



**NJAMHAA**

New Jersey Association of Mental  
Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.



Innovating for Progress  
Partnering for Solutions

**FY 2026**

Department of Health Budget Listening Session  
November 5, 2025

**Board Members**

CHAIR

Anthony Comerford, PhD

VICE CHAIR

Frank A. Ghinassi, PhD, ABPP

TREASURER

Alan DeStefano, MSW

SECRETARY

Derry Holland, LCSW

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR

Jacques Hryshko, LPC, ACS

**At-Large Members**

Robert J. Budsock, MS, LCADC

Kathryn Colhoun, LCSW

Anthony DiFabio, PsyD

Robert N. Davison, MA, LPC

Howard L. Haughton

Brigitte Johnson, Esq.

Erika Kerber, Esq.

Lisa Merritt

DNP, RN, PMHNP-BC, NE-BC

Kristine Pendy, LCSW

Louis A. Schwarcz, MA

Shavonda Sumter, MBA

Kathy White-Thomas, MS

Regina Widdows, MA

Barrett Young, MS

**President and CEO**

Debra L. Wentz, PhD

Written Testimony of

Debra L. Wentz, PhD  
President and CEO

New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the FY2027 budget.

The New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, known as NJAMHAA, represents 164 members that serve more than 500,000 children, youth and adults each year and directly and indirectly employ 61,000 members of New Jersey's workforce.

At this time of current and impending federal policy changes and funding cuts, it is more important than ever for New Jersey to apply every resource available to support access to quality mental health and substance use treatment and supports. To fully address the needs of New Jersey's children, youth and adults, initiatives within the Department of Health must be strengthened and expanded.

The Department of Health (DOH) is both directly responsible for many behavioral health services, such as inpatient psychiatric units and harm reduction centers, and also has significant impact on many other behavioral health services through licensing, funding and policy guidance. A primary example is the recently proposed integrated licensing regulation. We look forward to its final promulgation and adoption, with amendments to the proposed rule 8:43K as recommended by NJAMHAA and other stakeholders, so implementation may begin advancing integrated care.

To meet the mutual mission of the DOH, hospitals and community-based behavioral healthcare providers, NJAMHAA is sharing the following recommendations for the FY2027 budget to meet staffing and safety needs throughout the health system and expand access to care.

3635 Quakerbridge Road, Suite 35, Mercerville, NJ 08619

Phone: 609.838.5488 Fax: 609.838.5489 [www.njamhaa.org](http://www.njamhaa.org)



**NJAMHAA**

New Jersey Association of Mental  
Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.



Innovating for Progress  
Partnering for Solutions

- Provide funding to hire more staff in the Division of Certificate of Need and Licensing to assist in processing programmatic licensure applications more quickly, as well as to approve and grant waivers when appropriate.
- Increase the number of voluntary and involuntary adult inpatient crisis beds, specifically for forensic and medically frail patients and individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities so that there are an adequate number of appropriate beds in each geographic area.
- Increase the number of inpatient crisis beds for children and youth with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, ideally in locations across the state, reducing distances from families.
- Further facilitate integrated, whole-person care by providing an additional \$5 million in funding for community and private hospitals to attract and retain psychiatrists and advanced practice nurses in their inpatient units.
- Provide incentive funding for community providers to participate in the Quality Improvement Program (QIP). This initiative requires collaboration of hospitals with community-based behavioral healthcare providers yet funding for community providers is not included in the QIP framework. The Department should consider separate state funding to incentivize community providers to work with the QIP hospitals for the benefit of those served by these programs.
- Provide an additional \$5 million for the Graduate Medical Education budget line and an additional \$5 million for the Graduate Medical Education Supplemental budget to encourage an ongoing pipeline of future healthcare providers including behavioral healthcare providers.

All of these investments would bring the State closer to delivering the timely and appropriate care that all New Jersey's residents need and deserve. We appreciate their consideration.

 3635 Quakerbridge Road, Suite 35, Mercerville, NJ 08619

 Phone: 609.838.5488  Fax: 609.838.5489  [www.njamhaa.org](http://www.njamhaa.org)