



2014 Ulster County Budget Fact Sheet

Ulster C.A.R.E.S.

Michael P. Hein
County Executive

I. Overview

County Executive Hein's 2014 Executive Budget fully implements the Ulster C.A.R.E.S., or Community Access through Restructuring of Essential Services, initiative that was unveiled last May and approved by the Ulster County Legislature on June 18, 2013. Ulster C.A.R.E.S. is an innovative plan that continues high quality mental health services availability to Ulster County's residents regardless of their ability to pay.

II. Background

In the face of a serious long-term funding crisis resulting from major reductions in State and Federal aid, more than \$8 million over the past four years, Ulster C.A.R.E.S. was developed. It reflects the Hein Administration's ongoing commitment to transform County government into a sustainable organization that continues to ensure high quality services are made available to Ulster County residents in need, while simultaneously protecting taxpayers.

With the Ulster C.A.R.E.S. initiative, Ulster County will participate with Hudson Valley Mental Health, Inc. (HVMH) in a public/private partnership to operate the County's adult mental health clinics in Kingston, Ellenville and New Paltz. HVMH, a local not-for-profit community based provider, has a long-standing record of providing high quality mental health treatment services that are accessible, affordable and culturally sensitive. To provide for continuity of care, the plan includes a thorough transition period with final implementation scheduled for January 2014.

Under this plan, Ulster County will lease its clinical space and equipment to HVMH. The Ulster County Department of Mental Health's 17 professional staff will also continue to provide direct mental health care services, ensuring patients continuity of care and a seamless transition. Ulster C.A.R.E.S. creates the opportunity for the Department of Mental Health to enhance its other mental health services and better address emerging needs, such as working with school and other community-based mental health organizations on issues like prevention.

In addition, 13 employees of the Department of Mental Health will be transferred to the Department of Social Services (DSS). These employees will staff a new Energy Assistance Unit within DSS to help Ulster County residents, including seniors and Veterans, to better access the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and other economic assistance programs, as well as the Coordinated Children's Services Division, in order to further meet the needs of children and families. County employees who are involved in the Ulster C.A.R.E.S. initiative will maintain their current employment status, wages and benefits, and collective bargaining rights, bringing stability to the employees of the Department of Mental Health.

III. Proposed 2014 Budget Action

The Executive Budget completes the implementation of the Ulster C.A.R.E.S. Initiative, including appropriate staffing transfers between the Departments of Mental Health and Social Services.

IV. Fiscal Impact

Ulster Cares positions Ulster County to achieve financial savings through reduced expenditures and increased revenues. Through this initiative, Ulster County will capitalize on increased Federal and State reimbursement to the Department of Social Services for HEAP and other economic assistance programs. A shared staffing arrangement with HVMH will facilitate additional savings, in future years, as staff retire or otherwise leave County employment.

Absent of this proposal, the Ulster County Department of Mental Health was facing a \$300,000 increase in required County contribution for 2014. Through Ulster Cares we are able to preserve mental health services and improve economic assistance services provided to Ulster County residents while drawing down additional Federal and State reimbursement resulting in savings of approximately \$122,000 for 2014 budget year.