



NEWS FROM

ULSTER COUNTY

County Executive Jen Metzger

******For Immediate Release******

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Contact: Amberly Jane Campbell, Assistant Deputy County Executive
(845) 340-3800 x8958 / acam@co.ulster.ny.us

Public Invited to Help Shape Behavioral Health Services in Ulster County

PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 19 & 24

KINGSTON, NY - The Ulster County Department of Mental Health and the Community Services Board, in partnership with the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI), invite residents to participate in upcoming public input sessions for the County's Behavioral Health Needs Assessment to gather information from the community about local challenges, identify gaps, and develop solutions to make the system of care more effective, equitable, and accessible. Behavioral health includes mental health, substance use disorder, and intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Upcoming Listening Sessions to hear from residents include both in-person and virtual options. The first in-person session will be held **Wednesday, March 19, 5:30 to 7:30 PM**, at the Pine Street Family Health Center Community Room, 140 Pine Street in Kingston. Space is limited, and residents are encouraged to RSVP: bit.ly/UCMentalHealth. A virtual listening session will be held **Monday, March 24, 5:30 to 7 PM**. Please [RSVP](#), and a Zoom link will be provided. Spanish interpretation will be available at both events. To RSVP for either session, visit bit.ly/UCMentalHealth.

The goal of the Behavioral Health Assessment is to evaluate current community strengths and needs so that the County can create a comprehensive five-year action plan to enhance services for mental health, addiction, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. This collaborative effort will guide the development of a more effective and accessible behavioral health system that better serves all residents.

Community participation is critical to ensure the assessment reflects the real needs of residents. Those with firsthand experience in the behavioral health system are especially encouraged to participate.

“The need for mental health care continues to grow, and this assessment will help us identify gaps in the county so that we can promote a truly comprehensive system of care,” **said Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger**. “The success of this effort depends on input from the community, and I encourage residents to sign up for one of the listening sessions and share your insights and experiences.”

"Our community deserves a behavioral health system that is accessible, effective, and equitable," **said Ulster County Department of Mental Health Commissioner Tara McDonald**. "This assessment will help us identify challenges, close service gaps, and build a stronger system of care. We urge residents — especially those with lived experience — to share their voices through listening sessions, interviews, and public forums. Your input is vital in shaping the future of behavioral health services in Ulster County."

About the Behavioral Health Needs Assessment

The Behavioral Health Needs Assessment aims to build a stronger, more accessible behavioral health system by:

- Identifying community needs and examining the impact of social factors like trauma, racial inequity, housing, and poverty.
- Evaluating existing services, workforce capacity, and barriers to access, particularly for underserved populations.
- Pinpointing service gaps and exploring innovative solutions to improve care.
- Developing actionable recommendations to strengthen policies, funding strategies, and service delivery.

Ulster County is committed to strengthening its behavioral health system to meet the needs of residents in assisting with mental health challenges, substance use, and related issues. The County utilizes a strong network of community providers and initiatives to assist with these challenges, including Integrated Ulster, the Opioid Strategic Action Team (OSAT), and collaborations with the Ulster County’s Sheriff’s Office.

For more information on the Behavioral Health Needs Assessment, to RSVP for a forum, or to participate in an interview, visit the Participate Ulster website:

<https://participate.ulstercountyny.gov/behavioral-health-needs-assessment>, or contact ulsterstudy@hsri.org.

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