

2023 Annual Report



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Note from the Commissioner



Dear Friends,

OPWDD wants to make sure that people with developmental disabilities get the services and supports they need.

Last year, we shared our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan which explained what kind of goals and activities OPWDD was going to work on to make things better.

This 2023 Annual Report shares updates on the work and actions that OPWDD has done in the past year.

The report includes:

1. Words to Know - Important words and what they mean
2. Information about OPWDD
3. Work OPWDD has done to meet our goals

Each year, OPWDD will share a new report.

I hope you will read the report to see how OPWDD is doing on reaching our goals.

I hope that you keep sharing your thoughts about the Strategic Plan and our progress.

OPWDD and I want to thank each one of you for your support in this process.

OPWDD and I are happy to be working with you and others to make the system better.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Neifeld

Words to Know



Employment

jobs for people with developmental disabilities



Grant

money that is given to organizations or providers from OPWDD to try new things to improve services and supports



Medicaid

federal (United States) program that pays for many services for people with developmental disabilities



Services

different kinds of supports that help people with daily activities



Strategic Plan

a plan on how to help OPWDD work on the changes and challenges facing the system



Waiver

an agreement that OPWDD and the NYS Department of Health (DOH) have with the federal government - this is called the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waiver



Workforce

the different people working to help people with developmental disabilities - this includes Direct Service Professionals (DSPs), Care Managers, Care Coordination Organizations, providers, and more

OPWDD

OPWDD is the New York State agency that oversees services for many New Yorkers with developmental disabilities.

Services are provided by nonprofit agencies and by OPWDD.

Services include:

- housing supports
- community habilitation
- crisis services
- day and employment programs
- family support services
- respite
- care coordination

Most OPWDD services are paid for by federal Medicaid funds and New York State funds.

Each year, OPWDD spends over \$8 billion in Medicaid funds.

OPWDD Today

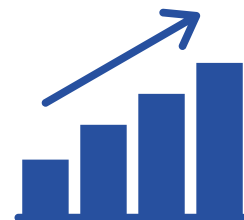
In the last five years, OPWDD's Medicaid spending has gone up by about \$1 billion.

The number of people OPWDD serves is growing.

The cost to support someone for a year has increased.

It costs about \$66,000 a year to support one person.

More children are getting OPWDD services.



OPWDD Strategic Plan

Last year, OPWDD made the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan was made to help with challenges and changes that OPWDD is facing.

The Plan has goals, objectives, and activities that explain what OPWDD will do to make things better.

The Plan is for the next five years from 2023 to 2027.

You can find a copy of the Plan on the OPWDD website at www.opwdd.ny.gov

Goals & Objectives



Goal 1: OPWDD's first goal is about staff, computers, and working with others.

- Strengthen the Workforce
- Update OPWDD's Computer Systems
- Work with Stakeholders



Goal 2: OPWDD's second goal is about improving services, simplifying rules, and looking for new ways to support people.

- Improve Supports and Services
- Simplify Rules and Policies
- Research New Programs and Services



Goal 3: OPWDD's third goal is to improve person-centered supports.

- Support Children, Youth, and Young Adults
- Serve People with Complex Needs
- Reach Diverse Communities

OPWDD Annual Report

Every year, OPWDD will share information and updates about its work and progress on the Strategic Plan goals.

This 2023 OPWDD Annual Report is the written update about that work.

The report includes:

- Information about OPWDD and its work
- Work that OPWDD has done this year to meet the Strategic Plan goals

OPWDD is still working on reaching our goals and will keep sharing updates on progress every year.



Keeping People Informed

This report is one way that OPWDD will keep people informed about our work.

OPWDD will continue to meet with people to hear from them about how well they think we're doing and if we should make changes to the plan.

OPWDD will find different ways to include people in our events and how we plan for the future.

OPWDD will keep people involved through in-person and online meetings, sharing surveys online, and finding new ways for people to tell OPWDD what they are thinking.



Goal 1 Updates

Strengthen the Workforce:

Improve staff hiring, how long staff stay in their jobs, and provide staff training.



OPWDD paid \$1.6 billion dollars to give staff bonuses and raises over the past 18 months.

- This money came from the federal and state government.
- The money was used to help keep staff and get new staff.



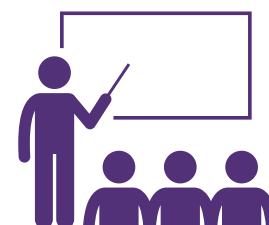
OPWDD asked providers what they are doing to keep staff.

- OPWDD also asked staff members how to make their jobs better.
- OPWDD used those answers to make new trainings and a website for providers.



OPWDD supported more training programs for people who want to work with people with disabilities.

- The State University of New York (SUNY) and OPWDD created 13 new training programs.
- Over 800 Direct Service Professionals got extra training for free.





Goal 1 Updates



Update OPWDD's Computer Systems:

Improve OPWDD's computer systems so better data is available.

OPWDD improved data systems and sharing with our partners and the public.



- OPWDD put a summary of Medicaid data on its [website](#).
- OPWDD hired new staff to improve our computer systems and data.
- OPWDD looked at new ways to use technology (computers, apps) to make our work easier.



Work with Stakeholders:

Talk with people with developmental disabilities, family members, and provider agencies when making decisions.

OPWDD held regular meetings and discussions with our partners.



- OPWDD talked with people about what they need and how to make the system better.
- OPWDD worked with other state agencies and disability groups.
- OPWDD surveyed people to find out what changes were most important to them. They said that workforce issues, housing, and self-direction were the top issues.

Goal 2 Updates



Improve Supports and Services:

Improve how supports and services help people now and in the future.



OPWDD worked on projects with other agencies to help more people get jobs.

- OPWDD invested \$26 million dollars to make job training programs to support people who want to get jobs.



OPWDD made more housing options available.

- OPWDD gave \$9 million dollars in grants to try new housing options.
- OPWDD provided more training so people could learn about different housing options.



OPWDD improved how it does its work.

- OPWDD hired more staff to support Self-Direction.
- OPWDD trained more staff to understand the rules of self-direction so they can do a better job.
- OPWDD used the Coordinated Assessment System (CAS) to get better information about people's needs.





Goal 2 Updates



Simplify Rules & Policies:

Make services more flexible and rules easier to understand.

OPWDD made it easier for people with more needs to get better help.

OPWDD and the Department of Health (DOH) made updates to the Home and Community Based Services Waiver (HCBS).



- The changes included:
 - Making some COVID-19 policies permanent.
 - Allowing some services to be offered online.
 - Adding a new kind of assistive technology called “Home Enabling Supports” which are technology and equipment that help people be more independent.



Research New Programs & Services:

Study how well programs are working and find new ways to support people.

- OPWDD began a study on how to make care coordination better and provided trainings to care managers.
- OPWDD is working with an organization to look at the best way to provide services in the future.
- OPWDD worked closely with other agencies to understand how to improve the lives of older people.



Goal 3 Updates



Support Children, Youth and Young Adults:

Make the right services available for children, youth, and young adults.

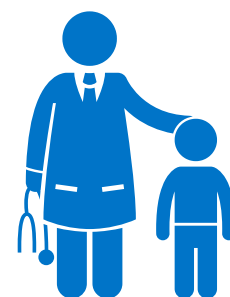
OPWDD continued using a new tool to understand the needs of children getting services.

- This tool is called the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS).
- Over 15,000 children have been evaluated using CANS.



OPWDD worked with partners to make it easier to help young people in crisis.

- This will make it easier for children to get the right kind of help during an emergency.



Serve People with Complex Needs:

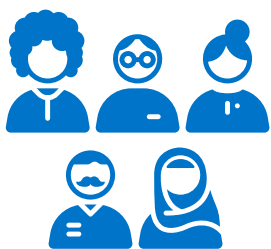
Improve services for people with complex behavioral and medical needs.

OPWDD worked to find new ways to support people who need extra help to keep living at home or in a community setting.

- OPWDD paid to train and help providers who support people during a crisis (emergency).
- OPWDD worked with the New York State Office of Mental Health to help people with disabilities who need mental health services.



Goal 3 Updates



Reach Diverse Communities:

Make sure people of all backgrounds can get OPWDD Services.

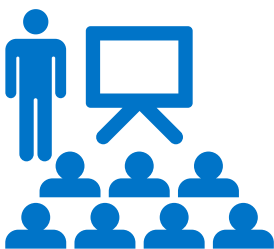
OPWDD hired extra staff to help reach more people from different backgrounds.

- One of the new staff members is in charge of making sure OPWDD makes information and forms in different languages.



OPWDD created and shared more plain language materials.

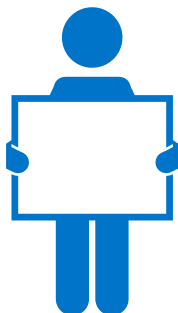
- Plain language materials are written to make sure more people can understand them. This Report is written in plain language.



OPWDD hired national experts to provide training to our staff on how to serve people from all backgrounds better.

OPWDD helped the public understand that people with developmental disabilities do many different things.

- OPWDD made posters and ads to teach people to, “Look Beyond” a person’s disability.



To view or download the
“Look Beyond” posters and
ads scan this QR code to
visit our website.





Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

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