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February 24, 2020

New York City Council Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and
Addiction

Testimony by:

Renee Campion, Commissioner, Mayor's Office of Labor Relations

Thank you, Chairperson Ayala and members of the Mental Health, Disabilities and
Addiction Committee, for inviting me here today to testify on this important issue for New
York City employees, and for all employees and employers.

I'm Renee Campion, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations, known as
OLR. I have with me Kevin Bulger, who is Executive Director of the NYC Employee
Assistance Program (EAP) and Claire Levitt, OLR's Deputy Commissioner for Health Care
Strategy.

Before I begin my testimony, I would first like to acknowledge the recent deaths of two of
our NYPD officers and to extend – on behalf of OLR – my sincere sympathies to their
families and to the entire NYPD community. These tragedies underscore the importance
of ensuring our City employees – and all New Yorkers – have access to quality mental
health care.

By way of background, OLR is responsible for labor relations and negotiations between
the City of New York and the many labor unions representing employees of the City. As
part of that responsibility, OLR administers the Health Benefits Programs for City
employees and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), thus having oversight of many

of the mental health programs available to the 1.2 million employees, dependents and retirees covered by the City of New York.

The common stressors of everyday life like managing debt, dealing with the loss of a loved one and dealing with physical illness, can impact our mental wellbeing and our ability to be present where we work. Stress and mental disorders can also exacerbate acute and chronic health conditions. In addition, we know from a Milliman Research Report that individuals treated for mental health conditions typically incur two to three times as much health care costs as those without a mental health condition, further adding to their burden.

Unfortunately, while mental health conditions are extremely common, they often remain hidden due to the stigma associated with them.

Fortunately for our employees and their families as well as our retirees, the City of New York provides many opportunities for the treatment of mental health issues, including extensive health insurance options at no cost; a wide range of employee assistance programs sponsored by the City and its municipal unions; and WorkWell NYC, our worksite-wellness program.

Health Insurance Coverage for City Employees

All New York City employees, dependents and retirees enjoy the unique privilege of having extremely generous health insurance coverage options available to them from the City for free – that is, with no employee contribution to the premium cost for either individual or family coverage. The majority of NYC employees, 75%, choose to be in the Emblem Health/GHI CBP PPO plan, while approximately 20% are in Emblem’s HIP HMO plan. Both of these plans, which are chosen by 95% of employees, are premium-free to employees and dependents. The remaining 5% of employees choose from several different available options, some of which require an employee premium share. Retirees also have free health coverage options.

NYC’s premium-free coverage is a stark contrast to the average employee in the US, who contributes over \$1,200 a year and over \$6,000 a year for the premium for individual and family coverage, respectively.¹ NYC employees with the CBP or HIP HMO plan have no annual deductible on their plans, which means there is no out-of-pocket cost before the

¹ According to the 2019 Kaiser Family Foundation Annual Employee Benefits survey reports.

insurance coverage starts paying for services. Most employer plans, by contrast, have an annual deductible, which is on average over \$1,600.²

All of our health insurance plans include extensive coverage for mental health treatment and cover all mental health and substance use treatment including hospital admissions, partial hospitalization programs, rehabilitation facilities, outpatient visits to psychologists, adult and child psychiatrists, and clinical social workers for ongoing support.

The mental health network for the GHI CBP plan and the HIP HMO plan are both administered by Beacon Health on behalf of Emblem Health. In both the GHI and HIP plans, in addition to having no premium cost sharing and no deductible, the copays for each visit to in-network mental health professionals are exceptionally low. While the average plan in the country is reported by Kaiser to have office visit copays of \$25 for primary care and \$40 for specialty care, for NYC employees in the GHI plan, copays for primary care and mental health care are only \$15 and in the HIP HMO they are either \$0 for preferred doctors or \$10 for non-preferred doctors.

For inpatient mental health services, the copays are also minimal; for the HIP HMO, there is a \$100 copay per admission; for GHI, it is a \$300 copay per admission (up to a \$750 maximum per calendar year). Both plans provide coverage for substance use disorders for the same copays as that of mental health.

The GHI plan also allows employees the flexibility to utilize out-of-network providers subject to additional deductibles and copays, with cost-sharing options to cover services.

Expanding Health Insurance Coverage & Access to Care

Emblem Health reported to us that in 2019 over 83,000 NYC employees and dependents generated nearly 1.4 million visits to mental health providers. About 23% of these visits were to psychiatrists, 19% to psychologists, 39% to clinical social workers and the balance to other providers. About 75% of the GHI visits were to in-network professionals.

Currently, the HIP HMO network has approximately 8,200 behavioral health providers in the 12 downstate counties. The GHI network has approximately 6,800 providers in the 12 downstate counties. While this is a very substantial number of providers, we do recognize that the increasing demand for mental health services can make it challenging to find mental health professionals, especially those with convenient hours for working people. In NYC and many areas, it can also be difficult to find mental health professionals willing

² Kaiser reports that 82% of employer plans have an annual deductible, and the average annual deductible for an individual in an employer plan in the US is over \$1,600.

to take any insurance coverage. The shortage of mental health professionals is especially severe for psychiatrists.

Access to mental health professionals is a widely recognized problem, not just in New York City but across the nation. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, about 111 million people in the US live in designated "mental health professional shortage areas", some of which are in the City.

To address access concerns for City employees, the City has been exploring solutions with Emblem Health, Beacon Health and the Municipal Labor Committee to expand the mental health provider network as well as to introduce a more convenient way for city employees in GHI to access the services of mental health providers. The MLC executive board is now recommending the City's proposed expansion of the mental health network to the MLC membership.

First, Emblem estimates that it may be possible to add as many as 1,000 new providers to the GHI network within the next four to six months, increasing the availability of in-network providers by about 15%. This is an important step in continuing to ensure that all City employees have appropriate access to necessary mental health services.

Second, a telemedicine benefit has been recommended for behavioral health care for GHI members that will provide access to mental health professionals telephonically and through video like Facetime or Skype. This will mean that city employees in GHI will be able to access a mental health professional from the privacy of their home or any other convenient location without requiring them to go to an office location. Similar to our telemedicine benefit for medical treatment, which has generated high utilization and strong customer satisfaction among the city workforce, we hope that telemedicine can encourage more people to seek care due to the convenience and privacy. These services will be available from 7 am to 9 pm daily, providing access during the much-needed after-work and weekend hours that are particularly necessary based on our dedicated City employees' work schedules.

Employee Assistance Programs for City Employees

Starting in the late 1960's and continuing to present day, New York City has a rich history of providing Employee Assistance Programs to our employees and their family members. Currently, New York City has an extensive network of Agency and Union based EAPs providing services to all city employees. Each EAP offers distinct services based on employees' needs, but all the programs work in concert with one another to best serve all NYC employees. EAPs follow all policy and procedures of Mayoral Executive Order #46.

The New York City Employee Assistance Program (NYC EAP), the largest of all city EAPs, is under the auspices of the Office of Labor Relations. Currently the NYC EAP provides services to Mayoral agencies, the Housing Authority, NYC Health + Hospitals and the Department of Education.

NYC EAP is designed to assist employees and their families in resolving personal problems that may be adversely affecting their personal and professional performance. NYC EAP offers assistance with a broad range of behavioral health issues such as substance abuse and misuse, mental health, child or elder care, relationship challenges, financial or legal problems, bereavement, wellness matters and traumatic events such as workplace violence. Free individual and family services are offered in-person, via phone and/or email interactions.

Other services provided by the NYC EAP include: information and referral services, case management, and extensive follow-up and insurance authorization. And, in 2018, the NYC EAP worked along with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to register the EAP as an Opioid Overdose Prevention Program (OOPP), offering all EAP clients the opportunity to be supplied with Naloxone and trained to administer if exposed to an overdose. The Overdose Prevention Program and all EAP services are free and confidential and all services are provided by master's level mental health professionals.

NYC EAP also offers supervisors and managers trainings and consultations to aid in their response to staff members' behavioral health needs. Stress Management, Suicide Awareness & Prevention, De-escalation techniques, Improving Communication in the Workplace, are just a few of the presentations offered to our employees. Supervisory consultations, onsite workshops and staff presentations are provided upon request of a City agency. In regards to supervisors that may need assistance with addressing an employee's behavioral health issue, the NYC EAP offers guidance through a 5-step model that emphasizes privacy, empathy and the steps to take to direct the employee to EAP for further assistance and support.

Furthermore, NYC EAP provides agency on-site interventions based on need and by request of the agency. Most often the NYC EAP is requested when a traumatic event has occurred at a worksite such as a threat to an employee's safety, unexpected loss of a co-worker, or other crisis related events. At times of crisis events, the EAP has adapted to the needs of NYC employees and agencies. For example, in 2014, at the Department of Environmental Protection, DEP, there was a murder that took place at one of the upstate facilities that was extremely traumatic for the employees at that site. The EAP offered ongoing support and services to the facility, which then inspired DEP to create and support an additional EAP counselor that could offer the EAP's services to their more remote locations.

In general, NYC EAP's delivery of services to clients emphasizes accessibility, confidentiality and appropriateness of clinical and social service treatment plans. Services to individual employees, supervisors or agencies are confidential, free and voluntary. The expertise of EAP counselors, all of whom are master-level mental health professionals, assists employees and their family members to address a wide range of personal problems. On average, over 62% of individuals accessing the EAP identify mental health problems as their reason for reaching out to the program. In addition to mental health problems, 42% of those who contact the EAP also identify family problems and 33% note job related problems.

EAP services continue to grow based on an increasing need and requests for services. In 2018, the EAP documented roughly 7,000 individuals that accessed a service of the EAP. In 2019, there was an increase of approximately 50%, with over 10,000 individuals reached by EAP services.

Those services include direct clinical services to individuals and family members, supervisor consultations, as well as on-site services such as workshops, presentations, health fairs and trauma interventions. Requests for these on-site services have increased by 47% from 2018 to 2019, indicating the growing need of mental health support services in the workplace.

New EAP Programs

Based on the increase in demand for EAP services, the program is also planning to expand our program in the following ways:

- Adopting an online platform that will allow NYC employees and their families to access the program confidentially via text or video, therefore increasing accessibility and convenience for all those who need assistance.
- Acquiring an advanced electronic service record database to document all EAP services in order to elevate quality of care by decreasing administrative barriers to productivity and clinical work. This system will also allow the EAP to track quantitative and qualitative data in order to capture and analyze outcomes, productivity levels, recognize trends and potential needs of our service population.
- Incorporating the Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) which will offer EAP information on absenteeism, presenteeism, work engagement, workplace distress and life satisfaction among our EAP clients. Assessing these particular domains will offer the EAP an even greater opportunity to enhance NYC employee's well-being, and assist in the strength and resilience of our NYC workforce.

EAP for ACS, Division of Child Protection

The NYC EAP continues to deepen services by developing programs tailored for City employees with specific needs. Last year, the EAP was contracted by the Administration of Children Services (ACS), Division of Child Protection (DCP) to develop the first NYC DCP-specific EAP program.

Child Protective Specialists are first responders for NYC children. They work around the clock to make sure that children are safe and families receive services they need in order to stay together and be healthy. Working as a CPS worker is rewarding, however, it can put many CPS employees at the risk for compassion fatigue.

Staff within the Division of Child Protection (DCP) now have access to on-site mental health counselors through the NYC EAP. DCP's EAP mental health counselors are located at ACS worksites and provide a wide range of services to address concerns such as: depression, anxiety, secondary trauma, substance misuse, family issues, intimate partner violence, bereavement, conflicts with coworkers, job stress and more.

New DOE Program

Recently, OLR's New York City Employee Assistance Program (EAP) joined with the Department of Education (DOE), the UFT Members Assistance Program (UFT/MAP) and DC37 Personnel Services Unity (DC37 PSU) to expand NYC's EAP services to all DOE employees and their families. Now, the NYC EAP will deliver comprehensive services to help DOE employees overcome personal problems that diminish quality of life and interfere with effectiveness on the job as well as trauma interventions in the event of critical job-related incidents. As provided for all NYC employees, the EAP will offer DOE employees the same mental health assessments and referral assistance to connect them to the appropriate resources in the community or through their health insurance plans. DOE will also be offered customized management training programs to guide supervisors and managers to effectively use the EAP as a tool for addressing performance problems and other supervisory concerns.

WorkWell NYC

WorkWell NYC is OLR's workplace wellness program for our 380,000 NYC employees. As part of this administration's commitment to our employees, WorkWell NYC was created in 2016 to leverage the convenience of the workplace to promote health and well-being, boost workforce engagement, and attract well-qualified candidates to civil service. Worksite wellness programs result in numerous benefits for employees, employers and the public including improved employee physical and mental health, reduced health care costs and improved productivity.

WorkWell NYC offers convenient, accessible programs, tools, and resources in 4 key areas: Eat Well (healthy eating), Move More (physical activity), Take Action (primary care and prevention) and Be Well (mental well-being and resilience). We recognize the importance of addressing the needs of the whole employee and therefore addressing both physical and emotional/mental health.

As part of the outreach to our employees, WorkWell NYC sends monthly email blasts to over 380,000 City employees providing health and well-being information and resources. Every e-blast includes a call to action – whether to participate in a program, to download a tool or a link to get more information.

New Services for NYPD Officers

I also want to highlight FINEST CARE, a partnership between the NYPD and New York-Presbyterian Hospital, which provides access to 24-hour telephone-based counseling services, comprehensive evaluation and mental health assessments, medication management and psychotherapy services, and counseling referral services for all uniformed members of the service confidentially and at no cost.

Lastly, all Captains and above, as well as all civilian executives in the Department have taken the Executive Health and Wellness Training program to better assist those in leadership roles to recognize those in crisis and to provide support and resources.

Partnership with the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC

Our office also partners with the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC to support the mental health of City employees.

Through Thrive NYC, nearly 68,000 City employees have been trained in Mental Health First Aid, which is a ThriveNYC-supported program implemented by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-driven, free, eight-hour training that is regularly provided seven days a week in all five boroughs to expand the number of people who can help New Yorkers in need. Conducted regularly in English, Mandarin, and Spanish, Mental Health First Aid helps trainees recognize mental health needs, learn how to talk about them, and learn where to direct people in need to ongoing care.

In 2019, we partnered with ThriveNYC to launch the BeWell program under OLR's WorkWell NYC initiative. BeWell offers programs and resources to promote mental health among the almost 400,000 people employed by the City of New York. This program aims to create work environments that support the mental and emotional well-being of City

employees and create opportunities for employees to build resilience. Our program helps to promote our EAP, NYC Well and the Mental Health First Aid training.

Legislative Proposals

Lastly, I will now turn to the legislation being heard today. Intro 64 by Council Member Cumbo would mandate that each City agency identify a *mental health coordinator* to assist and perform outreach to employees of the City about mental health services and support services including but not limited to the EAPs. OLR supports this bill and shares the Council's interest in promoting a mentally and physically healthier workforce.

We would also like to note that WorkWell currently has a network of hundreds of ambassadors and champions located at virtually all City agencies who share information and promote and implement WorkWell and other worksite programming. The roles of ambassadors and champions are critical in increasing the physical and mental wellness of NYC employees and enhancing the culture of wellness at our worksites. We would like to discuss opportunities for City agencies to further engage staff in wellness programming, provide deeper communication about resources, and access staff across all locations.

Finally, Intro. 1792 by Council Member Torres which requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to develop a list of all free behavioral health services and share the information with City agencies that provide direct services to young adults, families, and children. DOHMH supports the intent of this legislation. If you have questions, I will let Dr. Myla Harrison from the Health Department speak to the specifics of that bill.

I'd like to conclude by saying that OLR, on behalf of the de Blasio administration, recognizes and takes very seriously the importance of caring for the mental health of our employees and their families. Through our extensive health insurance coverage, our EAP programs and our worksite wellness programs, we offer a comprehensive approach to addressing these needs. We are always working on new and innovative approaches, as evidenced by the discussions on expansion of the mental health network and a new telemedicine benefit for mental health, the expansion of the EAP services, and the growing impact of our worksite wellness programs.

Thank you again for your time, and now I'd be pleased to take your questions.



**Testimony of Kathy Rivera, Senior Vice-President of Care Management Services, JCCA to the New York City Council Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction
2/24/20**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Ayala, members of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction, Council Member Torres. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Intro 1792-2019, proposed by Councilmember Torres. My name is Kathy Rivera and I am the Senior Vice President for Care Management Services at JCCA. JCCA has been working with New York's most vulnerable children and families since 1822.

Historically, the majority of our work has been within the child welfare system. Today, it is more accurate to say that we work to strengthen families, and provide them with the tools they need to live stable, healthy, independent lives. Effective and accessible mental health care is a crucial aspect of that.

HISTORY AND EXPERTISE OF JCCA THROUGH MEDICAID WAIVER PROGRAMS

Over a decade ago, JCCA established a new care management division to provide wraparound support services to young people with serious emotional disturbances. Our programs paired clients—from foster care or referred by OMH—with service providers who came to *them*, in their homes, schools, and communities. Staff helped children and their caregivers understand their diagnoses, practice important coping skills, and encourage independence and self-advocacy. Because of this, our clients were able to successfully avoid hospitalizations, foster care disruptions, or placements in higher levels of care. The theory was—wouldn't it be better to invest in care now, before a crisis occurs? It panned out. It worked. It helped children *and* their families. And JCCA became one of the largest providers of these services in New York.

Some time ago, New York State decided to invest in providing similar mental health services to all eligible children on Medicaid. In January 2019, the services we used to provide only to a small subset of children opened up to any child who meets the referring criteria—including assessment services, so that kids who might not yet have a qualifying diagnosis and treatment plan can be connected with appropriate services.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

These services provide crucial support to families – enabling them to address mental health needs so as to prevent situations that land young people in the hospital or in the child welfare system. Our staff are eager to provide more of the kind of support we provided to Lucy, a thirteen-year-old in Brooklyn. Lucy was referred to JCCA by the staff at the shelter she was living in with her mother and younger brother. It is worth noting that the shelter staff learned about JCCA only because our intake coordinator reached out to schedule a presentation when our services launched. Lucy had a history of suicidal ideation, but she had never received treatment for her depression—or even a diagnosis. But because of the flexible, in-home behavioral support she receives from JCCA, she participates in counseling now. She takes her medication and engages in treatment. She doesn't skip school, and she's getting better grades. She is hopeful and optimistic about her future. Her younger sibling has a heart condition, and, before connecting with JCCA, Lucy's mother was constantly stressed, worrying about both of her children. It is a tremendous relief to her now that her daughter is feeling better, and to know that she does not have to fear a call from school about Lucy harming herself. These services are far less expensive than one trip to the psychiatric emergency room—and, as you can see, far more productive.

It's very exciting to be able to provide these services to many more families who are now eligible. We have already developed a partnership with the family clinic at Maimonides and clinicians now refer an average of 30 families to us every month. We have also partnered with the Administration for Children's Services to offer counseling at the Children's Center. And every time we tell someone new about these new services, the response is overwhelmingly positive—but people are often surprised to learn that the services exist. We've done a lot to get the word out, but clearly there is more to be done.

JCCA and other providers can only help if people know we are here to support them. When New Yorkers access services at city agencies like DHS, HRA, or ACS, it is because they are already in a moment of crisis and vulnerability. It is stressful. If we want them to be successful—in finding economic, housing, or family stability—then we must support their mental health, instead of addressing it only once they reach a breaking point.

Educating and training city employees about available services so they can help families access behavioral health care will help us fulfill our commitment to the well-being of all our neighbors.

ACEs

Lastly, I want to help explain why behavioral health supports are such an important investment in our young people. Some of you may know about the research surrounding Adverse Childhood Experiences, called ACEs. This research shows that having three or more ACEs—such as divorce, domestic violence, or parental substance abuse— has long-term negative impacts on adulthood. Increased heart disease. Lower educational and professional achievement. Cancer. Jail. There's more.

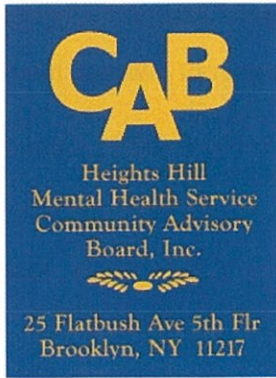
That's why something as simple as a list of free or Medicaid-funded mental health supports is such a step forward.

Whether or not someone triumphs over their adverse childhood experience has a lot to do with the support they receive as they grow up. When we can support the resiliency of our young people, we are contributing to the success of our communities. We are exponentially reducing future health care costs. We are keeping people out of prison.

This bill is not just a list. It represents our belief that all New Yorkers can make it here—and anywhere—when they have the resources they deserve. I'm grateful to Council Member Torres for your commitment to our families, our kids, and their kids, by sponsoring this legislation. And a big thanks to Chair Ayala and the Committee members for your interest and assistance. Behavioral health services are effective, necessary, and life-saving.

Thank you.

For additional information, please contact Kathy Rivera, Senior Vice-President at riverak@jccany.org or 347-293-4160



February 24, 2020

Testimony to the members of the New York City Council Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction in support of Int. No. 64

My name is Dr. Christian Huygen. I am a clinical psychologist, and for the past 18 years I have served as Executive Director of Rainbow Heights Club, an agency that many of you are familiar with because you've visited us there. Rainbow Heights Club contracts with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to provide mental health support, free of charge, to LGBTQ adults who are living with serious mental illness.

I am grateful to this committee for the concern it consistently shows for the most needy among us, as evidenced by the support that our agency has received from the City Council. Because of that, I'm delighted but not surprised that this committee, and its chair, would propose legislation that will ensure that a mental health coordinator is available in all city agencies to provide outreach and increase access to mental health and related support services. I am here to strongly support this legislation.

Despite the prevalence of mental illness and related substance abuse disorders, many people struggle to admit to themselves and others that they need and deserve assistance and support. In 2018, a study by Kaiser Permanente that involved 12 million people found that even among people newly diagnosed with depression, only about a third actually follow up and get treatment. Initiative No. 64 will increase pathways of access to care, and reduce the negative outcomes that can happen when people just don't know where to turn.

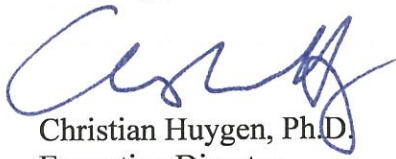
Those who work in City agencies are often on the front lines in the struggle against violence, exploitation, discrimination, trauma and abuse. Every day, City workers confront human lives impacted by human trafficking; domestic violence; and sexual abuse.

Vicarious traumatization is a term for the very real damage that all too often strikes our front line city employees - social workers, counselors, police, firefighters, EMTs, ACS workers, and thousands of others who face these realities every day. But mental health and related issues are also prevalent among those who many never come in contact with the public. Having visible, accessible mental health coordinators in every city agency will make it possible to reach not only those who are most obviously in need, but also those whom we may never suspect would be in need of help.

It is vital to destigmatize the common experience of depression and anxiety, and encourage people to ask for help. The presence of mental health coordinators in all city agencies, offering information and access to services and care, is a powerful way to send that message, and offer that opportunity.

I am here to show disinterested support for this legislation – disinterested, because it will not increase our agency’s staffing or funding in any way. But it will assure my staff and my clients that the agencies that we refer them to will be staffed by human beings who have the support and the help that they need and deserve. And that is priceless.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Christian Huygen', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christian Huygen, Ph.D.
Executive Director



**Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addictions
Testimony Re: Oversight--Mental health coverage for city employees
Monday, February 24, 2020**

Good afternoon. My name is Daron Marino and, on behalf of Samaritans Suicide Prevention Center, which has operated the city's 24-hour suicide hotline for 35 years, I want to thank Chair Diana Ayala and the members of the City Council's Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addictions, for the opportunity to speak today.

As a member of the organization that created the world's first suicide hotline almost 70 years ago and has centers in 42 countries—Samaritans joins everyone here today in expressing our great concern for NYC's growing suicide epidemic.

You don't need Samaritans to tell you this epidemic illustrates the ever-increasing number of New Yorkers who experience depression, trauma, self-harming and suicidal behavior who are not getting the help they need.

The CDC tells us 1-in-5 New Yorkers experiences a *psychological disorder* every year and up to 60% *will never receive care or treatment*; that's people of every age, race, culture, sexual identity and economic standing.

That means in 2020, with 8.6 million residents, 1.7 million New Yorkers will experience a disorder and 1 million will not receive the help they need; making it imperative that we increase our efforts to provide access to care.

That said: Samaritans strongly supports both suicide prevention bills proposed by Council Members, seeing it as an important step in advancing the message—Suicide Prevention Is Everybody's Business!

Considering the number of New Yorkers who are "at risk," having a mental health coordinator in every city agency is a necessity. We must have "point people" who are comfortable with this issue *and* have the awareness to be both *sensitive* and *effective* when responding to a person in distress.

In terms of 1792, there is no question that all city agency staff should be *directed to provide information regarding access to free services available to young adults, families and children*.

Samaritans would add that the development of these lists not be left solely to the city, but include direct input from the many community non-profits that are often excluded

from these types of initiatives. This is a necessity, if we are truly going to engage more people and break down the silos!

More significantly, the need to enhance suicide awareness training in all city agencies is paramount. Again, respectfully, as someone who received his initial mental health training on Samaritans Hotline, went on to join the Hotline Staff and then, with the skills and experience I developed, was hired by Vibrant Emotional Health, the contract agency for NYC Well, where I worked for three years, I have a unique perspective to offer.

While the primary suicide prevention trainings used by the city certainly have value—the most common being Emotional First Aid—these programs tend to be somewhat “boilerplate” and utilize a clinical/medical approach to educate people; which is fine for certain audiences. But they, mostly, do not adapt to the participants, their roles, personalities and perspectives.

Samaritans—with its 65 years of experience training tens of thousands of hotline staff from all walks of life and hundreds of thousands of lay and professional health care providers all over the world—has found that a more humanistic approach, addressing people’s fears, concerns, preconceptions and personal values is paramount in enhancing suicide awareness.

We believe: How we approach a person in distress, what we see as our role; how we define what is and is not helping, how well we listen and communicate must be at the heart of all suicide prevention training.

In fact, Samaritans has submitted an application to the City Council to fund our Suicide Prevention Sensitivity Training initiative, designed to address this issue and deliver training and technical support to city agencies, schools, the police department, taxi union and others that work with high-risk populations.

With its ongoing support for Samaritans Suicide Hotline and its efforts to enhance suicide prevention in NYC, we thank the City Council for its ongoing leadership and your commitment to help more New Yorkers in need.

Thank you.

REDUCING SUICIDE IN NYC WITH SAMARITANS SUICIDE PREVENTION SENSITIVITY TRAINING

Fact: Suicide is increasing in NYC, as it has for more than five years—AND IT SCARES US!

Fact: Even with the best efforts of some of the most respected experts, this trend continues

Fact: Even with the significant funding devoted to *NYC Thrive's* training programs, the numbers are still rising

Fact: To date, nobody has really come up with the next steps that need to be taken to reverse this trend that in the last year alone has led to countless tragedies among NYC police officers, taxi drivers, young Latinas and female Asians, members of the LGBTQ community and so many New Yorkers!

FACT: None of NYC's responses to police, taxi driver, student and other suicides has utilized the experience (and lessons learned) over the past 65 years by the world's oldest and largest suicide prevention network, which has provided crisis response and suicide prevention services to tens of millions of people in 42 countries.

MAYBE IT'S TIME TO START!

1. Samaritans created NYC's 24-hour suicide hotline in 1982 and has answered over 1.3 million calls.
2. Samaritans established NYC's first *support groups for survivors of suicide loss* that have provided solace to thousands of people that have been directly impacted by suicide.
3. Samaritans is credited with bringing suicide prevention education to the *NYC Department of Education* and has provided professional development training to over 40,000 NYC health providers.
4. Samaritans has designed/delivered suicide prevention trainings to *NYPD (Early Intervention, Police Academy, Internal Affairs), FDNY (9/11 EAP, peer support team, station houses), FBI, Coast Guard.*

LESSONS LEARNED THAT REDUCE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMOTIONAL FIRST AID, ASIST, ETC.

- The belief that if you teach people the warning signs of suicide they will be able to identify those at-risk
- Telling people they need to utilize *active listening* techniques and *establish rapport* with those at-risk
- Reminding those responding to at-risk individuals that they need to be *empathetic* and *non-judgmental*

Though these trainings are promoted throughout NYC, they lack key elements that compromise their effectiveness:

- a) participants don't learn that most of the helping behaviors they practice actually prevent them from listening
- b) they are not forced to confront their assumptions and misconceptions about what it takes to help someone
- c) they do not explore what makes people uncomfortable when responding to someone in crisis or distress
- d) they fail to address how a person's agenda and values can interfere in seeing what's right in front of them.

Samaritans over 30 years of experience operating NYC's 24-hour suicide prevention hotline and training over 3,000 hotline volunteers and 40,000 students, teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists and first responders has taught us: Most people (even those with advanced degrees and countless years on the job):

1. are not comfortable talking to people who are depressed and thinking about suicide
2. are not good listeners or effective communicators, and do not utilize basic *active listening tools*
3. do not recognize how their own beliefs and values interfere with their ability to connect to a person who is in distress, depressed, experiencing trauma, self-harming or suicidal behavior.

Sensitivity is the ability to receive signals. Which means you can't be listening, if you are doing all the talking

This is at the heart of *Samaritans Suicide Prevention Sensitivity Training* and why it should be a required precursor to every crisis response and suicide prevention training attended by a frontline NYC caregiver and service provider.

Samaritans requests funding for a \$120,000 training pilot project to be utilized by NYPD, EMS, Taxi and Limousine Commission, NYC Department of Education and other organizations with high-risk populations.



Lois Herrera

Chief Executive Officer
Office of Safety & Youth Development
52 Chambers Street – Room 218
New York, NY 10007

Jaye Murray

Executive Director
Office of Guidance & School Counseling

March 31, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the New York City Department of Education (DOE), we are very pleased to write this Letter of Support for the Samaritans.

Samaritans has been one of the key contributor's to NYC DOE student support personnel's awareness, education and training tied to their ability to identify and respond to high-risk students in need of help, care and treatment for over 25 years.

Samaritans training programs consistently examines the very real concerns, fears and challenges that our frontline staff experiences but are rarely if ever acknowledged in the other programs that they receive.

The programs are revised and adapted to address pressing needs DOE supervisory staff have identified, sometimes issues that have arisen that week or day (such as a recent suicide; the recognition that suicide assessments are not being performed properly, if at all; questions on how to address a conflict with a student's family member, etc.).

Samaritans trainings approach staff on a compassionate, supportive level, helping them in developing their skills, refreshing their knowledge of the tools available to them recognizing and acknowledging the difficulties they have, which is, basically that staff knows what they are supposed to do but they frequently feel ill-prepared or unsure of exactly how to do it.

Understandably, crises and suicidal situations scare many staff members, and when they have fears and are overwhelmed their anxiety can lead them to do nothing or to just pass the problem along without getting involved themselves. Samaritans trainings help to alleviate some of their fears, teach them to confront their concerns, accept their limitations and learn to utilize their strengths and abilities. I constantly have staff come up to me and say that they believe everybody should be required to attend Samaritans trainings at least once a year; that the experience reinforces what they may have learned or forgotten how important their use of active listening and effective communications is. The Samaritans Hotline is a well-known referral tool for many schools.

Samaritans provides an organized, systematic approach to responding to young people who are having problems, a communications and assessment model that student support personnel are comfortable using, with tools, skills and resources that support the model. Their trainings have clearly improved the ability of those who participate in their events to establish rapport, identify warning signs and determine risk in those they counsel.

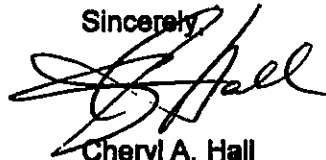
Samaritans talk to training participants on a human, empathetic level, acknowledging the challenges they face with a tone and attitude that is both direct and supportive. Staff frequently tell me that they find the resources and tools provided by Samaritans to be very helpful in crisis scenarios; to that end we have placed their materials on our portal.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the training and support Samaritans has provided to DOE has definitely saved students' lives and stopped bad situations from getting worse.

The DOE appreciates The Samaritans ongoing efforts to provide innovative best practice model programs that help support students in New York City's public schools. We enthusiastically support this important initiative and look forward to a continued collaboration.

Please do not hesitate to call me at 212-374-0805 if I can provide further references.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl A. Hall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "H".

Cheryl A. Hall
Citywide Coordinator
Office of Guidance & School Counseling

Samaritans
SUICIDE PREVENTION CENTER

Working Towards a Caring Community

*Suicide Prevention & Awareness
Public Education Project*

Borough & District Sites
New York City Council FY 2019

Samaritans Suicide Prevention Center

*NYC's only community-based organization
devoted to preventing suicide and saving lives*

Samaritans Mission

The Samaritans of New York’s mission is to prevent suicide by providing immediate and ongoing support to those in crisis; providing solace and support to those who have lost loved ones to suicide; teaching mental health professionals and lay caregivers the most effective methods that can be utilized to prevent suicide and save lives; and making the public, educators, health providers and those in industry and government aware of the public health problem that is suicide and the keys to prevention.

Advancing Our Mission Through Public Education

The mission of Samaritans Suicide Prevention Public Education and Awareness Program is to provide lay and professional caregivers and health providers with the skills, tools, information, resources and awareness they need to increase their comfort, confidence and competency in effectively identifying, responding to, caring for and treating those individuals who are in distress, depressed or suicidal.

Table of Contents

Samaritans Sites Served Map FY2019	3
"Caring Community" Suicide Prevention & Awareness Public Education Project	4
Feature	5
Talk to Me: Responding to NYC's Culturally and Emotionally Diverse Populations Survey, 2019	6
Schools and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) Served by NYC Council Member	8
Queens Schools and CBOs Served	8
Feature	10
Brooklyn Schools and CBOs Served	11
Feature	13
Manhattan Schools and CBOs Served	14
Bronx Schools and CBOs Served	15
Staten Island Schools and CBOs Served	16
Feature	17
NYC Department of Education <i>Student Support Personnel</i> Talk about Samaritans Professional Development Training	18

Samaritans Suicide Prevention Center

“Caring Community” Suicide Prevention & Awareness Public Education Project

With primary funding coming from members of the New York City Council, in 2019 Samaritans 'Caring Community' Public Education Project enhanced the ability of New York City's culturally diverse communities to identify, respond to and treat the ever-increasing number of individuals who are at-risk for self-harming and suicidal behavior.

These goals were achieved by providing NYC's lay and professional caregivers and health care providers with suicide awareness and prevention workshops, presentations and professional development trainings, distribution of culturally appropriate resource and referral guides and technical support to non-profit and government agencies and neighborhood groups that serve NYC's "at risk" populations.

Target Population of Services Provided:

The Project served students, parents, teachers, social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors, case managers and other lay and professional health care providers and advocates working in NYC schools, government, non-profit and other community settings as well as students and professionals working in communications, journalism and social media involved in reporting of issues tied to mental health.

Overview of Project Outcomes:

On a qualitative level, Samaritans' project enhanced communities awareness of the challenges faced that must be addressed to improve their readiness to respond to potentially life-threatening situations and their overall knowledge of the keys to preventing suicide and saving lives. On a quantitative basis the project provided education, training and consultation services to:

993 *teachers, social workers, guidance counselors, psychologists, case managers, other lay and professional health care providers, advocates, students, administrators, program managers and others involved in prevention and safety planning, best practices and available resources*

445 *unique New York City public and private schools*

95 *community-based organizations, government agencies, universities, etc.*



World Suicide Prevention Day, September 10, 2019

Rallying under the banner "Working Together to Prevent Suicide," those personally touched by suicide as well as prevention advocates, experts and politicians concerned about this pressing public health problem stood together to bring greater attention to this issue, fight the stigma tied to mental health and send the message that "Suicide Prevention Is Everybody's Business!" "Everybody needs a helping hand at some point in their life," said Samaritans Executive Director Alan Ross, pointing out suicide touches people of every age, race, sexual identity, culture, economic standing and political affiliation. Other organizations participating included The Gay Center, Comunilife, Asian American Federation, UFT, Safe Horizon, Coalition of Behavioral Health and others.



Samaritans 7th Annual Walk to Prevent Suicide

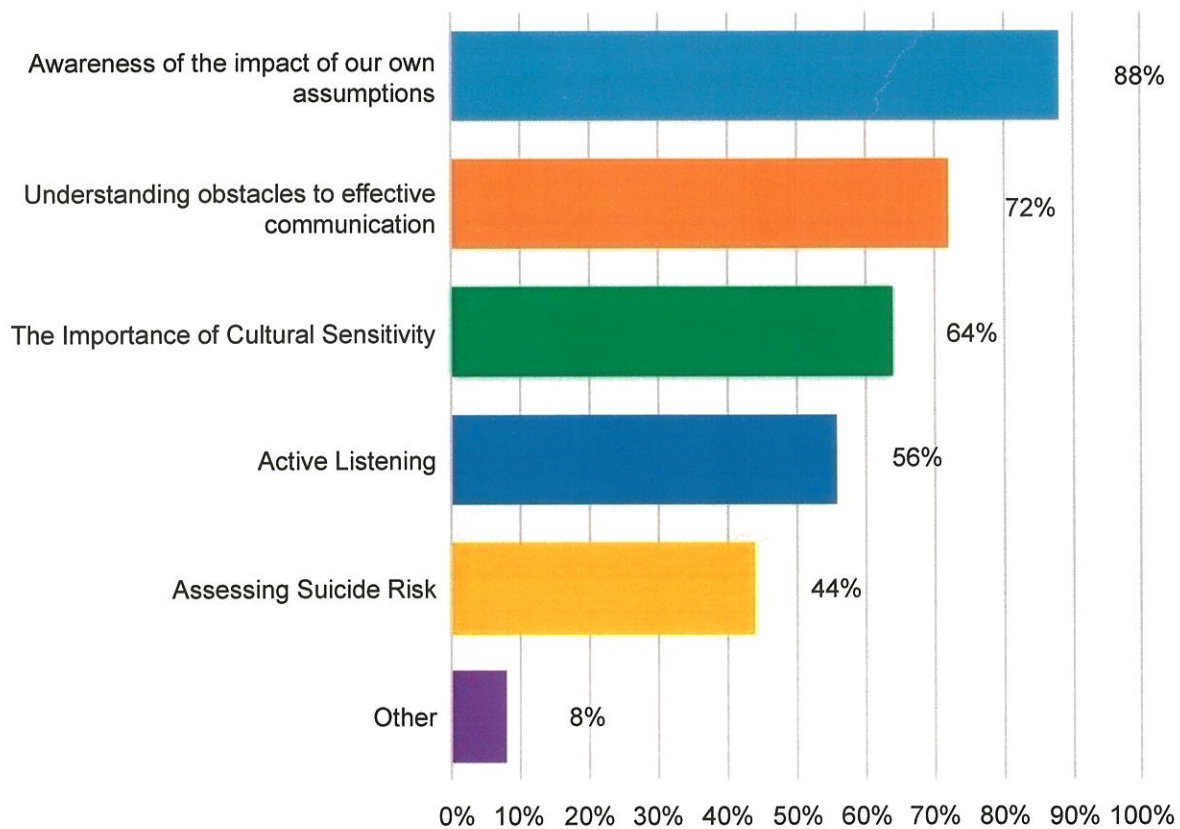
Recognizing that suicide and self-harming behavior continue to be on the rise in NYC (as well as the rest of the country) and last year there were more suicides than homicides in NYC, the Walk was a gathering of like-minded souls who came together to promote healing and human kindness to strengthen NYC's safety net for those in need. For those who have been personally touched by suicide as well as those devoted to preventing it and fighting stigma, the Walk was a wonderful opportunity to engage friends and family members in a cause everyone believes in while spending a lovely morning along the beautiful Hudson River Park.

"Talk to Me: Responding to NYC's Culturally and Emotionally Diverse Populations" (survey, 2019)

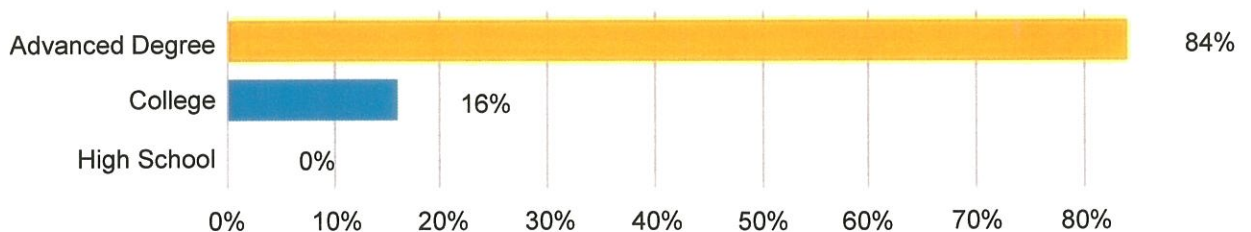
For health providers that care for and treat individuals at risk for self-harming and suicidal behavior, "Talk to Me--Responding to at-risk individuals and their families..." explored the major challenges they face in responding to members of NYC's culturally diverse communities who are in distress. Experts with experience working with high-risk populations (elderly, Asian, Hispanic, LGBTQ, victims, youth) shared what they have learned to be the keys in establishing trusting and supportive relationships with individuals they have served.

A survey of 254 participants who attended Samaritans' professional development training demonstrates the importance of providing suicide prevention and awareness training to community-based caregivers and health providers. 84% of participants hold an advanced degree, and still report valuable gains in key skills required for effective crisis management, response and intervention.

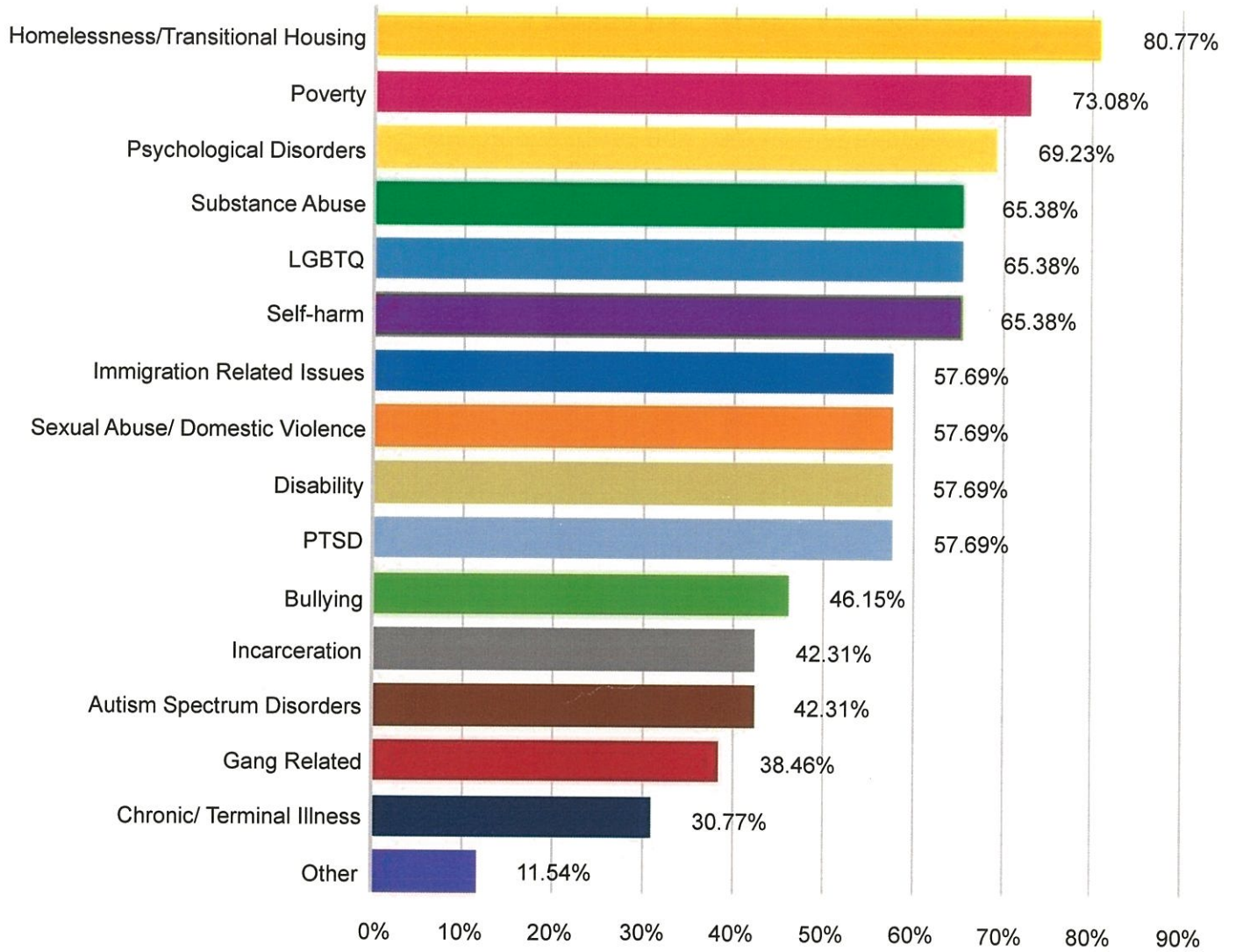
Participants reported increase in understanding of skills



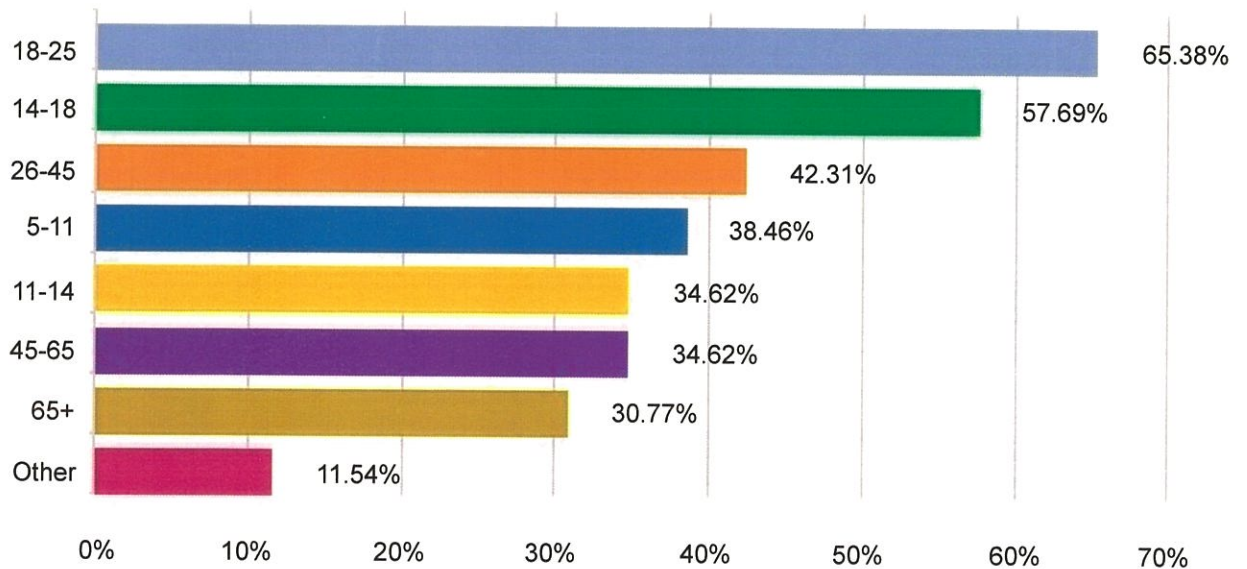
Participants Level of Education



Areas of concern for the populations served by participants



Age range of population served by participants



Schools and Community-based Organizations (CBO's) Served by New York City Council Member

The lists that follow provide key components by borough of the New York City schools, community-based organizations, non-profit and government agencies that were recipients of Samaritans suicide prevention and awareness public education program, projects and technical support in FY 2019.

Queens Schools and CBOs Served (164 schools, 29 CBOs)



Costa Constantinides District 22

Schools

Albert Shanker School for Visual and Performing Arts
PS 151 Mary D. Carter
IS 010 Horace Greeley
IS 141 The Steinway
PS 070
PS 234

Community Based Organizations

Steinway Wellness & Recovery Center

Daniel Dromm District 25

Schools

IS 145 Joseph Pulitzer
International High School for Health Sciences
Newtown High School
P255 @ PS 007Q
PS 007 Louise F. Simeone
PS 102 Bayview

Barry Grodenchik District 23

Schools

29Q381 - UPK
Benjamin N. Cardozo High School
Business Technology Early College High School
Cambria Heights Academy
Irwin Altman Middle School 172
JHS 074 Nathaniel Hawthorne
Martin Van Buren High School
PS 035 Nathaniel Woodhull
PS 186 Castlewood
PS 191 Mayflower
PS 221 The North Hills School
PS Q004
PS Q023 @ Queens Children Center
PS Q224
PS Q811
PS Q993
PS/IS 178 Holliswood

Adrienne E. Adams District 28

Schools

August Martin High School
Catherine and Count Basie Middle School
Epic High School - North
Epic High School - South
Hawtree Creek Middle School
High School for Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture
High School for Law Enforcement and Public Safety
JHS 226 Virgil I Grissom
New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math & Science IV
PS 040 Samuel Huntington
PS 048 William Wordsworth
PS 050 Talfourd Lawn Elementary School
PS 100 Glen Morris
PS 108 Captain Vincent G Fowler
PS 121 Queens
PS 123
PS 155
PS 160 Walter Francis Bishop
PS 223 Lyndon B Johnson
Queens Transition Center
Redwood Middle School
Richmond Hill High School

The Jermaine L. Green STEM Institute of Queens
Thurgood Marshall Magnet School of Multimedia and Communication
Voyages Prep- South Queens

Jimmy Van Bramer District 26

Schools

277Q The Riverview School
277Q @258
Energy Tech High School
IS 204 Oliver W. Holmes
Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College
PS 112 Dutch Kills
PS 150 Queens
PS/IS 78Q
The Children's Lab School

Community Based Organizations

AlliedMedix Resources
Arab-American Family Support Center
CUNY LAW School
Hour Children
LGBT Network
NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
Regal UA Kaufman Astoria & RPX

PS/IS 208
PS/IS 266
PS/IS 295
Queens High School of Teaching, Liberal Arts,
and the Sciences
The Bellaire School
The James J Ambrose School

Community Based Organizations
Commonpoint Queens Samuel Field Y
Creedmoor Psychiatric Center

Robert Holden
District 30

Schools
A.C.E. Academy for Scholars at the Geraldine
Ferraro Campus
Central Queens Academy Charter School -
South Campus
Grover Cleveland High School
IS 093 Ridgewood
IS 119 The Glendale
IS 73 The Frank Sansivieri Intermediate School
Maspeth High School
Middle Village Preparatory Charter School
PS 009 (Walter Reed Public School 9)
PS 049 Dorothy Bonawit Kole
PS 068 Cambridge
PS 071 Forest
PS 088 Seneca
PS 091 Richard Arkwright
PS 128 The Lorraine Tuzzo, Juniper Valley
Elementary School
PS 153 Maspeth Elementary
PS 229 Emanuel Kaplan
PS 58 The School of Heroes
PS/IS 087 Middle Village
PS/IS 113 Anthony J Pranzo

Community Based Organizations
Community Board Queens #5
Greater Ridgewood Youth Council
Maspeth Town Hall
Middle Village Older Adult Center
Peter Cardella Senior Citizen Center
Salvation Army Ridgewood Corps
Self Help Maspeth Senior Center

Peter Koo
District 20

Schools
East-West School of International Studies
Flushing High School
Flushing International High School
Francis Lewis High School
IS 237
JHS 189 Daniel Carter Beard
PS 020 John Bowne
PS 022 Thomas Jefferson
PS 024 Andrew Jackson
PS 120 Queens
PS 162 John Golden
PS 163 Flushing Heights

PS 214 Cadwallader Colden
PS 242 Leonard P Stavisky Early Childhood
School
PS Q177
Queens Academy High School
Queens High School for Language Studies
The Active Learning Elementary School
Veritas Academy

Community Based Organizations
Boys Club of New York
Community Board Queens 7
Korean American Family Service Center
Queens Library at Flushing
Salvation Army Flushing Corps
Selfhelp Virtual Senior Center
YWCA at Flushing

Karen Koslowitz
District 29

Schools
Forest Hills High School
JHS 190 Russell Sage
PS 099 Kew Gardens

Community Based Organizations
Selfhelp Community Services

Rory I. Lancman
District 24

Schools
Hillcrest High School
JHS 216 George J. Ryan
PS 117 J. Keld / Briarwood School

Community Based Organizations
District 28 Community Education Council

I. Daneek Miller
District 27

Schools
PS 036 Saint Albans School
PS 095 Eastwood
PS 176 Cambria Heights
PS 360
PS/MS 147 Ronald McNair
The Emerson School

Community Based Organizations
SUNY Queens Educational Opportunity Center
Sickle Cell Awareness Foundation Corp Int'l

Francisco Moya
District 21

Schools
30Q389
PS 014 Fairview
PS 019 Marino Jeantet - Corona
PS 092 Harry T. Stewart Sr.
PS Q016 The Nancy DeBenedittis School

Antonio Reynoso
District 34

Schools
PS 239
PS 81Q Jean Paul Richter
Robert E. Peary School

Donovan J. Richards
District 31

Schools
Knowledge and Power Preparatory
Academy VI
P256Q @ PS43
PS 105 The Bay School
PS 183 Dr. Richard R. Green
PS 195 William Haberle
PS/MS 138 Sunrise
Queens High School for Information,
Research and Technology

Community Based Organizations
Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens

Eric A. Ulrich
District 32

Schools
Gateway Academy at Beach Channel
Campus
John Adams High School
MS 137 America's School of Heroes
PS 090 Horace Mann

Paul Vallone
District 19

Schools
Bayside High School
BELL Academy
IS 025 Adrien Block
JHS 067 Louis Pasteur
JHS 185 Edward Bleeker
JHS 194 William Carr
MS 158 Marie Curie
PS 021 Edward Hart
PS 029 Queens
PS 031 Bayside
PS 032 State Street
PS 041 Crocheron
PS 079 Francis Lewis
PS 094 David D Porter
PS 098 The Douglaston School
PS 107 Thomas A Dooley
PS 129 Patricia Larkin
PS 130
PS 159
PS 169 Bay Terrace
PS 184 Flushing Manor
PS 193 Alfred J Kennedy
PS 209 Clearview Gardens
World Journalism Preparatory: A
College Board School



Charter School Nurses Suicide Prevention Training

With the goal of providing as many NYC "front-line" health staff who work with at-risk populations with the awareness and prevention training they need to be effective, Samaritans adapted its intensive "Meeting the Needs of NYC's Children and Families Mental and Emotional Support" workshop for NYC Office of School Health staff (mostly nurses) who work with, care for and treat students having difficulty coping with personal, emotional and psychological problems. This training provided key elements of the initial, more in-depth staff training (identifying health and behavioral disorders, understanding self-harming behavior, responding to family members) with an overview of stigma, risk factors, assessing suicide ideation and utilizing resources.



Strengthening the Safety Net Community Forum

These forums were a response to City Council Members who believe that the people who live in their districts as well as those who serve them need to work more collaboratively to increase their understanding of suicide, the public health approach to the problem, gain greater access to tools and community resources and learn more about 'best practices' in the field. The forums provided the opportunity for those concerned about the impact of mental health stigma to share their thoughts, needs and suggestions in a supportive and engaging environment.

Brooklyn Schools Served (135 schools, 8 CBOs)



Alicka Ampry-Samuel **District 41**

Schools

Brooklyn Collegiate: A College Board School
PS 189 The Bilingual Center

Community Based Organizations

SCO Family of Services

Inez Barron **District 42**

Schools

East New York Elementary School of Excellence
FDNY Captain Vernon A. Richard High School for Fire and Life Safety
Legacy School of the Arts
PS 013 The Roberto Clemente School
PS 036
PS 184 Newport
PS 190 Sheffield
PS 346 Abe Stark
Riverdale Avenue Community School
World Academy For Total Community Health High School

Justin Brannan **District 43**

Schools

New Utrecht High School

Robert E. Cornegy Jr. **District 36**

Schools

Academy for Health Careers
Bedford Academy High School
Boys and Girls High School
Brighter Choice Community School
Brooklyn Academy High School
Brooklyn Brownstone School
Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy
Brooklyn Technical High School
JHS 057 Whitelaw Reid
Madiba Prep Middle School
MS 035 Stephen Decatur
MS 267 Math, Science & Technology
Nelson Mandela High School
Pathways in Technology Early College High School
PS 021 Crispus Attucks
PS 026 Jesse Owens
PS 081 Thaddeus Stevens
PS 0 93 William H. Prescott
PS 243K- The Weeksville School
PS 262 El Hajj Malik El Shabazz Elementary School
PS 308 Clara Cardwell
PS 335 Granville T Woods
PS 368
PS 373 Brooklyn Transition Center
PS K140
Research and Service High School
Satellite East Middle School
Success Academy Charter School - Bed-Stuy 1
The Brooklyn Academy of Global Finance
The Brooklyn Green School

Community Based Organizations

79th Precinct Clergy Council

Laurie A. Cumbo **District 35**

Schools

Aspiration Diploma Plus High School
PS 009 Teunis G. Bergen
PS 316 Elijah Stroud

Community Based Organizations

Community Counseling and Mediation
State Building

Chaim M. Deutsch **District 48**

Schools

Bay Academy
Connie Lekas School
IS 98 Bay Academy
James Madison High School
JHS 014 Shell Bank
Leon M Goldstein High School of Science
Origins High School
Professional Pathways High School
PS 195 Manhattan Beach
PS 199 Frederick Wachtel
PS 206 Joseph F Lamb
PS 209 Margaret Mead School
PS 253
PS K771
The Eileen E Zaglin School
William E. Grady Career & Technical Education High School

Community Based Organizations

The Jewish Board - Neptune Family Services

Rafael L. Espinal Jr. **District 37**

Schools

Academy for Excellence in Leadership
Academy of Innovative Technology
Brooklyn Environmental Exploration School (BEES)
Brooklyn Lab School
Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School
Bushwick Community High School
Cypress Hills Collegiate Preparatory School
JHS 291 Roland Hayes
JHS 383 Philippa Schuyler
Multicultural High School
PS 065
PS 376
PS 377 Alejandrina B. De Gautier
The Academy of Urban Planning and Engineering

The Brooklyn School for Math and Research
The Brooklyn School for Social Justice
The Urban Assembly School for
Collaborative Healthcare
Transit Tech Career and Technical Education
High School
WH Maxwell Career and Technical
Education High School

Mathieu Eugene
District 40

Schools
PS 399 Stanley Eugene Clark

Brad Lander
District 39

Schools
PS 032 Samuel Mills Sprole
PS 282 Park Slope

Stephen T. Levin
District 33

Schools
A-Tech High School
Brooklyn Frontiers High School
Brooklyn High School of the Arts
Brooklyn Preparatory High School
Cobble Hill School of American Studies
El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice
Juan Morel Campos Secondary School
MS 8
PS 008 Robert Fulton
PS 054 Samuel C. Barnes
PS K369 Coy L. Cox School
The Math & Science Exploratory School,
MS 447

The Urban Assembly for Law and Justice
Urban Assembly Institute of Math and
Science for Young Women
Williamsburg High School for Architecture
and Design
Williamsburg Preparatory School

Community Based Organizations
Committee on Special Education (CSE)
NYC Department of Education

Farah N. Louis
District 45

Schools
Andries Hudde
Brooklyn Science and Engineering Academy
Central Brooklyn Ascend Charter School
Cultural Academy for the Arts and Sciences
IS 285 Meyer Levin
IS 381
It Takes a Village Academy
Kurt Hahn Expeditionary Learning School
Midwood High School
PS 109
PS 119 Amersfort
PS 181 Brooklyn
PS 193 Gil Hodges
PS 198 Brooklyn
PS 208 Elsa Ebeling
PS 224 Richard R. Green
PS 326 East Flatbush Early Childhood
School
PS 361 East Flatbush Early Childhood
School
PS K315
School of Science and Technology

Community Based Organizations
Brooklyn College Personal Counseling
Program

Alan N. Maisel
District 46

Schools
High School for Medical Professions
PS 279 Herman Schreiber

Antonio Reynoso
District 34

Schools
Brooklyn Frontiers High School Grand
Street Campus
JHS 162 The Willoughby
PS 075 Mayda Cortiella
PS 123 Suydam
PS 147 Isaac Remsen
PS 257 John F. Hylan

Mark Treyger
District 47

Schools
International High School at Lafayette
PS 095 The Gravesend
PS 101 The Verrazano

Kalman Yeger
District 44

Schools
Edward R. Murrow High School
JHS 223 The Montauk
PS 099 Isaac Asimov
PS 192 The Magnet School for Math and
Science Inquiry



Samaritans Talk To Me: Responding to NYC's Culturally Diverse Populations

"Talk To Me: Responding to at-risk individuals and their families from NYC's culturally and emotionally diverse populations" professional development training brought over 250 DOE student support personnel and other NYC health providers together with experts with extensive experience working with the city's highest-risk populations (including: Asian, Latina, LGBTQ, immigrants, elderly, victims, etc.) to address the challenges they face, culturally appropriate resources available and tools and techniques that have proved effective in responding to individuals (and their family members) in need of care, support and treatment.



Suicide Prevention Training Tied to American Bar Association Guidelines

This workshop was designed in response to a directive by the American Bar Association that large law firms' staff should receive education and training tied to self-harming and suicidal behavior so that they are more knowledgeable of the impact of mental illness on those it touches, how to identify and respond to those who may be "at risk," including the increasing number of lawyers who experience distress and suicide ideation.



Manhattan Schools and CBOs Served (66 schools, 34 CBOs)

Diana Ayala

District 8

Schools

Central Park East II
East Harlem Scholars Academy Charter
School II
PS 096 Joseph Lanzetta
PS 171 Patrick Henry

Community Based Organizations

Barrier Free Living
Getting Out and Staying Out
Mount Sinai

Margaret S. Chin

District 1

Schools

PS 110 Florence Nightingale
PS 126 Jacob August Riis

Community Based Organizations

Administration for Children's Services
Metropolitan College of New York
NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene,
Bureau of Early Intervention

Corey Johnson

District 3

Community Based Organizations

Legal Action Center
New York Foundling
Quest To Learn
Seyfarth Shaw

Mark Levine

District 7

Schools

New Design Middle School
PS 145 The Bloomingdale School
PS/IS 210 Twenty-First Academy for
Community Leadership
Urban Assembly School for Performing Arts

Bill Perkins

District 9

Schools

A. Philip Randolph Campus High School
Eagle Academy for Young Men
Eagle Academy for Young Men of Harlem
Frederick Douglass Academy
Frederick Douglass Academy II
Harlem Renaissance High School
Mott Hall High School
PS 030 Hernandez/Hughes
PS 046 Arthur Tappan
PS 076 A. Philip Randolph



PS 092 Mary McLeod Bethune
PS 138
PS 149 Sojourner Truth
PS 175 Henry H Garnet
PS 197 John B. Russwurm
PS 200 The James Mccune Smith School
PS 242 The Young Diplomats Magnet
Academy
STEM Institute of Manhattan
The Mott Hall School
The Urban Assembly School for Global
Change
Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning
and Social Change
Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower
Wadleigh Secondary School for the
Performing & Visual Arts

Community Based Organizations

Harlem Children's Zone
Harlem Dowling Westside Center
Jewish Ccommunity Center, Harlem

Keith Powers

District 4

Schools

Art and Design High School
East Side Elementary School PS 267
Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School
JHS Robert F Wagner
PS 006 Lillie D. Blake
PS 059 Beekman Hill International
PS M169 Robert F Kennedy
Repertory Company High School for the
Theatre Arts
The River School

Community Based Organizations

Administration for Children's Services of
NYC
American-Italian Cancer Foundation
Grand Central Library
Manhattan Community Board 5
Marble Collegiate Church
Marymount Manhattan College
New York University
NYU School of Medicine
Sadie Nash Leadership Project
The Jewish Board
Vanderbilt YMCA

Carlina Rivera
District 2

Schools

Bard High School Early College
Baruch College Campus High School
Earth School
East Side Community School
East Village Community School
Gramercy Arts High School
Harvey Milk High School
High School for Health Professions and Human Services
Institute for Collaborative Education
International High School at Union Square
Manhattan Academy for Arts and Language
Manhattan School for Career Development
PS 040 Augustus Saint-Gaudens
PS 064 Robert Simon

PS 116 Mary Lindley Murray
School of the Future High School
The Children's Workshop School
The STAR Academy PS 63
Unity Center for Urban Technologies

Community Based Organizations

14 Street Y
A New Heroism: International Human Rights and Peace Education
Baruch College
Comunilife, Inc's, Life is Precious
Grand Street Settlement/ BEST Norc
Homes for the Homeless
School of Visual Arts
The Father's Heart Ministries
The Lower Eastside Girls Club

Helen Rosenthal
District 6

Schools

Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts

Community Based Organizations

NYC Department of Education

Ydanis Rodriguez
District 10

Schools

Paula Hedbavny School
PS 128 Audubon
PS 189
Washington Heights Academy

Bronx Schools Served (79 Schools, 22 CBOs)

Diana Ayala
District 8

Schools

07X655
Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School
PS 062 Inocencio Casanova
PS 161 Juan Ponce De Leon School

Fernando Cabrera
District 14

Schools

MS 390
PS 226
PS 306
PS 396
The Bronx School of Young Leaders

Community Based Organizations

Bronx Community Board 5
Groundswell Community Resource Center at King of Glory Tabernacle
Morris Heights Health Center
New Settlement Community Center
Saint Dominic's Family Services
Young Adult Opportunity Initiative - New Settlement

Andrew Cohen
District 11

Schools

Bronx Community Charter School
Dewitt Clinton High School
Kinneret Day School

Ruben Diaz, Sr.
District 18

Schools

84X450
Blueprint Middle School
Bronx Charter School for Excellence
Bronx Community High School
Linden Tree Elementary School

Vanessa L. Gibson
District 16

Schools

Bronx Career and College Preparatory High School
Bronx Collegiate Academy
Bronx High School for Medical Science



Bronx High School of Business
 Bronx International High School
 Bronx Latin
 Claremont International HS
 DreamYard Preparatory School
 High School for Violin and Dance
 IS 117 Joseph H. Wade
 Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies
 MS 301 Paul L. Dunbar
 New Directions Secondary School
 P 186X Walter J. Damrosch School
 PS 053 Basheer Quisim
 PS 110 Theodore Schoenfeld
 PS 146 Edward Collins School
 PS X114 Luis Llorens Torres Schools
 PS/IS 218 Rafael Hernandez Dual
 Language Magnet School
 School for Excellence
 Sheridan Academy for Young Leaders
 Young Women's Leadership School of the Bronx

Community Based Organizations

American Red Cross
 Comunilife
 Bronx Community Board 4
 Bronx Lebanon Hospital
 NYC Department of Education
 Tolentine Zeiser Community Life
 Center, Inc/ Siena House
 Women's Housing and Economic
 Development Corporation

Mark Gjonaj
District 13

Schools
 Bronx High School for the Visual Arts
 Herbert H. Lehman High School
 MS X101 Edward R. Byrne
 PS 089 Bronx
 PS 105 Sen Abraham Bernstein
 PS 304 Early Childhood School
 PS/MS 11X498 Van Nest Academy

Community Based Organizations
 NYC Department of Education

Andy King
District 12

Schools
 PS 076 The Bennington School
 PS 112 Bronxwood
 PS 178 Dr. Selman Waksman
 PS X176

Rafael Salamanca Jr.
District 17

Schools
 Bronx Arena High School
 Bronx Charter School for the Arts
 ESMT - IS 190
 PS 001 Courtlandt School
 PS 006 West Farms

PS 048 Joseph R. Drake
 PS 061 Francisco Oller
 PS 067 Mohegan School
 PS X017
 The Metropolitan High School

Community Based Organizations

Jewish Child Care Association
 New York Psychotherapy and
 Counseling Center
 NYC DOHMH, Bronx Neighborhood
 Health Action Center

Ritchie J. Torres
District 15

Schools
 Fordham High School for the Arts
 JHS. 118 William W. Niles
 PS 028 Mount Hope
 PS 070 Max Schoenfeld
 PS 205 Fiorello La Guardia
 PS 9 Ryer Avenue Elementary School
 Theatre Arts Production Company School
 Wings Academy High School

Community Based Organizations

1 Fordham Plaza, Bronx
 Bronx Field Support Center
 PSS Morrisania Air Rights Center
 William Hodson Senior Center

Staten Island Schools and CBOs Served (1 schools, 2 CBOs)

Steven Matteo
District 50

Schools
 PS 038 George Cromwelll

Deborah Rose
District 49

Community Based Organizations
 Brooklyn Family Partnerships/NYCHA
 Gerard Community Center





Samaritans Suicide Awareness & Safety Planning Presentations

Based on the evaluation of the U.S. Air Force Suicide Prevention program (considered to be the most effective to date), Samaritans developed a workshop for students, parents, teachers and other caregivers that combines an overview of suicide awareness, warning signs and risk factors and culturally appropriate resources with the framework for developing individually tailored "safety plans" and advance problem-solving response scenarios that can be utilized to address anticipated client emotional and psychological problems and states.



Individual Site Consultations

Samaritans education associate staff make individual site visits to schools and community organizations to meet with health provider and/or student counseling staff to address their unique needs and challenges as well as provide them with up-to-date information tied to current research, best practices, statistics and trends, education and training tools, culturally appropriate resources to assist them with their challenging work.



Community Health Fairs

Community Awareness, Outreach and Advocacy are important elements of Samaritans mission to make the public more aware of the suicide epidemic, counter stigma and misconceptions about mental health and suicide and provide direct access to someone who can assist them in addressing their needs and concerns, whether for others or for themselves at community health fairs, event resource tables and other gatherings.

NYC Department of Education *Student Support Personnel* Talk about Samaritans Professional Development Training

The following statements come from evaluations of suicide prevention professional development trainings presented by Samaritans to NYC DOE student support personnel:

Quite simply, Samaritans helps save lives.

LCSW working for the DOE, 11 years in the field

The Samaritans is the most reliable resource that I have found regarding suicide and related topics, helping to make informed decisions.

Betty D. Robles, Bilingual School Guidance Counselor, Master's Degree, 25 years in field

This training should be taken by every educator regardless of the level of school they are in. The information given and the resources provided were invaluable.

Lauren Prettitore, School Guidance Counselor, Master's Degree, 13 years in the field

The trainings were exceptionally good. They provided insights into the various warning signs to look for as well as possible interventions.

Carol Graham, Social Worker, Master's Degree, 25+ years in the field

It makes you more aware of what is going on around you and it also gives you suggestions on how to help families. Workshop also gave you tools to recognize people in crisis.

Neila Adolphus, Social Worker, Masters

Samaritans helps open windows to the inner lives of kids in trouble, helps people who work with them to develop empathy and understanding of their issues and feelings. It guides professionals to find ways to help these children cope.

Ana Medina, PhD course work., counselor, 18 years in the field

I have received lots of resources from Samaritans workshops, which are not available to me at work. The information and outreach services change all the time and through Samaritans workshops I am kept informed and connected.

Lillian Hernandez, School Counselor, Master's Degree, 10 years in the field

I would be an awful social worker and counselor were it not for the expert training, support, and camaraderie I enjoyed as a volunteer: the trainings alone at Samaritans rival what I've learned in school and on the job. The personal value and joy I derived from the work were also life-changing, unique, invaluable.

Timothy Krause, former volunteer, LMSW, Social Worker, 3 years in the field

I have attended the Samaritans workshops for many years. As a K-8 grade counselor the tools provided by this organization are truly immeasurable.

Kelly Morales, School Guidance Counselor/ Professor, Master's Degree, 17 years in field

I work with middle school students who have been removed from their schools due to discipline problems. I attended The Samaritans training on suicide prevention and it has been a great resource to provide to families I worked with and to the students. Some students have actually come to my office and requested the palm card with the hotline number to keep with them.

Joyce L. Hernandez Lopez, School Counselor, Master's Degree, 8 years in the field

The Samaritans workshop helped me to access the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS). Every student that reports "wishing to be dead", or having "non-specific active suicidal thoughts" receives a baseline screening.

Elizabeth Sanchez, Elementary School Counselor, Master's Degree

This was the best workshop I have attended in regards to the topic on suicide. I value the real life stories and factual information given and the seriousness of the topic.

Julie McCullough, School Counselor, Master's Degree, 18 years in the field

Samaritans has provided valuable professional development opportunities to school-based staff for years. The topics range from issues within special education, to mental health, to crisis/traumatic loss response. I left there with a much better insight on understanding cultural issues in crisis and loss.

Jessica Joseph, Educational Assistant & School Counselor, Masters, 15 years in the field

I found the workshop to be a reminder of the students and their needs. A general refresher which was much needed. How much needed?? I took pictures of nearly every slide!!

Amie B Mizzi, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Masters, 14 years in the field

Samaritans has taught me to become a better listener. Both students and staff have benefited from my counseling and awareness skills due to my Samaritans training.

Kerry Donohue, school counselor, 9 years in the field, advanced degree

Working collegially, considering how to make a positive plan, talking with family members more comfortably, have all been positively impacted by the training by Samaritans, I think it is one of the best training offered in NYC for school personnel.

Valerie Preston, Social Worker, Master's Degree, 45 years in the field

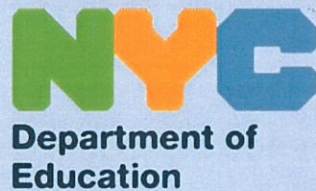
One benefit that I gained from participating in the Samaritans workshop was obtaining necessary tools and outline to develop a safety plan and gaining resources to support suicide prevention initiatives in my school community.

Brandy Nathan, School Secretary, M.S. ED. School Counseling, 12 years in the field

**Samaritans thanks the following
New York City Council Members for
their support in making this program possible**

Adrienne E. Adams
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Chaim M. Deutsch
Vanessa L. Gibson
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Robert Holden
Peter Koo
Stephen T. Levin
Bill Perkins
Keith Powers
Carlina Rivera
Paul Vallone
Jumaane D. Williams

In collaboration with



Samaritans wishes to thank the NYC Council Members who funded our FY 2019 *Caring Community Suicide Prevention & Awareness Public Education Project*, the NYC Department of Education and all of those who provided their support and assistance.

Email us at: education@samaritansnyc.org or go to Samaritans website at: samaritansnyc.org



**New York City Council
Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction**

HEARING RE: OVERSIGHT – MENTAL HEALTH COVERAGE FOR CITY EMPLOYEES

Int. No. 1792-2019

February 24, 2020

Testimony prepared by:

Lisa Furst, LMSW, MPH
Assistant Vice President, Center for Policy, Advocacy and Education
Vibrant Emotional Health
(Formerly the Mental Health Association of New York City, Inc.)

Thank you, Councilmember Ayala and the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction, for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the important issue of ensuring that city employees have information about and access to mental health services available to them.

Vibrant Emotional Health (Vibrant), formerly known as the Mental Health Association of New York City, has provided direct services, public education and advocacy services to New York City for over 50 years, and throughout its history, has been engaged in suicide prevention activities for vulnerable populations. Vibrant currently administers the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which serves nearly 2 million people every year. Vibrant also partners with the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to operate NYC Well, which serves as the front door to New York City's behavioral health system, connecting New Yorkers to free confidential, high quality behavioral health information, referral, support and crisis intervention services as well as follow-up and peer support services 24/7/365 through phone, text and/or chat. The program is staff by counselors and peer support specialists.

Vibrant does not support the passage of bill Int. No. 1792 – 2019. While we agree with the Council that all New Yorkers, including city employees, should have accurate, up to date information about behavioral health services available to them, we believe that this bill would inadvertently duplicate the services of NYC Well, which already has the capacity to provide the information that city employees need. Increasing the awareness of New York City employees about the availability of NYC Well and its publicly available service finder can help them access information about available services and connect them immediately to a counselor or peer who can address their specific behavioral health and other critical needs.

The NYC Well service finder contains approximately 1,500 active programs. Included in the service finder are clinical programs which offer treatment for mental health and/or substance use concerns at all levels of care, from outpatient clinics to inpatient and residential units for children, youth, families and adults across the age spectrum. The service finder is utilized by NYC Well staff to make referrals for those contacting NYC Well; however, the service finder is also made available to providers and members of the general public - including New York City employees - through the NYC Well website. The NYC Well service finder follows the standards set forth by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) the professional membership association for community information and referral and the sole source for standards, program accreditation and practitioner certification for the information and referral sector. The service finder is curated by the NYC Well resource staff, all of whom are AIRS certified, who conduct annual updates and interim updates if we learn of changes in existing program information. Annual verification of information is a requirement for inclusion in the database.

The service finder goes beyond a basic listing and contains a rich set of data elements. It does not simply list a program name, phone number, and address. It list information such as a description of the service, how to access the service, eligibility requirements, hours of operation, public transportation information, whether there is wheelchair access, languages spoken, fee structure/insurances accepted, catchment area served. In addition to providing these details, the service finder also contains programs which address the social determinants of mental health, such as food access, housing, and entitlements which are located within or serve the five boroughs of New York City. It also includes resources that assist in connecting individuals from outside New York City with their local information and referral hotline. Search results can be

further refined through the use of filters including payment options, geographical area, program focus, and age. The payment option filter includes approximately 30 different insurance plans, sliding scale fee, or free options.

We believe that NYC Well is a robust resource that can be leveraged to support the behavioral health needs of New York City employees, who could be made aware of its availability through education and promotion of the service at city agencies, including posting information about NYC Well and the service finder on city agency websites.

Thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony today. We are grateful for the New York City Council having made this opportunity possible, and we are available at the Council's convenience to assist in its efforts to support the emotional well-being of New York City's employees.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 064 Res. No. 1792
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DARON MARINO

Address: 61 GRAMERCY PARK NY NY 100

I represent: SAMARITANS Suicide Prevention Center

Address: 197 VERONA AVE, BROOKLYN NY 11206

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/24/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL CLARKE

Address: 1 POLICE PLAZA

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 POLICE PLAZA

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1792,69 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/24/2020

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Name: RENEE CAMPION, COMMISSIONER

Address: 22 CORTLANDT

I represent: OLR

Address: 22 CORTLANDT

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

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I represent: OLR

Address: 22 CORRLANDT

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I represent: OLR

Address: 22 CORRLANDT

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Name: Dr. Myla Harrison

Address: Assistant Commissioner

I represent: DOHMH

Address: _____

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Name: Kathy Rivera

Address: _____

I represent: JCCA - Senior VP of Care Management

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Beverly Johnson

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 2/24/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christian HUYGEN

Address: 360 W 21st St. # 2K, NY NY 10011

I represent: Rainbow Heights Cld

Address: 25 Flatbush Ave 3rd Fl. BK NY 11217

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