



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

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**MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO ANNOUNCES COUNTY
OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH RECEIVES \$265,000 GRANT FOR
BIPOC PEER SUPPORT SERVICES**

The grant was submitted for the county by Congressman Joe Morelle.

ROCHESTER, NY — Today, County Executive Adam Bello announced the Monroe County Office of Mental Health (OMH) has been awarded a \$265,000 grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The grant will provide free training and certification to Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) interested in becoming peer workers for mental health or substance use recovery services. SAMHSA defines peer workers as “people who have been successful in the recovery process who help others experiencing similar situations.” The goal is to enhance mental health and substance treatment services while also diversifying peer advocate professionals throughout the county, as recommended in the RASE Commission Report in 2021.

“Peer advocates have proven to be effective in helping those struggling with mental health or substance use get the help and support they need for recovery. This grant will help diversify our peer advocates and create a pathway to job opportunities in healthcare,” **said County Executive Adam Bello**. “Our county is grateful to Congressman Joe Morelle for securing the funds needed to help strengthen and diversify our public health workforce.”

“Unfortunately, we all know someone who has struggled with mental health issues or addiction, and solving this crisis requires a multifaceted approach,” **said Congressman Joe Morelle**. “I’m proud to have helped secure these federal funds that will create local jobs in essential recovery positions and help reintegrate workers displaced by addiction or mental health issues back into the workforce. I’m grateful for County Executive Bello for his effort to increase mental health and substance treatment services and look forward to our continued work in making recovery a reality for those in need of assistance.”

Studies have shown individuals with peer support see improvements in their sense of hope and empowerment, increased social functioning, enhanced community engagement and better overall quality of life.

The Monroe County Office of Mental Health will partner with local organizations to help BIPOC advocates obtain Certified Recovery Peer Advocate Certificates to work in local recovery clinics and behavioral health fields.

“Peers offer an invaluable and unique perspective in an individual’s recovery journey,” said **Dr. April Aycock, Director of the Monroe County Office of Mental Health.**

“This grant will allow for a more diversified peer workforce by offering peer trainings and certifications to the BIPOC community; because the voice of the community needs to be represented in the healing process.”

“Current data indicates that high-needs populations for substance use treatment include individuals from BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, post-incarceration, and Veteran communities. Unfortunately, representation of those communities and cultures is incredibly low in the prevention, treatment, and recovery workforce. I applaud Congressman Morelle and County Executive Bello’s administration for focusing on the development of a more diverse workforce to ensure that the interventions have the highest chance of success,” said **ROCovery Fitness Executive Director, Jonathan Westfall.**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA’s mission is to reduce the impact of substance use and mental illness on America’s communities.



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