



Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Local Services Plan 2024 – 2027, 2025 Update
Goals and Objectives

Issue Category	Applicable State Agency	Applicable Population
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Case Management / Care Coordination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Crisis Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Cross Systems Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Employment/Volunteer (Client)	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Forensics	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Inpatient Treatment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Non-Clinical Supports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Outpatient Treatment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Prevention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Problem Gambling	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Refugees and Immigrants	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Residential Treatment Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Respite	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Transitional Age Services	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Workforce Recruitment & Retention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Other 1: Adult Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Other 2: Harm Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults



**Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
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Goal 1: Timely Access to Care

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Niagara County's high risk / high need individuals will have timely access to appropriate services to support them in the least restrictive level of care.

LSP Issue Categories goal is applicable to:

1. Case Management/Care Coordination 2. Residential 3. Other 1 (ACT)

Goal 1: Progress to date:

- ACT in collaboration with SPOA minimized their waitlist in 2023 and began enrolling new referrals without delay. ACT worked diligently with the LGU and local Health Home Plus providers to transition individuals on the ACT caseload to a lower level of care. The number of Assisted Outpatient Treatment program clients on the ACT caseload decreased from 79% in January 2023 to 56% in April 2024. The LGU also advocated with NYS, requesting at least 12 ACT slots be added in Niagara County. **(Objectives 1, 2)**
- An OASAS Article 820 Residential Reintegration Program, Newfane House of Hope, opened in May 2023, making 12 treatment beds available for men receiving substance use treatment and transitioning to the community. **(Objective 3)**
- The LGU also hosted a planning session on the service system related to individuals who have co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, with 24 providers from local agencies attending. The LGU and providers examined barriers for people with co-occurring MH/SUD and what gaps exist in the housing continuum of care for individuals with co-occurring MH/SUD. **(Objective 4)**

Objective 1: Adult ACT Expansion

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will advocate for funding to expand the number of adult Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) slots in Niagara County that will serve both Medicaid and non-Medicaid eligible individuals.

Objective 2: Transition Between Levels of Care

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in collaboration with stakeholders to develop innovative processes, programming and/or models of care that will allow individuals to be admitted to and transition between levels of care in a timely manner.



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Objective 3: Residential Programming

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will monitor availability of and access to residential programming through available data sources and support expansion and/or new program development where need is clearly demonstrated.

Objective 4: Promote Recovery for Individuals with Co-Occurring Disorders

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will support the development and implementation of strategies / programming that will enhance services available to individuals with co-occurring disorders in order to promote recovery in multiple realms.

Objective 5: Improve Timely Access to Community Based Support Services

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will evaluate available data and engage in targeted activities that will help improve timely access to HH+, HARP, HCBS, CORE and CFTS services for eligible individuals and prevent / reduce unnecessary utilization of higher cost / level of services.



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Goal 2: Expanded Access to Treatment

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Niagara County residents across the lifespan will have expanded access to quality treatment at time of need.

LSP Issue Categories goal is applicable to:

1. Inpatient Treatment
2. Outpatient Treatment
3. Workforce

Goal 2: Progress to date:

- The LGU continues work on plans related to integrated co-occurring mental health and substance use treatment methods for inpatient, outpatient, and residential treatment.
- The LGU is in the early phases of discussing a comprehensive evidence-based orientation program for all new-hires in behavioral health programs.

Objective 1: Expansion of Treatment Options

Target Date: 12/31/2025

Utilizing available data sources, the LGU will monitor availability and access to inpatient and outpatient treatment and support expansion and/or new program development when need is clearly demonstrated.

Objective 2: Stabilization and Recovery

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will support the development and implementation of strategies and/or program expansions that promote the stabilization and recovery of individuals with co-occurring disorders when need is clearly demonstrated.

Objective 3: Building on the Workforce

Target Date: 12/31/2026

The LGU will work in collaboration with local providers to improve accessibility to mental health, substance use, and intellectual and developmental disability trainings through the development of a training network and evidence-based curriculum to ensure baseline competencies in behavioral health programming.



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Goal 3: Increase Access to Housing

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Niagara County residents will have increased access to and retention in safe and affordable housing that supports long term stabilization and recovery.

LSP Issue Categories goal is applicable to:

1. Housing

Goal 3: Progress to date:

- In October 2023, Governor Kathy Hochul announced, Community Services for Every1, Inc., received \$4.5 million to develop 18 units and 26 beds of permanent supportive housing in Niagara Falls for families and individuals. This is part of a larger project, The Nest, that will feature the new construction of a six-story mixed use building with a total of 73 units, a community room, on-site rental office, laundry facilities, tenant parking, and greenspace with a playground. The commercial space will be utilized by Community Services for Every1 to provide job readiness and workforce development for local residents. **(Objective 1)**
- Cazenovia Recovery Systems reported OASAS awarded the agency 20 HUD beds between Erie and Niagara, which will include an additional peer position. **(Objective 1)**
- The LGU hosted Landlord Education workshops in 2023, but engagement from landlords was difficult. These workshops were facilitated by Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), the LGU, and Niagara Orleans Regional Land Improvement Corporation (NORLIC). HOME provided a discussion on Fair Housing and its implications as an owner and manager of real estate property. NORLIC provided an overview of the NORLIC Land Bank. The LGU provided education on mental health and substance use and distributed a comprehensive guide to resources in Niagara County. **(Objective 2)**

Objective 1: SRO / Supportive Housing Expansion

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will advocate for the expansion of single room occupancy and supportive housing opportunities and support proposals that expand these affordable housing opportunities where need is clearly demonstrated.

Objective 2: Landlord and Community Education

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in collaboration with stakeholders to provide education to local landlords and the general community about mental illness, substance use disorders, I/DD and available resources to support individuals with these disabilities in order to increase housing opportunities and the retention of individuals in housing.



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Objective 3: Support Housing Stability

Target Date: 12/31/2026

The LGU will promote community education efforts related to homeownership opportunities and the resources available to remain housed.



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Goal 4: Crisis Services Continuum of Care

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Niagara County residents experiencing a mental health and/or substance use related crisis will have expanded access to a coordinated crisis response system and continuum of care that addresses an individual's immediate safety and needs.

LSP Issue Categories goal is applicable to:

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1. Crisis Services | 2. Cross-Systems | 3. Respite |
|--------------------|------------------|------------|

Goal 4: Progress to date:

Objectives 1, 2, 4

- The Well Niagara app launched in October 2023, providing Niagara County residents with immediate access to information on local resources at their fingers. At this time the app has been downloaded over 600 times. The Well Niagara App corresponding webpage was also published shortly after the App's release further expanding residents' access to information.
- Niagara County Crisis Services (NCCS) became 988 affiliated in September 2022. In 2023, NCCS averaged 237 988 answered calls per month, which accounted for about 10% of NCCS calls in 2023.
- The LGU provided 30 community trainings on mental health, substance use, LGU services, crisis services, trauma-informed-care, crisis de-escalation, and other similar topics in 2023.
- The LGU collaborated with Orleans and Niagara Career and Technical Centers' Graphic Communications program students to design unique Crisis Services tear away flyers and updated bus bench signage with Niagara County Crisis Services and 988 information for benches across Niagara Falls, NY. The updated bus bench signage was installed in 2023 and in October 2023 the flyers were distributed to every private and public middle and high school in Niagara County. The LGU, in partnership with stakeholders, continues to distribute the flyers community wide. The LGU receives ongoing positive feedback from school personnel and community members alike about the use of these flyers.
- Niagara County Suicide Prevention Coalition (NCSPC) resumed activities in September 2023, with 24 local services providers present. NCSPC currently has 58 members, with 41 different organizations represented. In 2023 and early 2024, NCDMH representatives participated in several regional suicide prevention efforts and trainings.

Objective 3

- Implementation of Trauma, Illness and Grief in Schools (TIG) began in April 2024. TIG is a comprehensive training and crisis response network for K-12 education and beyond. The innovative TIG program model trains networks of school-based professionals to meet the holistic needs of students and equips them with evidence-based crisis response skills, resources, and ongoing technical support to help students cope with trauma, violence, illness, death, and grief in the school setting. The goal of



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TIG is to strengthen and grow an organization's internal capacity to prepare to have appropriate support for students and staff in place to help minimize risk for crisis, respond more effectively and efficiently, and recover quickly by promoting health recovery strategies in the event of a traumatic incident. The goal is for 120 – 150 school personnel and Niagara County Crisis Services response staff to be trained in TIG before school begins in fall 2024. The LGU, in partnership with local school districts, is coordinating this initiative.

Objective 1: Community Resources Awareness and Utilization

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU, in collaboration with stakeholders, will provide community education through various mediums to increase the community's awareness and use of available resources.

Objective 2: Community Education and Training

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU, in collaboration with stakeholders, will facilitate and/or coordinate education and training opportunities that equip both providers and the general public with the knowledge and skill sets to recognize and appropriately respond to individuals in crisis.

Objective 3: Expand Options within the Crisis Continuum of Care

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will support proposals that expand options and/or enhance services within the crisis continuum of care where need is clearly demonstrated in order to serve individuals in the least restrictive setting.

Objective 4: Cross System Planning and Intervention

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in collaboration with cross-system providers to identify and implement strategies that support a coordinated response to effectively intervene with and guide high risk / need individuals, and their families, in crisis.

Objective 5: HBCI or Like Services for Children/Adolescents

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will evaluate the need for Home Based Crisis Intervention (HCBI) or like services (children's hospital diversion services) and support proposals for implementation when need is clearly demonstrated.

Objective 6: Access to Respite

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will support the expansion of respite opportunities that address the unmet needs of individuals, and their caregivers, where need is clearly demonstrated.

Objective 7: Crisis Intervention in Schools

Target Date: 12/31/2026



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The LGU, in collaboration with local school districts, will facilitate the training of school personnel and equip them with the knowledge and skills to recognize and appropriately respond to students experiencing a mental health and/or substance use related crisis.



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Goal 5: Cross-System Services

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Increase accessibility to integrated, coordinated care and services across the lifespan for individuals with co-occurring needs through innovative multifaceted cross-systems collaborative approaches.

LSP Issue Categories goal is applicable to:

1. Cross System Services

Goal 5: Progress to date:

- The LGU continues to facilitate the Community Network of Care for Children and Families in Niagara County (CNOC), Early Childhood Advisory Council, Niagara County OASIS (Opioid) Task Force Public Awareness/Involvement Subcommittee, and the Niagara County Suicide Prevention Coalition (NCSPC). **(Objective 1)**
- The Community Network of Care Coalition (CNOC) organized CNOC University, on May 15, 2023, with the goal of taking a deeper dive into learning more about the various supports, services and treatment options available to children, youth and their families in Niagara County and to provide the opportunity for cross-systems networking. The event was a success as 54 cross-system providers engaged in strategic planning, implementation activities, and continuous quality improvement efforts to effectively respond to identified system needs and service gaps. A common thread amongst attendees was the request to organize another CNOC University, this time with an emphasis on early childhood intervention. **(Objective 3)**
- CNOC developed and held the second CNOC University: Niagara County Early Childhood Symposium on October 24, 2023, with the goal of learning and discussing the current state of our youngest children (0-5 years) and their families in Niagara County and to develop goals/focus attention on how we can improve and enhance services and programming for these children and their families. The event was a success as 57 cross-system providers engaged in strategic planning and discussing quality improvement efforts to effectively respond to identified system needs and service gaps. **(Objective 3)**

Objective 1: Systems of Care

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will lead the Niagara County Systems of Care (Community Network of Care – CNOC- for Children & Families in Niagara County) to engage cross-system providers in strategic planning, implementation activities, and continuous quality improvement efforts to effectively respond to identified system needs and service gaps.



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Objective 2: Resources to Support Collaborations

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will identify additional resources and funding opportunities that can support sustainable cross-system engagement and collaborations in areas where need is demonstrated.

Objective 3: Service System Navigation and Education on Community Resources

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in partnership with cross-system providers to increase awareness of existing system platforms, which connect youth, families and adults to community resources that improve and sustain mental, emotional, behavioral, and physical wellness.



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Goal 6: Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Target Date: 12/31/2027

The Niagara County Mental Hygiene service system will strengthen the workforce and establish a continuous pipeline of qualified staff to meet the demand for services in a timely manner.

LSP Issue Categories goal is applicable to:

1. Workforce 2. Employment/Volunteer (clients) 3. Non-Clinical Supports

Goal 6: Progress to date:

Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5

Service providers noted success with the following methods:

- Attending local job fairs
- Strengthening relationships with local universities
- Digital media campaigns to spread awareness about jobs
- Reviewing job descriptions to reassess what qualifications are recommended opposed to what qualifications NYS mandates
- Revising language used in job descriptions, to not deter individuals from applying
- Changing job titles and reclassifying roles
- Bringing in interns, who then secure a job placement following their graduation/licensure

Objectives 1, 3, 4, 5

Service providers noted success with the following methods:

- Development of leadership programs
- Adjusting staff to telehealth/virtual when appropriate
- Restructuring orientation process to minimize time behind a desk/in virtual trainings
- Providing ‘big picture’ operations for new hires
- Greater emphasis on supervision and consistent scheduling of supervision for staff

Objective 1: Culturally Competent and Diverse Workforce Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will evaluate available data sources, best practices and innovative strategies to engage in workforce development initiatives that recruit and retain culturally competent and diverse personnel that are responsive to the needs of the populations served.



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Objective 2: Integrating Emerging Paraprofessionals/Professionals in the Workforce
Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in collaboration with local providers to identify and implement strategies that will increase the integration of emerging paraprofessionals and qualified health professionals in the workforce through innovative means.

Objective 3: Engage in Cross-System Collaborations to Increase Workforce Development and Job Placements
Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will engage in cross-system collaborations to identify resources and link people with opportunities that promote cultural competency, skill development, marketability, and increase job placements.

Objective 4: Increase Number of Peers in the Workforce
Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in collaboration with local providers to identify and implement strategies that will increase the number and retention of credentialed peers in the workforce to meet people “where they are at” when needed.

Objective 5: Integration of Individuals with IDD in the Workforce
Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU, in collaboration with stakeholders, will promote community education efforts related to employment skills training for individuals with I/DD to increase opportunities for integration into the general workforce.

Objective 6: Development of Standardized Training Practices
Target Date: 12/31/2026

The LGU will work in partnership with stakeholders to develop an evidence-based orientation training curriculum, to support the recruitment and retention of paraprofessionals and behavioral health personnel.



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Goal 7: Expand Prevention Activities

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Expand prevention activities across the lifespan, with an emphasis on high-risk, historically marginalized and underserved populations, to protect, promote and maintain the health and well-being of Niagara County residents.

LSP Issue Categories goal is applicable to:

1. Prevention
2. Cross System Services

Goal 7: Progress to date:

Objectives 1, 2, 3

- The Niagara County Suicide Prevention Coalition (NCSPC) resumed meetings after a brief hiatus in early 2023. NCSPC currently has 58 members, with 41 different organizations represented.
- In 2023 and early 2024, NCDMH representatives participated in several regional suicide prevention efforts and trainings, such as specialized education for the faith based, indigenous, LGBTQ, veteran, and youth communities.
- An NCDMH representative was trained to be a trainer for the Firearm Safety and Suicide Prevention which partners a suicide prevention expert with a firearms expert to share information with families and caregivers about how to safely and respectfully address the presence and potential use of a firearm.

Objectives 2, 3

- The Well Niagara app and its corresponding webpage launched, increasing awareness of and connection to over 393 different resources across WNY.
- Well Niagara provides quick access to:
 - Niagara County Crisis Services hotline and Crisis Text Line
 - Information on Narcan and harm reduction tools
 - Guidance to navigate the different service systems
 - Local trainings and events
- The LGU presented to 16 different audiences, on topics such as suicide prevention, helping students at risk, crisis intervention and de-escalation, and local community resources.
- The LGU tabled 13 different events, interfacing with students, parents, school staff, mental health professionals, and individuals in MH/SUD treatment, sharing information about harm reduction, NCDMH services, mental health, and overall wellbeing.
- The Niagara County PATH-3D (Presenting Alternatives for Treatment and Healing – Deflect, Destigmatize, attend to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) program and Addict2Addict Niagara distributed 374 Narcan kits, at the Niagara County Fair in 2023, three times the number distributed at the fair in 2022. Both entities are scheduled to conduct training and distribute Narcan at the 2024 Niagara County Fair.



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Objective 3

The LGU held CNOC University: Niagara County Early Childhood Symposium on October 24, 2023, with the goal of learning and discussing the current state of our youngest children (0-5 years) and their families in Niagara County and to develop goals/focus attention on how we can improve & enhance services and programming for these children and their families.

Objective 1: Commitment to Zero Suicide Model

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in partnership with the Suicide Prevention Coalition and stakeholders to make a formal commitment to, and establish benchmarks for, the adoption of the Zero Suicide Model.

Objective 2: Promotion of Healthy Living

Target Date: 12/31/2025

To promote healthy living, the LGU will work in partnership with the public health and prevention providers to implement evidence-supported / based approaches to prevent and/or reduce alcohol and substance use and related consequences as well as mental, social-emotional, intellectual/developmental and behavioral disabilities.

Objective 3: Expand Early Intervention Activities

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work with cross systems providers to expand early intervention activities where need is clearly demonstrated to prevent the development of long-term negative health outcomes.

Objective 4: Expansion of Trauma Response in Schools

Target Date: 12/31/2026

The LGU will collaborate with local school districts to develop a comprehensive training and crisis response network for grades K – 12 education and beyond.



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Goal 8: Tackle the Opioid / Drug Epidemic

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Increase the availability of, access to, and awareness of harm reduction options in a manner that demonstrates humility and compassion towards people who use drugs (and their loved ones) to reduce overdoses and other negative health outcomes.

LSP Issue Categories goal is applicable to:

1. Other 2: Harm Reduction 2. Non-clinical Supports

Goal 8: Progress to date:

- Community-based agencies, in an initiative supported by the LGU, installed 130 wall mounts, 15 Narcan stands, and 2 Narcan vending machines across Niagara County. These harm reduction resources are strategically placed in a wide range of locations, including golf courses in North Tonawanda, barbershops in Niagara Falls, local gas stations in the city of Lockport, and in residential apartments across Niagara County. The PATH-3D program works with the local HIDA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas) Officer to identify "hot spots" where overdoses are more prevalent and then increase access to Narcan and other harm reduction tools. These mounts and stands include information fentanyl test strips, Narcan, contact information for the PATH-3D program, and more. **(Objectives 1, 2)**
- The PATH-3D program continues to follow up with individuals post-overdose, offering support and referrals as appropriate. The program provided Narcan trainings to several agencies across multiple disciplines in 2023. The program continues to engage in community canvassing to increase visibility in the community and provide preventative interventions. The program continues to struggle to identify, thus be able to reach out to, individuals who experienced an overdose event and did not seek first responder assistance, as there is no current method to track these individuals. **(Objectives 1, 2, 3)**

Objective 1: Public Awareness/Engagement Opportunities Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in partnership with stakeholders to analyze data and other reliable resources to inform public awareness/engagement activities that will reduce stigma and barriers to care while increasing awareness of and linkage to community resources.

Objective 2: Expand Harm Reduction Options Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will support the expansion of harm-reduction programs, activities, supports and services that focus on meeting the basic needs of persons who use drugs, creating a safe space and developing/establishing trust as an entry point to care.



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Objective 3: Education and Training Opportunities

Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU, in partnership with stakeholders, will identify and facilitate access to education and training opportunities that equip the public with life-saving skills and harm reduction resources.

Objective 4: Expand Access to trained Peers / Family Peers Target Date: 12/31/2025

The LGU will work in collaboration with stakeholders to expand the reach of trained recovery peer advocates and family peer specialists/advocates to areas that will “meet people where they are at” and engage them “when they are ready”.



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Glossary

ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences
ACT – Assertive Community Treatment
CFTS – Child and Family Treatment Services
CNOC - Community Network of Care for Children & Families in Niagara County
HARP – Health and Recovery Plan
HBCI – Home Based Crisis Intervention
HCBS – Home and Community-Based Waiver Services
HH+ – Health Home Plus
HIDA – High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas
HOME – Housing Opportunities Made Equal
HUD – Housing and Urban Development
I/DD – Intellectual/Developmental Disorder
LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning
LGU – Local Government Unit
LSP – Local Services Plan
MH – Mental Health
NCCS – Niagara County Crisis Services
NCDMH – Niagara County Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
NCSPC – Niagara County Suicide Prevention Coalition
NORLIC – Niagara Orleans Regional Land Improvement Corporation
OASAS – Office of Addiction Services and Supports
OMH – Office of Mental Health
OPWDD – Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
PATH-3D – Presenting Alternatives for Treatment and Healing – Deflect, Destigmatize, attend to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
SPOA – Single Point of Access
SRO – Single Room Occupancy
SUD – Substance Use Disorder
TIG – Trauma, Illness, and Grief



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VA – Veterans Affairs

WNY – Western New York

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Needs Assessment

Issue Category	Applicable State Agency	Applicable Population
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Case Management / Care Coordination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Crisis Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Cross Systems Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Employment/Volunteer (Client)	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Forensics	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Inpatient Treatment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Non-Clinical Supports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Outpatient Treatment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Prevention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Problem Gambling	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Refugees and Immigrants	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Residential Treatment Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Respite	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Transitional Age Services	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Workforce Recruitment & Retention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Other 1: Adult Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMH <input type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults
Other 2: Harm Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/> OMH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OASAS <input type="checkbox"/> OPWDD	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Only <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both Youth & Adults

**Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Local Services Plan 2024 – 2027, 2025 Update
Needs Assessment**

Goal 1: Timely Access to Care

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Niagara County's high risk / high need individuals will have timely access to appropriate services to support them in the least restrictive level of care.

Needs Description:

The mental hygiene system in Niagara County has experienced a breakdown in their transition processes since the COVID-19 Pandemic. Due to staffing challenges and an increase in behavioral health needs, programs were unable to process new referrals in a timely manner. With many of these programs operating at or beyond capacity, individuals experienced delays in accessing care. While some waitlists have decreased over time, many programs continue to struggle with transitioning individuals to lower or higher levels of care. Of critical concern, individuals who are attempting to transition from Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) services to Health Home Plus (HH+) services are unable to access these services in a timely manner, resulting in reduced access to ACT services for those in need of / awaiting this service.

OMH and OPWDD providers report a lack of residential programming necessary to meet the needs of individuals with co-occurring emotional disturbance/mental illness and intellectual/developmental disabilities. The Adult Single Point of Access (SPOA) Program and Community Services Board (CSB) subcommittees report access to residential and inpatient care is also lacking for individuals with co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders (SUD). Data shows that in 2023, 46% of SUD inpatient treatment referrals were denied in Niagara County. Those with substance use disorders and co-occurring severe mental illness and/or significant medical needs face significant barriers in accessing inpatient substance use treatment locally and often have to seek placement at a facility out of state that is willing and able to accommodate their complex needs. According to available PSYCKES data, 14.3% of individuals ages 13 and older with a new diagnosis of alcohol or other substance use disorder (SUD) did not initiate SUD treatment within 14 days of diagnosis.

Additionally the average length of stay for someone discharged from a supportive housing unit was 52 months in 2023. With supportive housing slots unavailable for individuals to transition into, individuals continue to reside in residential programs longer than clinically necessary, thus preventing someone needing services from accessing that level of care. This inability to transition between levels of care has created a blockade for individuals ready to take the next step in treatment.

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Goal 2: Expanded Access to Treatment

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Niagara County residents across the lifespan will have expanded access to quality treatment at time of need.

Needs Description:

Significant gaps continue to exist for individuals in need of inpatient care who have co-occurring disorders. Individuals with severe emotional disturbance / mental illness and I/DD are often times denied admission to inpatient psychiatric units as their needs are determined to be chronic and pervasive versus acute in nature and appropriate programming is unable to meet their needs in an inpatient setting. As previously mentioned, a significant number of individuals are declined services because inpatient and residential programs are unwilling or unable to accommodate the complex needs and report that either mental health or substance use is more prominent than the other. According to available PSYCKES data, 33.7% of individuals ages 13 years and older discharged from inpatient SUD rehabilitation did not receive follow up treatment in a lower level of care setting within 14 days.

Critical need remains for inpatient and outpatient treatment program models of care that can effectively serve individuals with co-occurring disorders (severe emotional disturbances/mental illness) and I/DD as well as SED/SMI and substance use disorders. There are no Article 16 clinics in Niagara County to serve the unique needs of individual with intellectual/developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health concerns. The workforce is not well-versed in the treatment and care of individuals with these co-occurring needs, which creates inequities and contributes to poorer health outcomes for these populations.

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Goal 3: Increase Access to Housing

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Niagara County residents will have increased access to and retention in safe and affordable housing that supports long term stabilization and recovery.

Needs Description:

The housing needs of Niagara County residents remain critical and unmet. The availability of safe and affordable housing for individuals, and families, with mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual/developmental disabilities is severely lacking. Across Western New York (WNY) about 27% of individuals in emergency shelters, 16% of individuals in transitional housing, and 90% of individuals without shelter, are diagnosed with a mental illness or substance use disorder. Individuals with severe and persistent mental illness and/or chronic substance use disorder are disproportionately unhoused.

According to available PSYCKES data, in Niagara County about 10% of individuals with a behavioral health (MH and/or SUD) hospitalization were re-hospitalized within 30 days of discharge. A possible contributing factor to the high readmission rate is the lack of supportive housing beds. Single-room occupancy and supportive housing beds for individuals with mental illness have extensive wait lists and, despite these lists being diligently vetted to prioritize open slots that become available for individuals with the highest needs, the lists and wait times continue to grow. The waitlist for supportive housing units in 2023 was 9.98 months for those supportive housing programs that carry a waitlist.

Transitional housing availability is also insufficient for individuals with substance use disorders, which leads to delayed movement between levels of care as well as delayed community reintegration in order to attain permanent housing. For those with co-occurring disorders, locating appropriate housing, is even more difficult not only due to specialized supports, services and expertise required, but also due to the associated stigma.

**Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
Local Services Plan 2024 – 2027, 2025 Update
Needs Assessment**

Goal 4: Crisis Services Continuum of Care

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Niagara County residents experiencing a mental health and/or substance use related crisis will have expanded access to a coordinated crisis response system and continuum of care that addresses an individual's immediate safety and needs.

Needs Description:

Unfortunately, the enduring effects related to the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in new presentations of behavioral health concerns in the general population. The psychiatric instability and intensity of service intervention is increasing for many individuals living with severe emotional disturbances, severe mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders or intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Students were especially impacted as they returned to in-person schooling following the COVID-19 pandemic. The social emotional development provided by schools was mostly absent while youth were learning at home, physically separated from others their age. For many youth, this isolation exacerbated existing mental health challenges. Schools in Niagara County report a significant increase in student substance use and mental health crises. From January 2022 – December 2023, about 19.5% of mental health evaluation for youth resulted in a MHL 9.45 transport to a MHL 9.39 hospital.

Individuals of all ages with mental health, substance use and co-occurring issues need more options for crisis stabilization in the community that will prevent the overutilization of higher levels of services, such as emergency department evaluations, and provide opportunities for recovery in the least restrictive setting. Additionally, more respite options are needed for stabilization of individuals, who aren't meeting the criteria for inpatient hospitalization.

Educating the community on navigating service systems and accessing available resources remains a priority. The LGU has spearheaded mental health awareness campaigns, but stigma remains a key barrier to accessing mental health and substance use treatment. Engaging with parents of children and adolescents remains a unique challenge in the school setting. As the LGU builds on existing partnerships with schools, more opportunities become available to present to parents and school faculty on topics involving crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and availability of mental health and substance use resources.

**Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
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Goal 5: Cross-System Services

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Increase accessibility to integrated, coordinated care and services across the lifespan for individuals with co-occurring needs through innovative multifaceted cross-systems collaborative approaches.

Needs Description:

There is a critical lack of awareness of available services in Niagara County, and across WNY. Efforts to increase marketing of programs, services, supports and trainings / events are needed to ensure individuals served are receiving information on all resources available to them and also connecting with those resources that will best meet their complex needs. More resources and funding are necessary to increase cross-system services and collaborations in order to effect sustainable positive change. There is also a need for staff with cross-systems experience and expertise to meet the needs of individuals.

**Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
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Goal 6: Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Target Date: 12/31/2027

The Niagara County Mental Hygiene service system will strengthen the workforce and establish a continuous pipeline of qualified staff to meet the demand for services in a timely manner.

Needs Description:

Workforce recruitment and retention remains the most prominent and critical issue to be addressed in Niagara County across all three (3) mental hygiene service systems as our established goals cannot be accomplished without an adequate workforce. The severe shortage of qualified job applicants further jeopardizes service providers' ability to provide high quality services, as well as their capability to adapt programming to meet the population needs, especially in our historically underserved and under-resourced populations. This also leaves these populations vulnerable to negative health outcomes and creates greater health disparities. Additionally, the immense demand and stress on direct care staff to ensure 24/7 service availability and monitoring has led to staff burnout, trauma, and departure from human services work altogether creating even greater gaps in service and increased position vacancies.

Investment in our behavioral health workforce remains a critical need. The behavioral health needs in the general population became more complex following the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating that our behavioral health workforce must also evolve to better understand these complexities. Inconsistencies continue to exist between onboarding processes and required core competencies from organization to organization. Innovative strategies are needed to ensure staff are equipped with the skills to effectively serve individuals with co-occurring disorders (severe emotional disturbances/mental illness) and I/DD as well as SED/SMI and substance use disorders. A community collaborated evidence-based curriculum for new hires and existing staff would mitigate staff burnout, develop consistency amongst service systems, and improve health outcomes of those receiving services.

**Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
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Goal 7: Expand Prevention Activities

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Expand prevention activities across the lifespan, with an emphasis on high-risk, historically marginalized and underserved populations, to protect, promote and maintain the health and well-being of Niagara County residents.

Needs Description:

As it relates to health status and disparities Niagara County's prevention agenda indicators have been substantially worse compared to NYS in recent years. . In 2023, Niagara County ranked 51st in health outcomes out of the 62 ranked counties. Factoring the quality of life (premature death, poor physical health days, poor mental health days, and low birthweight), Niagara County ranked 46th. When taking into account access to and quality of clinical care, Niagara County ranked 54th. As prevention is all encompassing, specific strategies are critical to employ that focus on the following: reducing stigma and barriers to care; increasing awareness of available services and navigating access to preventative care; and integration of physical and behavioral health models of care into programming that are culturally appropriate and tailored for underserved communities and populations utilizing local data sources to guide efforts.

**Niagara County Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
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Goal 8: Tackle the Opioid / Drug Epidemic

Target Date: 12/31/2027

Increase the availability of, access to, and awareness of harm reduction options in a manner that demonstrates humility and compassion towards people who use drugs (and their loved ones) to reduce overdoses and other negative health outcomes.

Needs Description:

Disproportionately impacted by the opioid crisis, Niagara County exceeds NYS rates on most of the DOH Opioid related indicators. From 2020 – 2022, Niagara County observed an opioid overdose rate of 39.8 per 100,000 persons, ranking 55th out of 62 counties. Niagara County experienced about a 23% increase in suspected overdose fatalities in 2023 compared to 2022 (75 compared to 61). Niagara County saw a 23% increase in suspected fatal overdoses in 2023 over 2022. There was also a 3.1% increase in the total number of reported suspected overdoses in 2023 compared to 2022. Individuals with substance use concerns face tremendous stigma from the community in which they live as the community lacks factual information and education about individuals who use drugs, addiction, what harm-reduction is, what it means and its purpose. This negatively impacts people's willingness to seek support, creates greater health inequities and disparities.

An alarming trend throughout Niagara County is the early use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs. Early use of these substances delays youth from learning positive coping strategies and may impact youth development. Youth consumption of marijuana can be attributed to increased access, a change in public opinion due to its legalization, and an indifference from parents toward marijuana. While LGU and local agency prevention program education efforts have targeted youth and parents, more education on associated risk factors and harm reduction is needed.