

Listening & Feedback Tour Executive Summary



Peer Support Workers and Community Health Workers

Introduction

Amidst the behavioral health workforce crisis in New York City, the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH) convened an interagency working group over 18 months beginning January of 2023 to tackle workforce related challenges. One key strategy identified by the group was to redefine the ecosystem of behavioral health supports by strengthening and expanding the critical roles played by both Peer Support Workers (PSWs) and Community Health Workers (CHWs).

To better understand the roles and needs of PSWs and CHWs in the behavioral health workforce, the Community Engagement Committee organized a Listening and Feedback Tour with organizations that employ PSWs and CHWs. The tour engaged PSWs and CHWs on issues impacting their work including the skills and support required to be effective in their current roles, opportunities for career advancement and continuous learning, and policy change needed to improve their work environment and job satisfaction. The Committee collected qualitative data from more than 155 PSWs and CHWs, representing 27 organizations, across over 22 sessions.

Key Findings

Both PSWs and CHWs expressed a desire for enhanced training opportunities to acquire additional skills which would enable them to be more effective in their roles and facilitate their career growth and progression.

PSWs and CHWs highlighted the importance of better compensation, stronger supervision, and increased recognition to address the issues related to low staff retention rates and challenges in recruitment.

Recommendations

Based on findings from the Listening and Feedback Tour, the Community Engagement Committee proposed the following actions to enhance the professional growth and well-being of Peer Support Workers (PSWs) and Community Health Workers (CHWs).

These actions are to be implemented through City and State interagency collaboration, in partnership with employers, community members, and other partner organizations.

- **Enhancing job supports and career growth opportunities for both PSWs and CHWs**
- **Creating supportive policies and career advancement programs specifically for PSWs**
- **Developing role supports and continuous learning opportunities specifically for CHWs**



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