

# Ulster County Department of Mental Health

*Year in Review*  
*2024*



WE BELIEVE ALL PEOPLE DESERVE THE PROMISE, HOPE AND HELP TO ACHIEVE  
PRODUCTIVE, MEANINGFUL LIVES THAT FULFILL THEIR VISION OF WELLNESS.

# Message from Our Commissioner

Tara McDonald, LMSW, MPA

2024 was a year of tremendous growth and opportunity for the Ulster County Department of Mental Health. We've made great strides in laying the foundation for a more supportive and inclusive mental health system, with a continued commitment to bringing the vision of The Center for Well-Being to life. As we move into the new year, we are excited to announce the upcoming opening of the Ulster County Crisis Support Center, a 24/7 resource for individuals and families in need, operated by People USA. In addition, The Children's Home of Poughkeepsie will open The Children's Way mental health clinic, expanding access to crucial care for youth and families.

This year also brought a sense of hope and progress. We saw a 33% decrease in opioid overdoses and a 45% reduction in opioid-related fatalities. Additionally, suicide fatalities were reduced by 17% in 2024. While we recognize there is still much work to be done, these improvements serve as a reminder of the positive impact of our collective efforts. We remain unwavering in our commitment to reducing these numbers further, and the continued work of our Opioid Strategic Action Team and SPEAK Coalition will be integral to our mission—work that you will see highlighted in this report.

As we look toward 2025, we are filled with hope and determination. Our commitment to ensuring that every resident has access to the support and care they need to achieve their vision of wellness is stronger than ever. We encourage you to reach out, whether by phone, email, or in person, to share your thoughts with us. Above all, know that we are here for you—today, tomorrow, and always.

Tara McDonald

# Get to Know Our Team

**Moazzama Ashraf**

Fiscal Officer

**Allison Burch**

Adult Case Management  
SPOA Coordinator

**Jacob Carter**

Jail Re-Entry Case Manager

**Shaun Cohen**

Residential SPOA Coordinator

**Jodi Cordray**

Court Liaison

**Joleen Darby**

Special Projects Director

**Dr. Gerald Fix**

Psychologist

**Jessica Fish**

Project Manager

**Angel Gonzalez**

Administrative Specialist

**Sophie Halpern**

LGU Program Supervisor

**Lucinda Kaiser**

Manager of Fiscal Operations

**Tara McDonald**

Commissioner

**Jillian Nadiak-Bruck**

Community Engagement Specialist

**Kezia Pierce**

LGU Program Supervisor

**Stephanie Richers**

Children SPOA Coordinator

**Tonya Stokes**

Senior Case Manager

**Katrina Williams**

Deputy Commissioner



# We're Here for You!





# Major Projects & Accomplishments

## Ulster County Center for Well-Being

This year, we continued our mission to create a trauma-informed, compassionate center to all who seek assistance. The Department of Mental Health relocated to the Ulster County Center for Well-Being at 368 Broadway in January 2024. Through collaborative partnerships with Access: Supports for Living and Samadhi, we provided vital services addressing behavioral health challenges, addiction recovery support, and linkage to supportive services and housing.

## Ulster County Crisis Support Center

In May, we began construction for the Ulster County Crisis Support Center. This new Intensive Crisis Stabilization Center will embody our dedication to providing immediate, professional support for individuals experiencing a crisis. Once operational, the Crisis Support Center will serve as a critical resource, bridging gaps in care and ensuring timely interventions for those in the most vulnerable moments of their lives. This project marks a vital expansion of our services, reflecting our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our community.

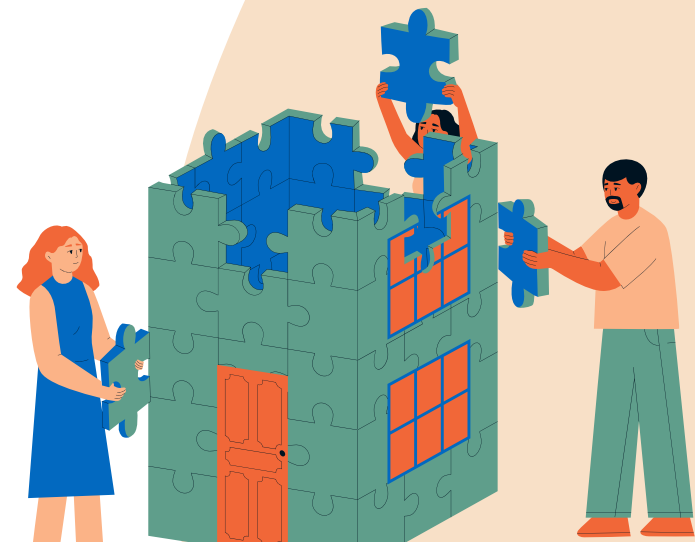


# Major Projects & Accomplishments

## Behavioral Health Needs Assessment

Ulster County faces significant behavioral health challenges, including higher-than-average rates of poor mental health days, excessive drinking, and suicide. To address these issues, the County has partnered with the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI), a nationally recognized organization with expertise in similar projects. Together, we aim to evaluate the current system and create a roadmap for a more efficient, equitable, and comprehensive system of care, addressing mental health, addiction, and intellectual/developmental disabilities.

You can share your voice by attending listening sessions, participating in interviews, or hosting a community discussion. Email [ulsterstudy@hsri.org](mailto:ulsterstudy@hsri.org) with your feedback. Further information and ways to get involved will be posted to [Participate Ulster](#) soon!



# Major Projects & Accomplishments

## Street Outreach Team

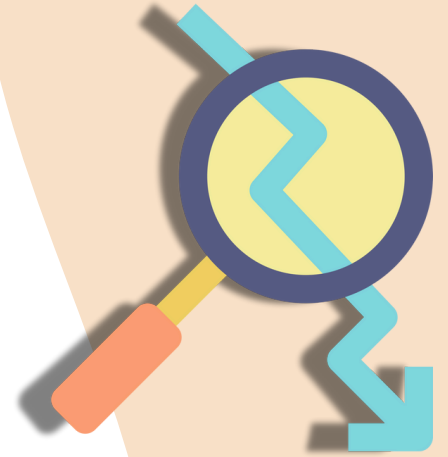
The Ulster County SOT organizes the outreach efforts of 11 distinct outreach providers including: ORACLE, Ulster County Dept. of Mental Health, Access: Supports for Living's Mobile Mental Health Team, Family of Woodstock, MHA in Ulster, RSS' Safe Options Support Team, People USA, RUPCO, CARES, Ellenville Rural Health Network, and Samadhi).

In 2024, the SOT organized an outreach effort to support a homeless crisis in Ellenville Regional Hospital's emergency department. They play a key role in the annual "point in time" homeless count coordinated by the Continuum of Care which helps drive statewide decision making.

The SOT is currently working with OSAT to address elevated overdose rates in the Saugerties area and the Southern Tier of the county. They have provided consistent outreach on the Linear park in Kingston and assisted the residents of Sangi's boarding house surrounding its shut down earlier this year. They continue to make themselves available to other groups who need assistance locating, outreaching, or otherwise connecting with specific members of the community.



# Monitoring opioid overdose trends *to reduce loss of life*



In 2024, the Department continued to closely monitor overdose data across the County and coordinate with the Ulster County Sheriff's Office to respond to hot spots and trends using methods such as naloxone distribution and harm reduction interventions.

**By the end of 2024, opioid fatalities were down 45% from the previous year. There were a total of 346 overdoses, 29 of which were fatal.**

We plan to build on current projects and continuing the coalition work of the Opioid Strategic Action Team which is made up of over 40 organizations. This group focuses on coordinating efforts, sharing information and implementing strategies for overdose prevention, harm reduction, and pathways to recovery.



# Opioioid Strategic Action Team

## *Highlights & Accomplishments*

10,162 naloxone kits distributed

208 naloxone administrations reported

5,644 people trained to use naloxone

41,897 fentanyl tests distributed

7,600 medication disposal packets distributed

This work is done in collaboration with all our OSAT partners, including: Ellenville Regional Hospital's Rural Health Network, the Ulster County Sheriff's Office's ORACLE team, Samadhi, Family of Woodstock, People USA, Family Services Inc.'s Ulster Prevention Council, Ulster County Department of Health, and Gateway Hudson Valley.

The Ulster County Recovery Friendly Business pilot program made strides this year, creating a partnership between Gateway Hudson Valley, Samadhi and Bread Alone wherein individuals in recovery gain employment and receive vocational support. So far, 2 individuals have enrolled in the program.

The Department supported the ORACLE team by purchasing \$45,115 in harm reduction supplies and street outreach kits that included items such as non-perishable food and warm clothing.

# Suicide deaths

*were on the rise this year*

There were 25 suicide deaths in Ulster County in 2024. Fatalities are down 17% from last year.

The 5 year average is 26. Deaths of youth under 18 has stayed steady at 0 since 2022.

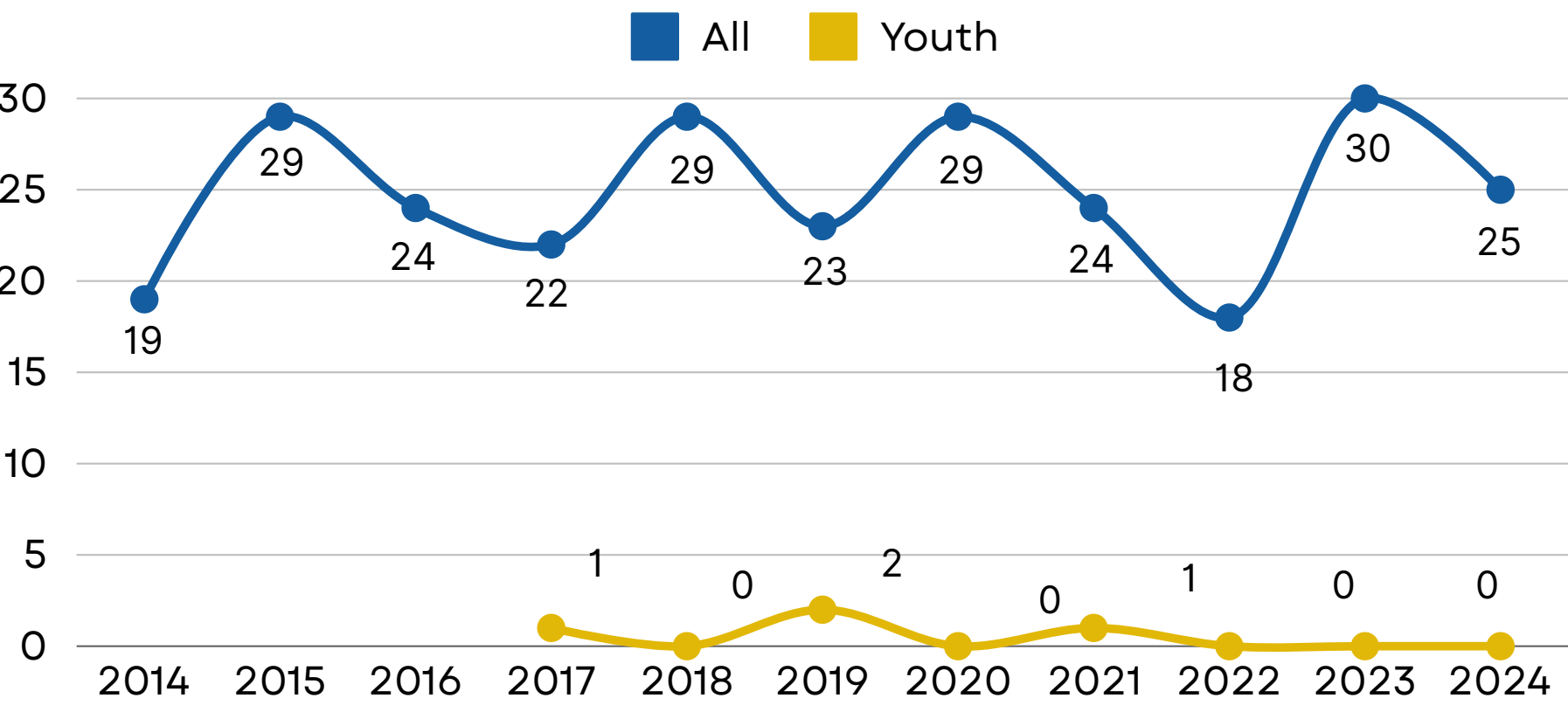
Our SPEAK (Suicide Prevention, Education, Awareness & Knowledge) Coalition works together to make Ulster County a suicide safer community. In 2024 we partnered with the Ulster County Dept. of Health to create a countywide billboard campaign to promote 988 awareness. We participated in several college campus events to reach our young adults, and partnered with the Brain & Body Coalition on their Reel Hope event geared toward older men. We also held numerous prevention trainings throughout the community.



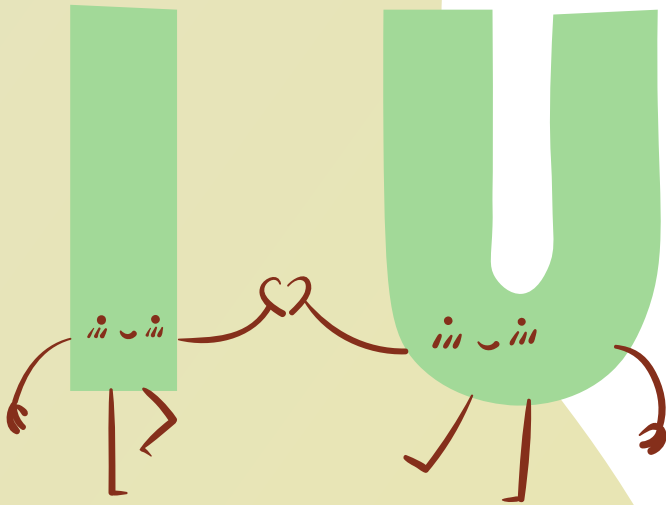


# Ulster County Suicide Deaths

Data source: Ulster County Medical Examiner  
Updated: January 2025

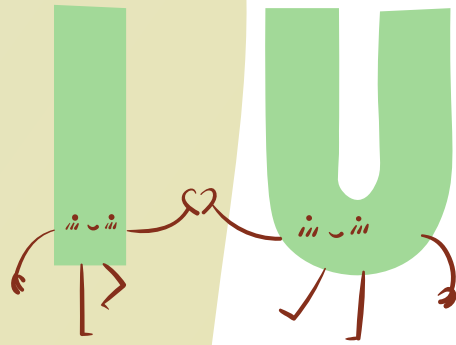


# 6 years of *Integrated Ulster*



Integrated Ulster is a partnership of organizations of all types to create a system of care that is welcoming and effective in addressing the complex needs of all people in Ulster County. Data shows our partners are more connected, coordinate services more efficiently, deepen professional development across their workforce, and provide more person-centered, culturally responsive and trauma-informed care.

In 2024, we prioritized Housing, Community Engagement, Cross System Collaboration, Training, Workplace Wellness, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging. Some successes include the implementation of wellness activities for partners, schools and the community, enhanced community collaboration with a focus on having fun and sparking joy, and honing our DEIB efforts by bringing on a consultant to provide trainings and facilitate a network-wide needs assessment.



# Integrated Ulster



SPEAK  
Suicide Prevention

Opioid  
Strategic  
Action Team  
& Workgroup

Criminal  
Justice  
Task Force

Child & Family  
System of Care

Trauma  
Informed  
Care Collaborative

DEIB  
Workgroup

# *Integrated Ulster*

Department Led Initiatives

Street  
Outreach  
Team

Community Engagement  
Workgroup



# Monitoring programs & agencies *to ensure quality services*

One of the main responsibilities of the Department under our designation as the Local Government Unit (LGU) is to oversee the program operations of the roughly \$10.5m State and County funding that passes through the Department onto local provider agencies.

- The Ulster County Mobile Mental Health Team, operated by Access: Supports for Living, served a total of 2,508 individuals this year with an average response time of less than 18 minutes.
- LaSalle's Mental Health in Schools program maintained an average capacity of 91%, with 96% of parents directly involved in the program. 87% of families discharged from the program completed their goals.





# Monitoring programs & agencies *to ensure quality services*

- Gateway Hudson Valley's Workforce One program supported 104 individuals and assisted 43 of them in successfully obtaining a job or internship.
- Family of Woodstock's switchboards took 87,660 calls and made 120,502 referrals.
- Mental Health Association in Ulster County's Drop In Center served 545 individuals and facilitated 336 Support Groups.
- The Mid-Hudson chapter for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reached 558 Ulster students with their "Ending the Silence" education program to reduce stigma.
- HealthAlliance's methadone program served 541 people and maintained a waitlist of 0.





799 linkages to care  
management, peer  
support & other  
supportive services

*via*  
Single Point of  
Access



61 admissions to  
SPOA housing

45 court-ordered psychological  
examinations conducted



# Community Support *Division*

Our Department's unique Community Support Division was developed as a response to the isolation and increased needs resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and includes the provision of a Court Liaison, a mental health professional who assists individuals interacting with our courts, and a Senior Case Manager who works intensively with individuals coming back into the community from Ulster County Jail.

In 2024, our Court Liaison assisted 63 individuals. Our Senior Case Manager successfully engaged and worked with 27.



# Community Engagement

- We continued our Community Office Hours initiative this year, visiting 9 towns and clocking nearly 50 hours throughout Ulster County. This year, we began to have a weekly presence at the Trudy Farber County Building in Ellenville.
- Our Department was represented at over 50 community events.
- For the second year in a row, we partnered with the Ulster County Youth Bureau for Mind, Body & Soul: a Youth & Parent Expo for the community. This year, it was held at Ellenville Elementary School. We were joined by over 20 vendors who provided fun and engaging activities for families including an inspiring youth panel discussion.





# Community Engagement



# Coming in 2025

## **Behavioral Health Community Needs Assessment**

The needs assessment will evaluate our behavioral health system and identify strengths and gaps across critical areas such as access to care, prevention, treatment, crisis services, and social supports. Over the year, HSRI will collaborate with community partners, members, and individuals utilizing services to gather feedback on their perception of the system and encourage active participation in the process. This will take place throughout 2025 and will help guide the development of actionable strategies to create a more effective, equitable, and comprehensive system of care for all residents.

## **Court Navigation Project**

Through new funding made available by the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Department will be hiring a mental health professional and a peer advocate to work with individuals with serious mental illness and are facing incarceration via County Court. The program will work intensely with these individuals and the court to provide support and connect individuals to needed services. The goal of the program is to get individuals connected to necessary care to improve outcomes for them and reduce further risk to the community.



# Coming in 2025

## Ulster County Center for Well-Being

### Ulster County Center for Wellbeing

The Center for Well-Being is becoming a vibrant hub of support, offering greater public access to Departmental services alongside those provided by Access: Supports for Living and Samadhi. In early 2025, we will proudly welcome People USA's Crisis Support Center and the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie, further expanding the range of resources available to our community. Additionally, efforts are underway to streamline workflows between providers, ensuring that community members can access services in a seamless, stress-free manner.

### Opening of the Ulster County Crisis Support Center

In early 2025, People USA will open the Crisis Support Center, providing immediate, short-term intervention to stabilize children and adults in crisis and transition them to ongoing care, and helping to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations and emergency room visits. The Center will work closely with local community partners to ensure individuals are connected to the right services and support. The Center will be open 24/7, 365 days a year.







## Ulster County Center for Well-Being



**ULSTER COUNTY, NY**  
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Administrative Offices



**CHILDREN'S HOME**  
*of Poughkeepsie*  
SINCE 1847

Children's Clinic



Substance Use Treatment



Mental Health & Substance Use Urgent Care

**people**USA

Ulster County Crisis Support Center  
24/7

*Contact Us*

## Ulster County Department of Mental Health

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