



Dr. Stephen Giordano, PhD.  
Commissioner  
Albany County Department of Mental Health  
260 S Pearl St  
Albany, NY 12202

January 13, 2025

Dear Dr. Stephen Giordano

I am pleased to inform you that the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) has issued a revised 2024 New York State Aid Approval Letter to include state aid funding to implement Court Based Mental Health Navigators (Navigator). Based on county feedback, the original funding amounts brought to counties have been increased to cover costs more accurately for salary, fringe and other than personnel service (OTPS) for pre-selected job titles and number of Navigators awarded. A representative from the Hudson River Field Office will be reaching out with specifics on the exact funding amount. At this time, counties can reference code 1760 for this funding stream. Counties will be notified of the dedicated program code at a later date.

Navigators support justice-involved individuals with mental health needs who are currently in the community. Navigators work with local systems to coordinate voluntary care for justice-involved individuals to support their health, wellness, and recovery. Navigators are housed within county government and have a strong understanding of the local mental health, social services, and criminal justice systems. Ideally, Navigators are located at courthouses and work closely with peer specialists to foster rapid connection to services and encourage engagement and participation with services.

To support individuals with mental health needs who are involved in the criminal justice system, Navigators will, among other duties:

1. Conduct initial screenings to assist with referrals to mental health and/or substance use treatment services and to determine if a more comprehensive evaluation is needed.
2. Connect individuals with appropriate mental health services, treatment programs, and community resources based on their needs and circumstances, including a connection to Single Point of Access (SPOA), Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams, Intensive and Sustained Engagement Teams (INSET), case management services, and/or Safe Options Support (SOS) teams when available.
3. Follow-up with referred individuals and community providers to ensure seamless transition and engagement in services. If individuals are not attending treatment, continue to encourage participation and, where possible, resolve potential barriers.
4. Develop and maintain a comprehensive resource guide of appropriate local behavioral health and social services to assist with matching individuals with the best resources to promote health, wellness, and recovery.
5. Facilitate communication and collaboration with existing providers, criminal justice stakeholders, and state agencies on mental health service-related issues.
6. Provide participants with basic information and education about the court process and related terminology.
7. Connect participants to resources for shelter, food, or other health-related social needs; as needed, aid and/or refer for completion of applications for social services benefits.

8. Provide on-going training and consultation about navigator services and available state and local behavioral-health resources to various criminal justice stakeholders and mental health agencies to increase referral opportunities.
9. Maintain accurate records of clients served, interventions, and outcomes. Prepare reports as required.
10. Enter data on program referrals, participant demographics, interventions, and outcomes into the OMH Diversion Center Navigator data collection system.
11. Coordinate with OMH Diversion Center to discuss system issues and develop innovative solutions to barriers.

Counties or county designated providers must comply with the below reporting requirements:

- Participate in OMH led training(s) on the Navigator data system and reporting responsibilities.
- Document all contacts with participants in the OMH Diversion Center Navigator data system.
- Maintain data sharing practices and ongoing communication with the OMH Diversion Center to discuss obstacles to treatment services/referrals, and collectively develop solutions to barriers and gaps in services.
- Participate in OMH-led quarterly stakeholder calls to facilitate dialogue with fellow Navigators to identify county/regional needs, trends, and barriers to service, and areas of needed technical assistance.

For more information counties can reference the *Court Based Mental Health Guidance* document previously sent or contact the Diversion Center with questions.

OMH's Diversion Center will be providing technical assistance and support to counties on the development, implementation, and on-going operation of the Navigator initiative. We look forward to partnering with you on implementing Navigators in your county.

If you have any questions, please contact Songyun Huang at [Songyun.Huang@omh.ny.gov](mailto:Songyun.Huang@omh.ny.gov) or Diversion Center staff at [dfs-jaildiversion@omh.ny.gov](mailto:dfs-jaildiversion@omh.ny.gov).

Sincerely,

Tricia George  
Director of the Diversion Center

Cc: Li-Wen Lee, MD  
Naomi Freeman, Ph.D.  
Melissa Porter, Psy.D.  
Anthony Walsh  
Theresa Brandow