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Mayor de Blasio Announces "NYC Safe," An Evidence-Driven Public Safety And Public Health Program That Will Help Prevent Violence

August 6, 2015

New \$22 million annual investment will provide enhanced support to individuals with untreated serious mental illness whose care requires close coordination between City services

NEW YORK – Mayor de Blasio today announced the launch of “NYC Safe,” an evidence-driven program to support the narrow population of New Yorkers with untreated serious mental illness who pose a concern for violent behavior. NYC Safe changes the way the City intervenes to stop and respond to violence committed by the mentally ill by establishing a centralized oversight body that coordinates public safety and public health. With NYC Safe, the City can respond more rapidly and appropriately to prevent violence and more assertively when it happens. NYC Safe is part of the de Blasio Administration’s commitment to overhaul the City’s approach to mental health and to keep every New Yorker safe. Implementation of NYC Safe starts immediately.

"It is our sacred mission to address a broken mental health system and to revolutionize how we care for all those who are struggling. That includes the small percentage of those with mental illness that, left untreated, are at risk of committing violence against themselves or others," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "Too many have literally lost their lives to untreated mental illness. NYC Safe will protect our city and save people from violence and suffering by making sure New Yorkers who need care will receive it, stick to it, and keep themselves and others safe."

"Most people who suffer from mental illness are not violent," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. "Serious, untreated mental illness leads to violent behavior in a very small percentage of cases. It is just not acceptable that those who suffer are not getting proper treatment. We can do better. We can provide New Yorkers who are ill with the care they deserve, *and* keep our neighborhoods and city streets safe."

NYC Safe's \$22 million annual investment, an unprecedented partnership between law enforcement and health care agencies, will allow New York City to:

- Develop a more comprehensive and real-time picture of where and how to intervene.
- Better connect individuals to the appropriate level of ongoing treatment and support to avoid crises and violence.
- Deploy the most appropriate treatment to individuals in need and ensure continuity of care.
- Rapidly and effectively deploy a law enforcement response, where appropriate, and enhance communication with services.

Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who have mental health needs are safely treated in the community. Prior to NYC Safe, the de Blasio administration had already committed \$323 million in additional funding over three years to mental health programs to ensure that every New Yorker gets the treatment they need. Today's announcement expands engagement levels and services for a group of New Yorkers that has long been ignored to meet mental health needs and effectively respond to different levels of risk.

The new plan includes a series of interventions that together create a continuum of services to meet the specific needs of this vulnerable population, from timely intervention to treatment and follow up to law enforcement response, when necessary. Specifically, this two-pronged plan includes:

1. Increased coordination between criminal justice, health, and homeless services agencies through:

- A new hub, managed by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, to coordinate information sharing between law enforcement, homeless services, and those providing clinical treatment.

- A new monitoring team at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to connect high-risk individuals with treatment and follow up.
- Specially trained NYPD officers and DOHMH clinicians for five new "co-response" teams.
- Increase of DHS peace officers inside highest-need shelters, and of NYPD presence where needed.
- Resources to more effectively use Kendra's Law and the Assisted Outpatient Treatment program

2. Increased investment in consistent, high-quality health treatment with:

- Funding for four new Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams to provide intensive, high-quality treatment to reach people with mental illness where they are. Forensic ACT is a proven-model to treat people with serious mental illness who are involved with the criminal justice system. They are dispatched anywhere in the city and are specially trained to provide coordinated support to this specific population.
- Three on-the-ground Intensive Mobile Treatment Teams to provide immediate and ongoing care for individuals who struggle to get treatment and also face housing instability; increase of on-site clinical staff at the City shelters that specialize in housing the mentally ill.
- Additional clinical staff at the City's homeless shelters.

The coordination and treatment services are designed to more effectively provide services to unsheltered individuals and the sheltered homeless. Specifically, the specialized Intensive Mobile Treatment Teams will expand the City's capacity to care for unsheltered New Yorkers.

"Untreated serious mental illness can increase the risk of violent behavior in some individuals, but more importantly, it also prevents them from leading a fulfilling life," said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett**. "This initiative brings mental health teams closer to the ground, to reach people who need this connection to care, but face challenges engaging in adequate treatment – including their housing status or involvement with the criminal justice system."

"In an unprecedented way, the different parts of the system are now working together and we are rapidly deploying the appropriate, real-time, muscular public safety and public health responses to the few individuals who could pose a threat to themselves or others," said **Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice**. "We are linking two systems together and equipping both law enforcement and clinicians with real-time information and more tools so that we can respond nimbly with the right approach at the right time to prevent future crises and violence."

"Police officers understand that people experiencing behavioral health crises often benefit from a multi-agency response. We applaud the Mayor and First Lady Chirlane McCray for supporting this focused and well-coordinated initiative to address these issues involving the mentally ill as effectively as possible," said **Police Commissioner Bill Bratton**.

"This new coordinated approach to caring for New Yorkers with severe mental illness who demonstrate

violent behavior will strengthen our City's ability to get them connected to the high-quality, compassionate and culturally responsive health care services they deserve and help create a safer environment for them, their families and the community at large," said **Health and Hospitals Corporation President and CEO Dr. Ram Raju**.

"Supporting our clients who are affected by mental health illness is one of our top priorities at the Department of Homeless Services," said **Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Gilbert Taylor**. "We are committed to working closely with the Administration and strive to partner with other City Agencies to ensure all New Yorkers, including our staff and clients, are safe."

"I commend the Mayor's effort to address the national problem of the link between mental illness and criminal conduct. The courts stand ready to assist in this groundbreaking effort which will no doubt be an effective and welcome compliment to the judiciary's seven mental health courts which now operate in New York City," said **Chief Judge of the State of New York Jonathan Lippman**.

"I applaud the Mayor's efforts to tackle this issue and provide services to the city's most difficult to serve. I believe this is a bold step forward and am committed to working with both Mayor de Blasio and my colleagues in the City Council to ensure this initiative receives all the resources necessary to achieve success," said **Council Member Andrew Cohen, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health**.

"I applaud the De Blasio administration's historic new initiative, which will provide the needed mental health services and resources to the most vulnerable New Yorkers. This \$22 million initiative shows that New York City's government is committed to effective and compassionate care for all New Yorkers," said **Council Member Steve Levin, Chair of the Council's General Welfare Committee**.

"Serious mental illness can be all-encompassing and can affect every area of a person's life. Individuals suffering from serious mental illness risk becoming alienated from everyone around them, including those in charge of their care. Their personal relationships and physical health may suffer, and their housing and employment options are limited. With timely interventions, however, those few who are likely to commit acts of violence have a greater chance of receiving the treatment they need before a crime is ever committed. And when proactive intervention does not succeed, these individuals need specialized care and resources to prevent them from continuously cycling through the criminal justice system. That's why I support this effort, and why my office previously committed \$40 million in funding to the Mayor's Task Force on Behavior Health to tackle high recidivism rates and improve a system that can disproportionately affect the lives of the mentally ill," said **Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.**

"This is an important step forward as the City looks to improve coordination related to mental health

services and support," said **Congressman Jerrold Nadler**. "I congratulate Mayor de Blasio on taking important steps to address serious untreated mental illness in New York City. This program will provide flexibility across the City government, improving our response and making everyone more safe."

"People with mental health problems in New York City need our attention and help. This is important both for their wellbeing and for public safety. NYC Safe will help address a complex problem in a comprehensive manner, using strategies that allow it to respond quickly and efficiently depending on the situation, and to reduce the incidence of violent crimes related to mental illness," said **Congressman Jose Serrano, Sr.**

"We know that an untreated mental illness can sometimes cause a person to take violent actions they may not have otherwise taken," said **Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney**. "By monitoring populations at high risk and working to deliver the appropriate treatment, we can prevent terrible crimes. We can also improve the lives of those who need our help. I applaud Mayor de Blasio for recognizing the need for NYC Safe, and will do whatever I can to support the successful implementation of this vital initiative."

"The tragic events at the Project Renewal Shelter in April underscored the need to invest in measures targeting violence prevention for those with serious mental illnesses," said **Congressman Eliot Engel**. "Coordinated public safety is a key component of any successful big city. The NYC Safe initiative – which allocates over \$22 million to programming that will monitor, respond to, and treat high-risk individuals across the five boroughs – is a critical step towards improving safety for those living with mental illness, as well as for all NYC residents. I commend Mayor de Blasio and First Lady McCray for making this issue a top priority."

"With NYC Safe, Mayor de Blasio reinforces the public health and public safety of New Yorkers while remaining sensitive to the circumstances of a vulnerable population—those suffering from serious, untreated mental illness. The steps taken today will build a culture of cooperation among housing, mental health, police, and community-based professionals. Moreover, these steps will build a pathway to more readily accessible mental health care. As Ranking Member of the State Senate Committee on Mental Health, one of the challenges mental health professionals bring to my attention is coordination and followup - how to turn a plan of care into action in complex cases. I applaud Mayor de Blasio for marshaling the resources necessary to make sure that challenge is met head on. All New Yorkers stand to benefit from this proactive action," said **New York State Senator Jesse Hamilton**.

"Untreated, unaddressed mentally ill populations are a persistent health and safety challenge in New York City. Only a comprehensive, data-driven approach like the one launched today by the Mayor will have a chance of success. Coordinating law enforcement activity with the City's available services will reduce crime while providing mentally ill New Yorkers the treatment and other help they need to lead productive lives," said **Richard Aborn, President of Citizen's Crime Commission of New York City**.

“NYC Safe brings unprecedented focus and smart solutions to the challenge of homeless adults who are disconnected from traditional sources of mental health treatment. The City's new capacity to reach homeless mentally ill adults before a problem arises will reduce dangerous incidents in a way that protects the public and provides a humane response to people who've been unable to get the help they need,” said **Gail B. Nayowith, Chair of the DOHMH Community Services Board.**

“Over the past 15 years, CASES has provided effective alternatives for individuals with serious mental illness who would otherwise face incarceration, demonstrating that with the right combination of services and supervision these men and women can achieve stability and success in the community. I commend the NYC Safe initiative and its commitment to improve public safety and public health outcomes for this high-need and often neglected population. As a leader in the community of criminal justice and mental health providers, CASES looks forward to working with the City on this very important initiative,” said **Joel Copperman, CEO and President of CASES.**

[Download the NYC Safe Fact Sheet](#) (in PDF)

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