

STATE OF NEW YORK

8618

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

December 15, 2025

Introduced by Sen. CANZONERI-FITZPATRICK -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Rules

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to establishing a transportation assistance voucher demonstration program for certain outpatient mental health and substance use disorder services

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

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 the "behavioral health transportation access act".

3 § 2. Legislative findings and purpose. The legislature finds that many
4 New Yorkers receiving outpatient mental health and substance use disorder
5 services lack access to reliable and affordable transportation and
6 are ineligible for Medicaid-funded non-emergency medical transportation.
7 Individuals with incomes modestly above Medicaid thresholds often incur
8 significant transportation costs to attend therapy, counseling, medication
9 management, and recovery services, resulting in missed appointments
10 and early dropout from care. Such disruptions increase the likelihood of
11 psychiatric crisis, overdose, relapse, hospitalization, and involvement
12 with law enforcement, imposing substantial costs on the state and local
13 communities.

14 The purpose of this act is to authorize the office of mental health,
15 in consultation with the office of addiction services and supports, to
16 establish a demonstration program providing transportation assistance
17 vouchers to eligible individuals attending outpatient behavioral health
18 appointments, in order to promote continuity of care, reduce avoidable
19 crises, and improve behavioral health outcomes.

20 § 3. The mental hygiene law is amended by adding a new section 7.49 to
21 read as follows:

22 § 7.49 Transportation assistance voucher demonstration program.

23 (a) Definitions. As used in this section:

24 (1) "Eligible individual" means a resident of the state who:

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

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1 (i) has a scheduled appointment at an outpatient mental health program
2 licensed, operated, or funded by the office, or at an outpatient
3 substance use disorder program certified, operated, or funded by the
4 office of addiction services and supports;

5 (ii) has household income at or below two hundred fifty percent of the
6 federal poverty level;

7 (iii) is not enrolled in the medical assistance program under title
8 eleven of article five of the social services law and is not receiving
9 non-emergency medical transportation benefits for such appointment; and

10 (iv) lacks access, as determined by the commissioner, to safe, reli-
11 able, no-cost transportation to and from such appointment.

12 (2) "Outpatient behavioral health program" means an outpatient program
13 providing mental health or substance use disorder services that is
14 licensed, operated, or funded by the office or by the office of
15 addiction services and supports.

16 (3) "Transportation voucher" means a digital code, prepaid card, paper
17 voucher, transit pass, or reimbursement mechanism redeemable only for
18 transportation services authorized under this section.

19 (4) "Transportation services" means public transportation, including
20 bus, subway, light rail, paratransit, or commuter rail; for-hire trans-
21 portation including taxis, liveries, or rideshare services; and any
22 other transportation modality approved by the commissioner.

23 (b) Establishment. The commissioner, within amounts appropriated and
24 in consultation with the commissioner of addiction services and
25 supports, shall establish a transportation assistance voucher demon-
26 stration program to provide round-trip transportation to eligible indi-
27 viduals for scheduled outpatient behavioral health appointments.

28 (c) Program design. (1) The demonstration program may be implemented
29 directly by the office or through contracts or grant agreements with
30 local governmental units or outpatient behavioral health programs.

31 (2) The commissioner may establish eligibility verification proce-
32 dures, voucher issuance protocols, limits on voucher value or frequency,
33 attendance confirmation requirements, and safeguards to prevent fraud or
34 misuse.

35 (3) Vouchers shall be used solely for transportation to and from sche-
36 duled outpatient behavioral health appointments.

37 (d) Coordination with existing benefits. Individuals eligible for
38 non-emergency medical transportation through the medical assistance
39 program or any other public benefit shall not receive vouchers for the
40 same appointments under this section. The commissioner shall establish
41 procedures to prevent duplication of benefits.

42 (e) Outreach and administration. The office, in consultation with the
43 office of addiction services and supports, shall develop guidance and
44 materials to assist participating programs and local governmental units
45 in identifying eligible individuals and administering vouchers.

46 (f) Data collection and evaluation. (1) The office shall collect data
47 on participation, vouchers issued, appointment adherence, and such other
48 outcome measures as the commissioner deems relevant.

49 (2) No later than three years after the effective date of this
50 section, and annually thereafter while the demonstration program is
51 operational, the commissioner shall submit a report to the governor and
52 the legislature on program implementation, outcomes, and recommenda-
53 tions.

54 (g) Funding. The commissioner may use state appropriations, federal
55 funds, local contributions, or private grants or donations for the

1 purposes of this section. Nothing in this section shall create an enti-
2 tlement to transportation assistance.

3 (h) Confidentiality. All individually identifiable information
4 collected pursuant to this section shall be maintained in accordance
5 with applicable state and federal confidentiality laws.

6 § 4. The mental hygiene law is amended by adding a new section 19.46
7 to read as follows:

8 § 19.46 Transportation assistance voucher demonstration program; coordi-
9 nation.

10 The office of addiction services and supports shall collaborate with
11 the office of mental health in the implementation and evaluation of the
12 transportation assistance voucher demonstration program established
13 pursuant to section 7.49 of this chapter, and is authorized to enter
14 into contracts, provide guidance, and collect data consistent with such
15 implementation.

16 § 5. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after
17 it shall have become a law; provided, however, that the office of mental
18 health and the office of addiction services and supports are authorized
19 to promulgate regulations and take any other measures necessary for
20 implementation prior to such effective date.