



# Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of Children Seeking Asylum in New York City

*For parents and caregivers who have come  
with children to New York City to seek asylum*



 Mayor's Office of  
Community  
Mental Health

# Dear Parents & Caregivers

You have come to New York City with your children seeking safety, freedom and a better life. We want to give you support and made this guide with you in mind.

## **Caring for the Whole Person - Mental Healthcare is Key!**

New York City government offers shelter, health, and social services for your family. Support for the emotional wellbeing of your family is also available to help you build a healthy life for you and your children. Remember that both mental and physical wellbeing are equally important parts of overall health!

## What is mental health?

Mental and physical health are equally important parts of our overall health. Mental health deals with feelings, thoughts, and actions — it affects how we relate to ourselves, others and the world — the way we handle stress and make healthy choices. For our children, their growth and development, how they play, learn, cope with challenges, reach milestones and function well in home, school and the community—are all dependent on their mental health. Overall, mental health and physical health go hand in hand, influencing each other in many ways.

YOU can take proactive steps to strengthen and protect your children's and your own mental health by developing healthy habits and coping strategies, fostering a safe and nurturing environment for your family, learning more about mental health and social emotional resources - so that you and your children can adapt well to change, and cope with life's challenges, and lead meaningful, healthy lives!

## Why are mental health resources important?

As an adult caregiver who arrived with children in your care, you have encountered many unknowns and risks, you have gone through challenging or even scary situations. Now that you are in New York City, you may continue to face some unfamiliar things that can be hard for you and your young ones as you try to settle in and start a new life. Many people who have had to face challenges and hardship find themselves worrying often about things, feeling sad, having angry feelings; they may have trouble focusing thoughts, and become forgetful.

They may find themselves having a hard time falling asleep or sleeping too much, and their appetite may also be affected. You may be experiencing some of these symptoms, or you may see this happening to your children too. These are very common reactions to having faced big challenges and hardships.

For example, according to the the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 9% of children in the United States have anxiety conditions that have been diagnosed by a clinician. See [more facts about childhood anxiety and depression](#). Symptoms may pass with time, but sometimes they last longer, and it is a great idea to get help to return to your normal self, to feel at ease again. You can recover. All these symptoms can happen because of the experience of migration.<sup>1</sup>

## Did you know that the experience of migration impacts children's mental health?

These are examples of reasons why the stress of migration, leaving one's home to a new place, affects mental health:

- Many new and unfamiliar experiences
- Difficulty communicating due to language and/or cultural differences
- Family separation and loss
- Being treated unkindly or unfairly.<sup>2</sup>

## There is hope...

Many things can help you and your children feel better and cope with hard things you have faced. It is good to do these things to keep your child healthy.<sup>1</sup>

- Attending school and social programs
- A safe place to live
- Caring and trusted adults in the family
- Creating a daily routine
- Exercise
- Healthy eating

## How to use this guide?

The ready-to-use information included here can be used digitally on your phone or on a computer. Click the link next to each picture below to view the guides. Next to each link, there is information about how to use each guide and the age group it is for.

This guide will help:

1. Children and teens cope with stress
2. Pregnant people and families care for themselves during pregnancy and nurture infants in their care
3. Families access mental health services

**Note:** This guide only focuses on mental health for children and caregivers. It is not a complete resource for all social service and mental health services in New York City. Please look at the [NYC Office of Asylum Seeker Operations website](#) for more information.

# Mental Health Toolkit For Caregivers

We at the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health encourage self-care and community care, understanding that healing comes in many forms. It is normal to have feelings go up and down, sadness, anxiety, worry, fear, anger or guilt.

This is a list of things to do to help you cope—to gain a sense of calm, feel in control, and find hope. Look and try each one at your own pace. There is professional help when needed. When you learn coping skills, you will know how to take care of the well-being of you and your loved ones, for now and into the future.

☐ **Be kind to yourself:**

Take as little as 1 minute each day to care for your mental and emotional health (e.g., say a prayer, take a few calming breaths, do a gentle stretch, etc.). Be compassionate to your own needs. Notice the different feelings you have and try not to judge yourself for how you feel.

☐ **Watch and chat:**

Regularly talk with your children, watch their moods, and notice any new challenging behaviors. Show your care and love; be accepting towards their feelings. To care for your teen(s) or young person(s), be interested in their day and give them space when they need it.

☐ **Create a new routine:**

For parents and caregivers, think of a new ritual you can do as a family to make new memories and positive moments. This can be a short walk after dinner together or talking about your day before bedtime.

☐ **Connect with supportive adults:**

For parents, be in touch with your children's teachers so you can find out how they are doing at school, share your concerns about their emotional health or behaviors with their teachers.

☐ **Build your mental strength and resilience:**

Choose an activity or resource below and use it with your loved one to build healthy skills.

☐ **Learn about signs of stress:**

Read about common and normal reactions to difficult experiences or trauma, and when you need to reach out for more help. See the many educational guides below.

☐ **Find trusted support:**

You may be far away from friends and family, and it is important to build or re-build a circle of support for yourself. Slowly make new friends, find new community, go to a church or place of worship, and stay connected by phone or on social media if possible.

☐ **More help:**

Go to the [Mayor's Office of Asylum Seekers Website](#) for updated resources.





# How To Help Children & Teens Cope With Stress



**SCAN this QR code to open all these resources links.**

Open the camera app on your phone and point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears to open Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health webpage where you can download this guide onto your device.

## **My Resilience Workbook - Inner Space** [English Only]

[Mi Libro de Actividades de Resiliencia - Espacio Interior](#) [En Espanol]

- Who: Parents of children ages 5-10
- What: Workbook
- How: Best if printed to use as a workbook but can also use on your mobile phone
- Credit: Written by Tzivy Reiter and Naomi Baum, Ohel Children's Home and Family Services (shared with permission from the authors)



*INNER SPACE, for parents, helps your children ages 5-10 name their feelings and learn ways to cope. Parents, you can read through the workbook and do the activities together as a playful way to talk about different emotions.*

## **Talking to young children when violence happens** [English]

[Hablando con los Niños Cuando Sucede La Violencia](#) [En Espanol]

- Who: Parents of young children up to age 11
- What: Tips
- How: Print or use on your mobile phone
- Credit: Center for Resilience + Well Being in Schools



*When your young children go through something scary, they look to adults for comfort. Parents, these tips tell you how to make children feel safe.*

## **Talking to teens when violence happens** [English]

[Hablano con los Adolescents Cuando Sucede la Violencia](#) [En Espanol]

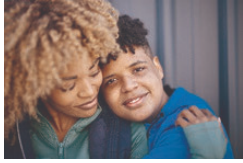
- Who: Parents of teens
- What: Toolkit
- How: Print or use on your mobile phone
- Credit: Center for Resilience + Well Being in Schools



*Your teens will come to you with questions, wanting to know more about what happened after something scary takes place. These tips tell you how to talk to teens to make them feel safer.*

## [Talking to young people about their mental health](#) [English]

- Who: Parents of teens
- What: Toolkit
- How: Printed or use on your mobile phone.
- Credit: Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health



*Parents, you may be first to notice changes in your child's behavior. If you do, it's time to talk to your young ones. Use these five steps to learn how to talk to young people about their feelings and connect them to mental health care.*

## [Tips for healing after disasters](#) [English]

- Who: Parents
- What: Tips
- How: Print or use on your mobile phone
- Credit: Mental Health First Aid



*This mental health first aid guide helps you, as a parent, cope when something scary happens. It includes parent tips about how to help children of all ages.*

## [Creating soothing environments for family](#) [English]

[Creando Ambientes de Apoyo Cuando Suceden Hechos Alarmantes](#) [En Espanol]

- Who: Parents
- What: Tips
- How: Print or view on mobile phone
- Credit: Center for Resilience + Well Being in Schools



*Building routines, rituals, and rhythm into your home life restores a sense of safety. These tips give ideas about how to restore calm on the inside by structuring what's outside.*

## [Simple Activities for Children and Adolescents](#) [English]

[Actividades sencillas para niños y adolescentes](#) [En Espanol]

- Who: Parents
- What: Activity Ideas
- How: View on mobile phone or print.
- Credit: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network



*Play helps your children grow and keeps them strong! Children who regularly play with their parents are less likely to develop problems with emotions and behavior. This guide lists fun games for you and little ones that do not need a lot of time or money. Great ways to keep little ones busy!*

# Help For Caregivers & Pregnant People



## **Starting Life Together** [English]

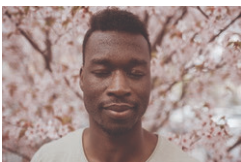
[Comenzando la vida juntos](#) [En Español]

- Who: Pregnant people or family caring for young children (0-5)
- What: A parenting booklet with information for healthy growth of children and parenting tips to help with challenges in the first five years.
- How: Print all or part of the booklet or view on a mobile phone.
- Credit: New York State Office of Mental Health

## **Practicing healthy coping for caregivers** [English]

[Prácticas para el Bienestar: Breves Recordatorios para Tiempos de Estrés](#) [En Español]

- Who: Any caregiver or anyone who works with youth of all ages
- What: Tips
- How: Print or view on a mobile phone
- Credit: Center for Resilience + Well Being in Schools



*This short list of well-being practices and gentle reminders for times of stress describes actions that caregivers can take to immediately reduce the body's stress response and restore calm.*

## **Help for People who are Pregnant or who Have Recently Given Birth** [English]

[Ayuda para personas embarazadas o que han dado a luz recientemente](#) [En Español]

- Who: People who are pregnant or who have recently given birth who need support
- What: Tips, connection to emotional and social support, information about postpartum mental health, and help line
- How: View website on a mobile phone; Call the help line: 1-800-944-4773
- Credit: Postpartum Support International

## Information about mood and anxiety during pregnancy and after giving birth [English]

### Trastorno del estado de animo y ansiedad en la etapa perinatal [En Espanol]

- Who: People who are pregnant or who have recently given birth
- What: Information about how to identify perinatal depression and anxiety, risk factors, and ways to seek help
- How: Print or view on a mobile phone
- Credit: Postpartum Support International

**PERINATAL MOOD AND ANXIETY DISORDERS (PMADS)**  
Perinatal: Anytime during pregnancy through the first year postpartum

**SYMPTOMS**

- Feelings of guilt, shame or hopelessness
- Feelings of anger, rage, or irritability, or scary and unwanted thoughts
- Lack of interest in the baby or difficulty bonding with baby
- Loss of interest, joy or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- Disturbances of sleep and appetite
- Crying and sadness, constant worry or racing thoughts
- Physical symptoms like dizziness, hot flashes, and nausea
- Possible thoughts of harming the baby or yourself

**TREATMENT OPTIONS**

- Counseling
- Medication
- Support from others
- Exercise
- Adequate sleep
- Healthy diet
- Bright light therapy
- Yoga
- Relaxation techniques

**RISK FACTORS**

- History of depression, anxiety, OCD
- Thyroid imbalance, diabetes, endocrine disorders
- Lack of support from family and friends
- Pregnancy or delivery complications, infertility, miscarriage or infant loss
- Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)
- Financial stress or poverty
- Abrupt discontinuation of breastfeeding
- History of Abuse
- Unwanted or unplanned pregnancy

Postpartum Support International | [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net) | 800.944.4773 (call or text)  
Updated March 27, 2023

PMAD Infographic ENGLISH

**TRASTORNO DEL ESTADO DE ÁNIMO Y ANSIEDAD EN LA ETAPA PERINATAL**  
Etapa perinatal: se refiere a cualquier tiempo durante el embarazo y el primer año de posparto o puerperio

**SÍNTOMAS**

- Tener sentimientos de culpa, vergüenza y desesperación
- Tener sentimiento de enojo, ira, irritabilidad, miedo o pensamientos no deseados
- No tener interés en el bebé o tener dificultad de apegarse al bebé
- Falta de interés, alegría, o placer en hacer cosas que solías hacer
- Interrupción en el sueño y el apetito
- Estar llorando y tener tristeza, preocupación constante o pensamientos acelerados
- Tener síntomas físicos incluyendo mareos, bochornos, y náusea
- Tener posibles pensamientos de lastimar a tu bebé o a ti misma

**OPCIONES DE TRATAMIENTO**

- Consejería
- Medicamento
- Apoyo social de alguien más
- Ejercicio
- Rutina saludable de dormir
- Dieta saludable
- Terapia de luz
- Yoga
- Técnicas de relajación

**FACTORES DE RIESGO**

- Tener antecedente de episodios de depresión, ansiedad, historia de depresión, ansiedad, TCO
- Tener imbalances en la tiroides, diabetes, o trastorno endocrínolo
- Falta de apoyo de la familia o amigos
- Complicaciones en el embarazo o en el parto, infertilidad, aborto espontáneo o pérdida infantil
- Síndrome premenstrual
- Estrés financiero o pobreza
- Parar de dar pecho a tu bebé repentinamente
- Tener antecedentes de abuso
- Haber tenido un embarazo no planeado o querido

Postpartum Support International | [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)  
800.944.4773 (#1 para español) 971-203-7773 (texto 'AYUDA')

PMAD Infographic SPANISH

## Call to receive doula support, resources, and services for pregnant people and people with infants

- Who: Families with a member who is pregnant or who are caring for infants
- What: Access to a variety of resources and support for pregnant people and families with pregnant people and infants
- How: **Call NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 347-396-7979** between 9 am and 5 pm and connect with a trained health worker to receive screening/referral for support and social services that help pregnant people and their families
- Translation is available – ask for the language you prefer
- Credit: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



# A Circle Of Care For Your Children

There is a saying “It takes a village to raise a child.”  
Who are the members of your care team?

## Parents and Caregivers:

Think about who makes up this “village” for you in New York City? Fill in the picture below with the names of people who help. Step-by-step, you can build a group of support for you and yours.

People who work in the community are part of your circle of support.

Your circle of support might be made of hospital or healthcare workers, teachers, members of your faith-based community, interpreters, lawyers, case workers, shelter workers, and others. They are a part of this village.

As a parent, you may be one of the first people to see changes in your child’s behavior or emotions that worry you. If you want professional mental health help for your child, you have to agree that it is okay with you that your child talks to a mental health worker. You will be asked to sign a form letting the mental health workers know that when your child talks to them, it is okay with you.

<b>Hospital or clinical mental health provider</b>	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____	 <p><b>We can all support you and your family</b></p> <p><b>I had no idea there was this much help available!</b></p> <p><b>Now I know I'm not alone!</b></p>	<b>Caregiver</b>
<b>School-based mental health</b>	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____		
<b>Faith community</b>	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____		
<b>Shelter case manager</b>	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____		
<b>Preferred language interpreter</b>	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____		
<b>Students in temporary housing liaison</b>	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____	<b>Young person</b>	

Share this information with all members of your care team if you like to help coordinate your child’s care. Your care team will ask you to sign a consent form to communicate with each other about your child’s mental health.

# Information To Help Your Family Access Mental Health Services If Needed

## NYC Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health

### How to Access Mental Health Services and Support in NYC [English]

### ¿Cómo ayudar a alguien que necesita cuidado para la salud mental? [En Español]

- **Use this guide to find the right kind of help (available in multiple languages)**
- **Who:** All ages
- **What:** In New York City, everyone can have healthcare, including mental healthcare. There are services that are free or low cost. Services are in your language and can be found in all neighborhoods in New York City. You can get healthcare even if you do not have insurance coverage. You can have health insurance at any age. You can get healthcare regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.
- **How:** View on a mobile phone.

## Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD)

- **Who:** Ages 14-24
- **What:** Drop-in Center -- A safe space for young people to access food, clothing, showers, laundry and mental health and substance use support. Also offering educational, job, housing, and family reunification help. Services offered regardless of immigration status. May be especially useful for Asylum Seekers ages 14-24 traveling independently.
- **How:** Print or view on a mobile phone.

### RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICES

#### DROP-IN SERVICES

Young people ages 14 through 24 are welcome! Food, clothing, showers, laundry and case management services are available. Receive referrals to crisis services programs, Transitional Independent Living programs and additional supportive services.

**MANHATTAN**  
**All Forney Center**   
307 West 38th Street  
New York, NY 10018  
(212) 206-0574

**The Door**  
555 Broome Street  
New York, NY 10013  
(646) 690-8986  
Mon-Fri: 9 AM-6 PM  
Sat: 10 AM-6 PM

**Safe Horizon**  
**Streetwork Harlem**  
209 West 125th Street  
New York, NY 10027  
(212) 695-2220  
Mon, Tues, Thurs-Sun:  
10 AM-6 PM

**BROOKLYN**  
**SCO Family of Services**   
774 Rockaway Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11211  
(718) 685-3850

**QUEENS**  
**Rising Ground Inc.**   
165-13 Jamaica Avenue, 2nd Floor  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
(718) 526-2400 ext. 2080

**Rising Ground Inc.**  
(Far Rockaway Site)  
1600 Central Avenue  
Far Rockaway, NY 11691  
(718) 471-6818 ext. 2123  
Mon-Thurs 2 PM-8 PM  
Fri: 11 AM-7 PM, Sat: 12 PM-8 PM

**STATEN ISLAND**  
**Project Hospitality**   
27 Fort Richmond Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10302  
(718) 876-4752

**BROOKLYN**  
**Cardinal McCloskey**   
**Community Services**  
333 East 149th Street  
Bronx, NY 10451  
(718) 593-5455  
(917) 334-0957



**NYC**  
Department of  
Youth & Community  
Development  
www.nyc.gov/dycd  
https://bit.ly/nyccenters

**DYCD Youth Connect**  
**1 (800) 246-4646**  
**(646) 343-6800**  
Monday - Friday 9 AM to 5 PM

### SERVICIOS PARA JÓVENES FUGITIVOS Y SIN HOGAR

#### PROGRAMAS DE SERVICIOS EN CASO DE CRISIS

Los programas de servicios en caso de crisis del DYCD ofrecen alojamiento de emergencia e intervención en caso de crisis. Estos servicios se ofrecen a jóvenes de 16 a 20 años (jóvenes fugitivos y sin hogar) y de 21 a 24 años (jóvenes adultos sin hogar). Los jóvenes pueden alojarse hasta 120 días.

**MANHATTAN**  
**The Bridge**  
(347) 275-2749  
all4bridge@youthcenterhouse.org  
\*Personas de identidad femenina/jóvenes adultos sin hogar

**Manhattan**  
**Maya's Place**  
(718) 844-2979  
all4mayas@youthcenterhouse.org

**BROOKLYN**  
**SCO Family of Services**  
321 West 125th Street  
New York, NY 10027  
(212) 206-0574 

**The Door**  
555 Broome Street  
New York, NY 10013  
(646) 690-8986  
Lun-Vie: 9am-6pm  
Sáb: 10am-6pm

**Safe Horizon**  
**Streetwork Harlem**  
209 West 125th Street  
New York, NY 10027  
(212) 695-2220  
Lun-Vie: 9am-6pm  
Sáb: 10am-6pm

**QUEENS**  
**Rising Ground Inc.**  
165-13 Jamaica Avenue, 2nd Floor  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
(718) 526-2400 ext. 2080 

**Rising Ground Inc.**  
(Centro de Far Rockaway)  
1600 Central Avenue  
Far Rockaway, NY 11691  
(718) 471-6818 ext. 2123  
Lun-Vie: 2pm-8pm  
Sáb: 11am-2pm, Sáb: 12pm-8pm

**STATEN ISLAND**  
**Project Hospitality**  
27 Fort Richmond Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10302  
(718) 876-4752 

**MANHATTAN**  
**Overseas House**  
Menores de 21 años (y madre si hay)  
(212) 613-0300  
\*Personas de identidad femenina/jóvenes adultos sin hogar

**All Forney Center**  
(718) 844-2979  
all4forney@youthcenter.org  
\*Contacta con el centro de acogida

**QUEENS**  
**All Forney Center**  
Jóvenes adultos sin hogar (De 21 a 24 años)  
(718) 206-0574  
all4forney@youthcenter.org  
\*Personas de identidad masculina

**Safe Horizon**  
**Streetwork Harlem**  
(917) 501-1562

**Streetwork Arms/Safe Space**  
(917) 433-3790  
(347) 266-7044  
\*Personas de identidad masculina

#### PROGRAMAS DE TRANSICIÓN A LA VIDA INDEPENDIENTE

Los programas de transición a la vida independiente del DYCD ofrecen servicios residenciales a los jóvenes de 16 a 20 años (jóvenes fugitivos sin hogar) y de 21 a 24 años (jóvenes adultos sin hogar). Los jóvenes pueden alojarse hasta 24 meses.

#### ASISTENCIA EN LAS CALLES

Los voluntarios que reciben los 5 distritos proporcionan ropa, alimentos, información y transporte a programas de servicios en caso de crisis y centros de acogida.

Para seguir las últimas noticias y ubicaciones, sigue a Streetwork en Instagram @streetworknyc

#### SERVICIOS DISPONIBLES EN TODOS LOS PROGRAMAS

- Programas educativos • Capacitación profesional • Asistencia para la colocación laboral
- Asesoramiento • Capacitación en habilidades básicas para la vida • Servicios de salud mental
- Remisión y colocación en viviendas • Ayuda a la integración familiar (cuando corresponda)

**NYC**  
Department of  
Youth & Community  
Development

**CONTACTA CON DYCD COMMUNITY CONNECT LLAMANDO AL 1.800.246.4646**  
O AL 646.343.6800, DE LUNES A VIERNES, 9AM-5PM

 @NYCYOUTH

[Runaway & Homeless Youth Services](#)  
[English]

[SERVICIOS PARA JÓVENES FUGITIVOS Y SIN HOGAR](#)  
[En Español]

# Help Is Always Available

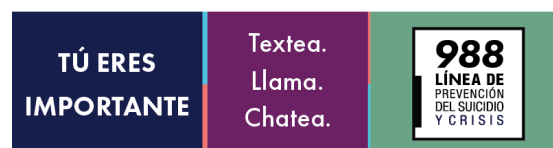
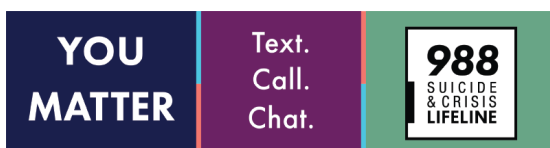
## NYC Teenspace

- Who: Any teenager age 13 to 17 living in NYC
- What: Free mental health support program. Whether you struggle with mental health challenges or just want somebody to talk to about your everyday ups and downs.
- How: [Visit Talkspace](#) and enter your address and birthday. Enter your parent or guardian's information and email address so they can provide consent. Complete a simple online assessment. You will then get matched with a licensed therapist for ongoing virtual support, access online mental health exercises or both.



## 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

- Who: Any age
- What: If you or a loved one are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, 988 can help. 988 is your connection to free, confidential crisis counseling, mental health and substance use support, information and referrals
- **Speak to a counselor via [phone](#), [text](#), or [chat](#)** and get access to mental health and substance use services, in more than 200 languages, 24/7/365. NYC 988 is your connection to get the help you need.
- [Call or Text 988](#)
- [Chat Now](#) at [988lifeline.org/chat/](https://988lifeline.org/chat/)
- [Find Services](https://nyc.gov/988) at [nyc.gov/988](https://nyc.gov/988)
- Relay Service for Deaf/Hard of Hearing: [Call 711](#)
- Español: [988](#), Aprete 2
- Veteran's Crisis Line dial [988](#), press 1
- LGBTQI+ Youth & Young Adults dial [988](#), press 3
- How: Call, Text, View on a mobile phone or [Search the NYC988 database](#) for behavioral health and substance use services that work for you.







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Open the camera app on your phone and point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears to open this guide on your device.

### **About The Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH):**

The Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health is committed to improving mental health outcomes for all New Yorkers, so that more people can get the mental health support they need to live healthy and content lives. We work with City agencies to reduce barriers to mental health care for underserved communities. Our priorities are rooted in equity, racial justice, and cultural responsiveness. We adopt a community-centered and strength-based approach that recognizes diverse perspectives, lived experiences, resilience, and the unique needs of New Yorkers.

You can [visit our website for more information and mental health resources](https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us).

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