furthermore, Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people ages 10 to 14, and in 2021 death by suicide for all ages increased to near record highs. Too many people continue to struggle in silence. Our team is trained to listen and have compassionate conversations so the person on the other line is supported during their mental health crisis or substance abuse crisis, and they are not alone during their time of crisis. We are here 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and if you need us, our 988 team will be available to help you.”

“Villa of Hope is proud to partner with County and New York state agencies as well as our peer agencies to serve to growing mental health needs of our community,” **said Dr. William Dávila, president and CEO of Villa of Hope.** “Our readily available and accessible services help proactively address and manage health and wellness and help reduce incidents of crisis or hospitalizations. The Villa offers outpatient mental health and substance use treatment services, among other services, that are community-based, client-centered, and trauma informed.”

Governor Hochul recently announced the 2023/ 2024 New York State budget has \$1 billion available for mental health services. Monroe County and the community partners are ready to apply for these grants and ensure Monroe County receives its fair share of this funding.

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