

STATE OF NEW YORK

1797

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 13, 2025

Introduced by Sens. FERNANDEZ, HARCKHAM -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Mental Health

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to creating the office of addiction and mental health services

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Subdivisions 2 and 2-a of section 1.03 of the mental
2 hygiene law, subdivision 2 as amended and subdivision 2-a as added by
3 chapter 281 of the laws of 2019, are amended to read as follows:

4 2. "Commissioner" means the commissioner of [~~mental health,~~ addiction
5 and mental health services and the commissioner of developmental disa-
6 bilities [~~and the commissioner of addiction services and supports~~] as
7 used in this chapter. Any power or duty heretofore assigned to the
8 commissioner of mental hygiene or to the department of mental hygiene
9 pursuant to this chapter shall hereafter be assigned to the commissioner
10 of [~~mental health~~ addiction and mental health services in the case of
11 facilities, programs, or services for individuals with [~~mental illness~~
12 a mental health diagnosis, to the commissioner of developmental disabili-
13 ties in the case of facilities, programs, or services for individuals
14 with developmental disabilities, to the commissioner of addiction
15 [~~services~~] and [~~supports~~] mental health services in the case of facili-
16 ties, programs, or addiction disorder services in accordance with the
17 provisions of titles D and E of this chapter.

18 2-a. Notwithstanding any other section of law or regulation, on and
19 after the effective date of this subdivision, any and all references to
20 the office of alcoholism and substance abuse services and the predeces-
21 sor agencies to the office of alcoholism and substance abuse services
22 including the division of alcoholism and alcohol abuse and the division
23 of substance abuse services and all references to the office of mental
24 health, shall be known as the "office of addiction [~~services~~] and
25 [~~supports~~] mental health services." Nothing in this subdivision shall

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD05307-01-5

1 be construed as requiring or prohibiting the further amendment of stat-
2 utes or regulations to conform to the provisions of this subdivision.

3 § 2. Section 5.01 of the mental hygiene law, as amended by chapter 281
4 of the laws of 2019, is amended and two new sections 5.01-a and 5.01-b
5 are added to read as follows:

6 § 5.01 Department of mental hygiene.

7 There shall continue to be in the state government a department of
8 mental hygiene. Within the department there shall be the following
9 autonomous offices:

10 (1) office of addiction and mental health services; and

11 (2) office for people with developmental disabilities[†

12 ~~(3) office of addiction services and supports~~].

13 § 5.01-a Office of addiction and mental health services.

14 (a) The office of addiction and mental health services shall be a new
15 office within the department formed by the integration of the offices
16 and services of mental health and addiction services and supports which
17 shall focus on the integration of care and issues related to both mental
18 illness and addiction in the state and carry out the intent of the
19 legislature in establishing the offices pursuant to articles seven and
20 nineteen of this chapter. The office of addiction and mental health
21 services is charged with ensuring the development of comprehensive plans
22 for the integration of programs and services in the area of research,
23 prevention, care and treatment, co-occurring disorders, rehabilitation,
24 education and training, and shall be staffed to perform the responsibil-
25 ities attributed to the office pursuant to sections 7.07 and 19.07 of
26 this chapter and provide integrated services and programs to promote
27 recovery for individuals with a mental health diagnosis, substance use
28 disorder, or a mental health diagnosis and substance use disorder.

29 (b) The commissioner of the office of addiction and mental health
30 services shall be vested with the powers, duties, and obligations of the
31 office of mental health and the office of addiction services and
32 supports. Additionally, two deputy commissioners shall be appointed,
33 one deputy commissioner to represent addiction services and supports,
34 which shall be prominently represented to ensure the needs of substance
35 use disorder communities are met, and one deputy commissioner to repre-
36 sent mental health services. In conjunction with one another, the
37 commissioners shall develop a plan for integrating services which shall
38 be made available for public comment.

39 (c) The office of addiction and mental health services may license
40 providers to provide integrated services for individuals with a mental
41 health diagnosis, substance use disorder, or a mental health diagnosis
42 and substance use disorder, in accordance with regulations issued by the
43 commissioner. Such direct licensing mechanism allows for resources to
44 get to community-based organizations in an expedited manner.

45 (d) The office of addiction and mental health services shall establish
46 a standing advisory committee on addiction and mental health services.
47 The standing advisory committee shall consist of seven members appointed
48 by the governor as follows: (i) two members appointed on the recommenda-
49 tion of the temporary president of the senate; (ii) two members
50 appointed on the recommendation of the speaker of the assembly; (iii)
51 one member appointed on the recommendation of the minority leader of the
52 senate; (iv) one member appointed on the recommendation of the minority
53 leader of the assembly; and (v) one member appointed on the recommenda-
54 tion of the department of health AIDS institute, the office of mental
55 health and the office of addiction services and supports to ensure the
56 intent of the legislature is fulfilled in establishing the integration

1 of services by such office. Such standing advisory committee shall
2 consist of providers, peers, family members, individuals who have
3 utilized addiction services and supports and/or mental health services,
4 the local government unit as defined in article forty-one of this chap-
5 ter, public and private sector unions and representatives of other agen-
6 cies or offices as the designated standing advisory committee may deem
7 necessary. Such standing advisory committee shall meet regularly in
8 furtherance of its functions and at any other time at the request of the
9 designated standing advisory committee leader.

10 § 5.01-b Office of addiction and mental health services; composition of
11 office.

12 Until January first, two thousand twenty-six, the office of addiction
13 and mental health services shall consist of the office of mental health
14 and the office of addiction services and supports.

15 § 3. Section 5.03 of the mental hygiene law, as amended by chapter 281
16 of the laws of 2019, is amended to read as follows:

17 § 5.03 Commissioners.

18 The head of the office of addiction and mental health services shall
19 be the commissioner of [~~mental health~~] addiction and mental health
20 services; and the head of the office for people with developmental disa-
21 bilities shall be the commissioner of developmental disabilities[~~, and~~
22 ~~the head of the office of addiction services and supports shall be the~~
23 ~~commissioner of addiction services and supports~~]. Each commissioner
24 shall be appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent
25 of the senate, to serve at the pleasure of the governor. Until the
26 commissioner of addiction and mental health services is appointed by the
27 governor and confirmed by the senate, the commissioner of mental health
28 and the commissioner of addiction services and supports shall continue
29 to oversee mental health and addiction services respectively, and work
30 collaboratively to integrate care for individuals with both mental
31 health and substance use disorders.

32 § 4. Section 5.05 of the mental hygiene law, as added by chapter 978
33 of the laws of 1977, subdivision (a) as amended by chapter 168 of the
34 laws of 2010, subdivision (b) as amended by chapter 294 of the laws of
35 2007, paragraph 1 of subdivision (b) as amended by section 14 of part J
36 of chapter 56 of the laws of 2012, subdivision (d) as added by chapter
37 58 of the laws of 1988 and subdivision (e) as added by chapter 588 of
38 the laws of 2011, is amended to read as follows:

39 § 5.05 Powers and duties of the head of the department.

40 (a) The commissioners of the office of addiction and mental health
41 services and the office for people with developmental disabilities, as
42 the heads of the department, shall jointly visit and inspect, or cause
43 to be visited and inspected, all facilities either public or private
44 used for the care, treatment [~~and~~], rehabilitation, and recovery of
45 individuals with a mental [~~illness~~] health diagnosis, substance use
46 disorder and developmental disabilities in accordance with the require-
47 ments of section four of article seventeen of the New York state consti-
48 tution.

49 (b) (1) The commissioners of the office of addiction and mental
50 health[~~,~~] services and the office for people with developmental disabil-
51 ities [~~and the office of alcoholism and substance abuse services~~] shall
52 constitute an inter-office coordinating council which, consistent with
53 the autonomy of each office for matters within its jurisdiction, shall
54 ensure that the state policy for the prevention, care, treatment [~~and~~],
55 rehabilitation, and recovery of individuals with a mental [~~illness~~]
56 health diagnosis, substance use disorders and developmental disabili-

1 ties [~~alcoholism, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, substance dependence,~~
2 ~~and chemical dependence~~] is planned, developed and implemented compre-
3 hensively; that gaps in services to individuals with multiple disabili-
4 ties are eliminated and that no person is denied treatment and services
5 because [~~he or she has~~] they have more than one disability; that proce-
6 dures for the regulation of programs which offer care and treatment for
7 more than one class of persons with mental disabilities be coordinated
8 between the offices having jurisdiction over such programs; and that
9 research projects of the institutes, as identified in section 7.17 [~~or~~],
10 13.17, or 19.17 of this chapter or as operated by the office for people
11 with developmental disabilities, are coordinated to maximize the success
12 and cost effectiveness of such projects and to eliminate wasteful dupli-
13 cation.

14 (2) The inter-office coordinating council shall annually issue a
15 report on its activities to the legislature on or before December thir-
16 ty-first. Such annual report shall include, but not be limited to, the
17 following information: proper treatment models and programs for persons
18 with multiple disabilities and suggested improvements to such models and
19 programs; research projects of the institutes and their coordination
20 with each other; collaborations and joint initiatives undertaken by the
21 offices of the department; consolidation of regulations of each of the
22 offices of the department to reduce regulatory inconsistencies between
23 the offices; inter-office or office activities related to workforce
24 training and development; data on the prevalence, availability of
25 resources and service utilization by persons with multiple disabilities;
26 eligibility standards of each office of the department affecting clients
27 suffering from multiple disabilities, and eligibility standards under
28 which a client is determined to be an office's primary responsibility;
29 agreements or arrangements on statewide, regional and local government
30 levels addressing how determinations over client responsibility are made
31 and client responsibility disputes are resolved; information on any
32 specific cohort of clients with multiple disabilities for which substan-
33 tial barriers in accessing or receiving appropriate care has been
34 reported or is known to the inter-office coordinating council or the
35 offices of the department; and coordination of planning, standards or
36 services for persons with multiple disabilities between the inter-office
37 coordinating council, the offices of the department and local govern-
38 ments in accordance with the local planning requirements set forth in
39 article forty-one of this chapter.

40 (c) The commissioners shall meet from time to time with the New York
41 state conference of local mental hygiene directors to assure consistent
42 procedures in fulfilling the responsibilities required by this section
43 and by article forty-one of this chapter.

44 (d) [~~1.~~] (1) The commissioner of addiction and mental health services
45 shall evaluate the type and level of care required by patients in the
46 adult psychiatric centers authorized by section 7.17 of this chapter and
47 develop appropriate comprehensive requirements for the staffing of inpa-
48 tient wards. These requirements should reflect measurable need for
49 administrative and direct care staff including physicians, nurses and
50 other clinical staff, direct and related support and other support
51 staff, established on the basis of sound clinical judgment. The staffing
52 requirements shall include but not be limited to the following: (i) the
53 level of care based on patient needs, including on ward activities, (ii)
54 the number of admissions, (iii) the geographic location of each facili-
55 ty, (iv) the physical layout of the campus, and (v) the physical design
56 of patient care wards.

1 ~~[2-]~~ (2) Such commissioner, in developing the requirements, shall
2 provide for adequate ward coverage on all shifts taking into account the
3 number of individuals expected to be off the ward due to sick leave,
4 workers' compensation, mandated training and all other off ward leaves.

5 ~~[3-]~~ (3) The staffing requirements shall be designed to reflect the
6 legitimate needs of facilities so as to ensure full accreditation and
7 certification by appropriate regulatory bodies. The requirements shall
8 reflect appropriate industry standards. The staffing requirements shall
9 be fully measurable.

10 ~~[4-]~~ (4) The commissioner of addiction and mental health services
11 shall submit an interim report to the governor and the legislature on
12 the development of the staffing requirements on October first, [~~nineteen~~
13 ~~hundred eighty eight~~] two thousand twenty-five and again on April first,
14 [~~nineteen hundred eighty-nine~~] two thousand twenty-six. The commissioner
15 shall submit a final report to the governor and the legislature no later
16 than October first, [~~nineteen hundred eighty-nine~~] two thousand twenty-
17 six and shall include in [~~his~~] their report a plan to achieve the staff-
18 ing requirements and the length of time necessary to meet these require-
19 ments.

20 (e) The commissioners of the office of addiction and mental health[~~7]~~
21 services and the office for people with developmental disabilities[~~7~~
22 ~~and the office of alcoholism and substance abuse services~~] shall cause to
23 have all new contracts with agencies and providers licensed by the
24 offices to have a clause requiring notice be provided to all current and
25 new employees of such agencies and providers stating that all instances
26 of abuse shall be investigated pursuant to this chapter, and, if an
27 employee leaves employment prior to the conclusion of a pending abuse
28 investigation, the investigation shall continue. Nothing in this section
29 shall be deemed to diminish the rights, privileges, or remedies of any
30 employee under any other law or regulation or under any collective
31 bargaining agreement or employment contract.

32 § 5. Section 7.01 of the mental hygiene law, as added by chapter 978
33 of the laws of 1977, is amended to read as follows:
34 § 7.01 Declaration of policy.

35 The state of New York and its local governments have a responsibility
36 for the prevention and early detection of mental [~~illness~~] health disor-
37 ders and for the comprehensively planned care, treatment [~~and~~], rehabil-
38 itation and recovery of [~~their mentally ill citizens~~] individuals with a
39 mental health diagnosis.

40 Therefore, it shall be the policy of the state to conduct research and
41 to develop programs which further prevention and early detection of
42 mental [~~illness~~] health disorders; to develop a comprehensive, inte-
43 grated system of treatment [~~and~~], rehabilitative and recovery services
44 for [~~the mentally ill~~] individuals with a mental health diagnosis. Such
45 a system should include, whenever possible, the provision of necessary
46 treatment services to people in their home communities; it should assure
47 the adequacy and appropriateness of residential arrangements for people
48 in need of service; and it should rely upon improved programs of insti-
49 tutional care only when necessary and appropriate. Further, such a
50 system should recognize the important therapeutic roles of all disci-
51 plines which may contribute to the care or treatment of [~~the mentally~~
52 ~~ill~~] individuals with a mental health diagnosis, such as psychology,
53 social work, psychiatric nursing, special education and other disci-
54 plines in the field of mental illness, as well as psychiatry and should
55 establish accountability for implementation of the policies of the state

1 with regard to the care [~~and~~], rehabilitation and recovery of [~~the~~
2 ~~mentally ill~~] individuals with a mental health diagnosis.

3 To facilitate the implementation of these policies and to further
4 advance the interests of [~~the mentally ill~~] individuals with a mental
5 health diagnosis and their families, a new autonomous agency to be known
6 as the office of addiction and mental health services has been estab-
7 lished by this article. The office and its commissioner shall plan and
8 work with local governments, voluntary agencies and all providers and
9 consumers of mental health services in order to develop an effective,
10 integrated, comprehensive system for the delivery of all services to
11 [~~the mentally ill~~] individuals with a mental health diagnosis and to
12 create financing procedures and mechanisms to support such a system of
13 services to ensure that [~~mentally ill~~] persons in need of services
14 receive appropriate care, treatment and rehabilitation close to their
15 families and communities. In carrying out these responsibilities, the
16 office and its commissioner shall make full use of existing services in
17 the community including those provided by voluntary organizations.

18 § 6. Section 19.01 of the mental hygiene law, as added by chapter 223
19 of the laws of 1992, is amended to read as follows:

20 § 19.01 Declaration of policy.

21 The legislature declares the following:

22 [~~Alcoholism~~] Unhealthy alcohol use, substance [~~abuse~~] use disorder and
23 chemical dependence pose major health and social problems for individ-
24 uals and their families when left untreated, including family devas-
25 tation, homelessness, [~~and~~] unemployment, and death. It has been proven
26 that successful prevention [~~and~~], integrated treatment, and sustained
27 recovery can dramatically reduce costs to the health care, criminal
28 justice and social welfare systems.

29 The tragic, cumulative and often fatal consequences of [~~alcoholism~~]
30 unhealthy alcohol use and substance [~~abuse~~] use disorder are, however,
31 preventable and treatable disabilities that require a coordinated and
32 multi-faceted network of services.

33 The legislature recognizes locally planned and implemented prevention
34 as a primary means to avert the onset of [~~alcoholism~~] unhealthy alcohol
35 use and substance [~~abuse~~] use disorder. It is the policy of the state to
36 promote comprehensive, age appropriate education for children and youth
37 and stimulate public awareness of the risks associated with [~~alcoholism~~]
38 unhealthy alcohol use and substance [~~abuse~~] use disorder. Further, the
39 legislature acknowledges the need for a coordinated state policy for the
40 establishment of prevention [~~and~~], treatment, and recovery programs
41 designed to address the problems of chemical dependency among youth,
42 including prevention and intervention efforts in school and community-
43 based programs designed to identify and refer high risk youth in need of
44 chemical dependency services.

45 Substantial benefits can be gained through [~~alcoholism~~] unhealthy
46 alcohol use and substance [~~abuse~~] use disorder treatment for both
47 addicted individuals and their families. Positive treatment outcomes
48 that may be generated through a complete continuum of care offer a cost
49 effective and comprehensive approach to [~~rehabilitating~~] treating such
50 individuals. The primary goals of the [~~rehabilitation~~] treatment and
51 recovery process are to [~~restore~~] rebuild social, family, lifestyle,
52 vocational and economic supports by stabilizing an individual's physical
53 and psychological functioning. The legislature recognizes the impor-
54 tance of varying treatment approaches and levels of care designed to
55 meet each [~~client's~~] individual's needs. [~~Relapse~~] Reoccurrence

1 prevention and aftercare are two primary components of treatment that
2 serve to promote and maintain recovery.

3 The legislature recognizes that the distinct treatment needs of
4 special populations, including women and ~~[women]~~ individuals with chil-
5 dren, persons with HIV infection, persons [diagnosed] with a mental
6 ~~[illness]~~ health diagnosis, persons who ~~[abuse]~~ misuse chemicals, the
7 homeless and veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder, merit partic-
8 ular attention. It is the intent of the legislature to promote effective
9 interventions for such populations in need of particular attention. The
10 legislature also recognizes the importance of family support for indi-
11 viduals in alcohol or substance ~~[abuse]~~ use disorder treatment and
12 recovery. Such family participation can provide lasting support to the
13 recovering individual to ~~[prevent relapse and maintain]~~ support
14 sustained recovery. The intergenerational cycle of chemical dependency
15 within families can be intercepted through appropriate interventions.

16 The state of New York and its local governments have a responsibility
17 in coordinating the delivery of ~~[alcoholism]~~ unhealthy alcohol use and
18 substance ~~[abuse]~~ use disorder services, through the entire network of
19 service providers. To accomplish these objectives, the legislature
20 declares that the establishment of a single, unified office of ~~[alcohol-~~
21 ~~ism and substance abuse]~~ addiction and mental health services will
22 provide an integrated framework to plan, oversee and regulate the
23 state's prevention and treatment network. In recognition of the growing
24 trends and incidence of chemical dependency, this consolidation allows
25 the state to respond to the changing profile of chemical dependency.
26 The legislature recognizes that some distinctions exist between the
27 ~~[alcoholism]~~ unhealthy alcohol use and substance ~~[abuse]~~ use disorder
28 field and the mental health field and where appropriate, those
29 distinctions may be preserved. Accordingly, it is the intent of the
30 state to establish one office of ~~[alcoholism and substance abuse]~~
31 addiction and mental health services in furtherance of a comprehensive
32 service delivery system.

33 § 7. Upon or prior to January 1, 2026, the governor may nominate an
34 individual to serve as commissioner of the office of addiction and
35 mental health services. If such individual is confirmed by the senate
36 prior to January 1, 2026, they shall become the commissioner of the
37 office of addiction and mental health services. The governor may desig-
38 nate a person to exercise the powers of the commissioner of the office
39 of addiction and mental health services on an acting basis, until
40 confirmation of a nominee by the senate, who is hereby authorized to
41 take such actions as are necessary and proper to implement the orderly
42 transition of the functions, powers and duties as herein provided,
43 including the preparation for a budget request for the office as estab-
44 lished by this act.

45 § 8. Upon the transfer pursuant to this act of the functions and
46 powers possessed by and all of the obligations and duties of the office
47 of mental health and the office of addiction services and supports as
48 established pursuant to the mental hygiene law and other laws, to the
49 office of addiction and mental health services as prescribed by this
50 act, provision shall be made for the transfer of all employees from the
51 office of mental health and the office of addiction services and
52 supports into the office of addiction and mental health services.
53 Employees so transferred shall be transferred without further examina-
54 tion or qualification to the same or similar titles and shall remain in
55 the same collective bargaining units and shall retain their respective

1 civil service classifications, status, and rights pursuant to their
2 collective bargaining units and collective bargaining agreements.

3 § 9. Notwithstanding any contrary provision of law, on or before Octo-
4 ber 1, 2025 and annually thereafter, the office of addiction and mental
5 health services, in consultation with the department of health, shall
6 issue a report, and post such report on their public website, detailing
7 the office's expenditures for addiction and mental health services,
8 including total Medicaid spending directly by the state to licensed or
9 designated providers and payments to managed care providers pursuant to
10 section 364-j of the social services law. The office of addiction and
11 mental health services shall examine reports produced pursuant to this
12 section and may make recommendations to the governor and the legislature
13 regarding appropriations for addiction and mental health services or
14 other provisions of law which may be necessary to effectively implement
15 the creation and continued operation of the office.

16 § 10. Any financial saving realized from the creation of the office of
17 addiction and mental health services shall be reinvested in the services
18 and supports funded by such office.

19 § 11. Severability. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, section or
20 part of this act shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdic-
21 tion to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate
22 the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the
23 clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part thereof directly involved
24 in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been rendered.

25 § 12. This act shall take effect immediately. Effective immediately,
26 the office of mental health and the office of addiction services and
27 supports are authorized to promulgate the addition, amendment and/or
28 repeal of any rule or regulation or engage in any work necessary for the
29 implementation of this act on its effective date authorized to be made
30 and completed on or before such effective date.