



Office for People With
Developmental Disabilities

2025 Annual Report

Plain Language



2025 OPWDD Annual Report

Plain Language

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A Message from Commissioner Willow Baer



Dear Friends,

This year, we worked together to make services better for people with developmental disabilities. People come first at OPWDD. We want everyone to have what they need to live, work, and be part of their community.

I am proud of what we have done and thankful for everyone who helped with this important work. This report is an update on all the work OPWDD did in 2025 to make our system better.

Last year, at OPWDD we supported staff with better training, the chance to get promotions, and higher pay. We also worked to make our computer systems better so we can make it easier for people to get the support they need.

We worked with agencies to make sure services are high quality and safe. We studied our programs, like Care Coordination and Self-Direction to learn what was working and how we can make those programs better. We also worked to make sure people who need complex support or have a crisis have the help they need.

A big part of making our system better is listening to people with developmental disabilities and their families. Last year, many people and family members helped us with this work.

In 2026, we are excited to keep working together to build a system that is fair, respectful, and welcoming to everyone. I look forward to continuing this work with all of you.

Thank you for your support and for caring about this work.

With Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Willow Baer'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Willow Baer, OPWDD Commissioner



OPWDD Strategic Plan

In 2022, OPWDD made a new five year Strategic Plan.

The plan outlines what changes we would like to make in the next five years from 2023 to 2027.

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

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

OPWDD Goals & Objectives



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

- Strengthen the Workforce
- Update OPWDD's tools and systems
- Work with People and the Public



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

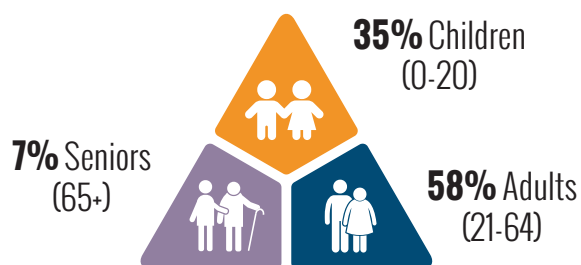
OPWDD Data

In 2024, OPWDD supported over 135,000 people.

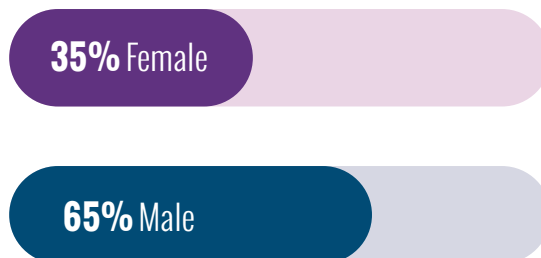
65% of those people were male and 35% of people were female.

OPWDD supports people of all ages. 58% of people supported by OPWDD were Adults between 21 and 64 years old. 35% of people were Children 20 years old or younger and 7% of people were Seniors 65 years or older.

Age of People Served



Sex of People Served



OPWDD helps people from many different cultures and from all parts of New York State.

In 2024, most people who got help from OPWDD identified as White (65.5%). The next largest group was Black (19.3%), followed by Asian (4.5%). OPWDD also supported (16.6%) people who said they were of Hispanic Origin.

OPWDD is still working to learn more about the people we support. We will start getting information about gender identity and sex so we can share more about who we support in the future.

\$ OPWDD Spending

OPWDD is a New York State agency that helps people with developmental disabilities to get the services and supports they need. Most services are provided by other agencies across the state, but some are provided directly by OPWDD.

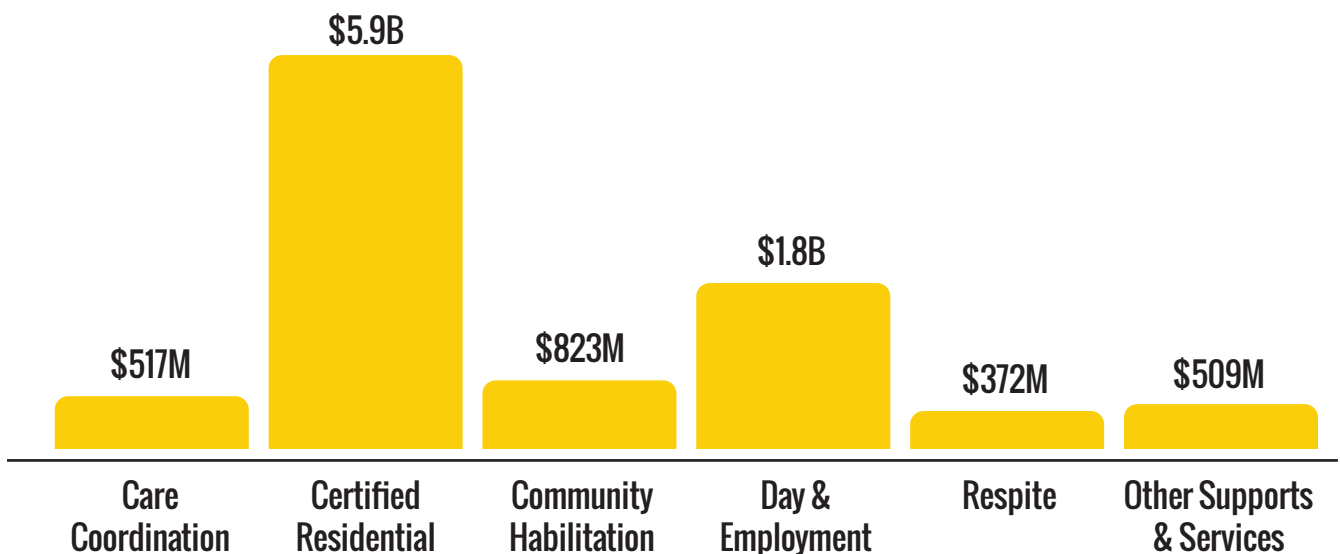
OPWDD services are paid for with money from federal Medicaid funds and New York State funds.

In 2024, OPWDD spent around \$10 billion in Medicaid funds to pay for services. This equals about \$76,000 per person for one year of support.

In 2024, OPWDD spent money on:

- \$517 Million dollars on Care Coordination
- \$5.9 Billion dollars on Certified Residential Services
- \$823 Million dollars on Community Habilitation
- \$1.8 Billion dollars on Day Programs and Employment Supports
- \$372 Million dollars on Respite
- \$509 Million dollars on Other Supports and Services

Medicaid Expenditures by Service Category





Goal 1 Updates

Strengthen Our Workforce, Technology, and Collaboration

OPWDD continued to help get more staff to support people with disabilities

- For the last two years, OPWDD and other providers have been using a campaign called More Than Work to help hire more DSPs.
- Over 1.6 million people visited the [website](#) and more than 96,000 went to provider websites to learn about local jobs.

Staff got free training to learn new skills to better support people with disabilities

- 1,300 students took part in DSP microcredential training at 21 different SUNY campuses across New York State.
- Staff learned about different topics like trauma informed care, cultural competence, person-centered planning and front line supervisor skills.

OPWDD is using technology to make it faster and easier for people to get services

- OPWDD worked with the Department of Health to get federal funding to improve our technology and computer systems.



1.6 Million+

people have visited the #MoreThanWork website



\$4 Billion

has been given to providers and staff since 2022



3,000 DSPs

learned new skills and earned an e-badge

Working Together to Make OPWDD Better

OPWDD works with many people, families, and providers to make our system better. We meet with people all over New York State to hear what you want and what your goals are for the future.

OPWDD had in-person meetings in:

- Niagara Falls
- Syracuse
- Hyde Park
- Long Island
- Brooklyn



OPWDD also held 5 meetings online.

HIGHLIGHTS

OPWDD hosted five in-person forums in 2025



OPWDD hosted five online forums in 2025



Over 150 people shared comments with OPWDD at the forums



OPWDD hosted events for self-advocates and for people who speak languages other than English



The main topics were Self-Direction, Access to Services, Housing, Staff, Working with OPWDD, and Aging



Many people said they want to help OPWDD make changes





Goal 2 Updates

Transform Our System through Innovation and Change

OPWDD connected people who want jobs with programs and training to help them reach their goals

- Almost 400 people finished career specific trainings.

OPWDD is working with people, families, and providers to improve housing services

- OPWDD is continuing to develop technology to make it easier to match people with housing that fits their needs.
- OPWDD has worked to make programs like Assistive Technology, Environmental & Vehicle Modification easier to use and get.
- OPWDD's State Operated services provides housing for people with the most complex needs.

OPWDD is working on different projects to improve the quality of services

- OPWDD is working with doctors, nurses, and dentists to provide better health and dental care for people with disabilities.
- New rules were created for Supported Decision-Making to help people understand their rights and get the support they need.
- OPWDD staff provided training on the Coordinated Assessment System process and tool to people, families, and providers all over New York.



\$25 Million+

for Regional
Disabilities Clinics in
the 2024 budget



9,800+

Site Reviews
were done by
OPWDD



1,200+

People were
trained about
the CAS

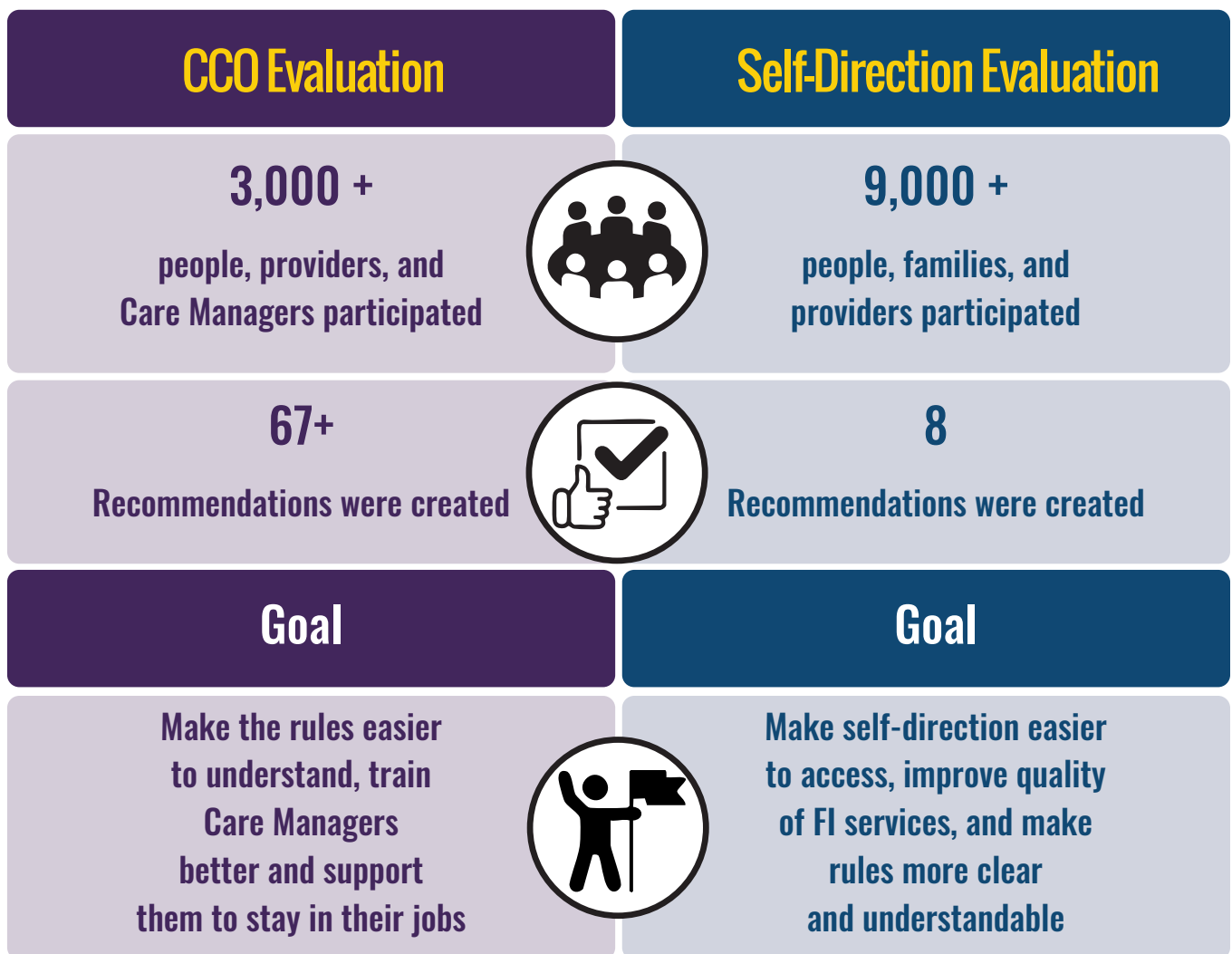
Working with People & Families to Improve Programs

OPWDD has been working with self-advocates, families, and providers to improve Self-Direction and Care Coordination.

In 2024, OPWDD began a project to look at what is working and what could be done better in both programs.

That feedback was reviewed and used to create a plan on how to improve Self-Direction and Care Coordination.

You can find a copy of the [Self-Direction](#) and [Care Coordination](#) reports on the OPWDD website.





Goal 3 Updates

Enhance Our Person-Centered Supports and Services

OPWDD worked to make sure everyone in NYS has equal access to help and support

- OPWDD staff were trained on how to write in Plain Language and to make sure documents and forms are available in many different languages.
- OPWDD staff were also trained on how to help people from different cultures and people who speak languages other than English.

OPWDD taught people with disabilities and their families from different backgrounds and cultures to be advocates

- A new Leadership Academy helped people learn about how to advocate for themselves and their community.
- The group met online and in person to talk about how to make the system better for everyone.

OPWDD found new communities to work with

- OPWDD connected with two nations, the Onondaga and Kanien-keha:ka (St. Regis Mohawk Tribe) to share information and ideas.



2,600+

documents were translated into 60+ languages



4,000+

people got help using language access services



80+

people joined a Leadership Academy

Supporting People with Complex Needs

Some people who are supported by OPWDD need more services than OPWDD can provide alone.

To help people that need more services, OPWDD works with other state and local agencies to connect them with different kinds of support. Some examples of that work are:

- 11 emergency and support programs with the Office of Mental Health for people in crisis.
- Two specialty hospitals that support people with complex medical needs.
- One special hospital unit in Syracuse for young people who have challenging behaviors.
- OPWDD staff helped providers manage complex issues for over 40 people in crisis.

OPWDD helps many people who have complex needs or need emergency help.

New Comprehensive Adult Transitional Homes (CATHs) help people who are moving from one kind of setting to another.

OPWDD has 9 CATH programs across NYS



OPWDD will add 3 more CATH programs in 2026-2027



There are CATH programs in 5 of the 6 State Operations Regions



People in CATH programs stay for an average of 14 months

CATH graduates have been successful and need less support when they are ready to leave



CATH programs give people space to learn skills, and be part of the community



OPWDD Advocacy and Peer Support Unit

Who We Are

The Advocacy and Peer Support Unit include Peer Specialists and Individual & Family Advocates.

These advocates have lived experience and use that experience to support people, improve OPWDD services, and help OPWDD communicate better with the public to make the agency more accessible and fair.

These advocates support people across New York State.

What We Do

Advocate, Educate, and Improve.

OPWDD advocates share information, help people connect with services, and become stronger advocates for themselves. They also train people and groups on their work and the agency.

In 2024-2025:

- **30+** Public Events
- **45+** Staff Trainings
- **50+** Peer Support Cases
- **15+** Committee Memberships



How to Connect

People can contact the Advocacy and Peer Support Unit to ask questions, learn more, or request support.

Email: advocacy@opwdd.ny.gov

Resources

- [Accessing Life Podcast](#)
- [Self-Advocacy Webpage](#)



**Office for People With
Developmental Disabilities**

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