

OFFICE OF THE NEW YORK STATE COMPTROLLER

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ISSUES FACING NEW YORK CITY'S AGENCIES: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Overview

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) protects and promotes the health and mental health of all City residents, with a budget of \$3 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2022. DOHMH contracts with community-based organizations to deliver services to address mental health, developmental disabilities and substance use disorders, and provides a wide range of direct public health services. The department's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) uses forensic science to conduct independent investigations of deaths.

Pandemic Impact on Agency Operations

Together with NYC Health and Hospitals (H+H), DOHMH has been at the forefront of the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting disease surveillance, distributing medical equipment to healthcare facilities and coordinating the City's vaccination efforts. The Test & Trace Corps is managed by H+H in cooperation with DOHMH. OCME coordinated with hospitals to expand and manage morgue capacity. The pandemic impacted the delivery of some core public health services as agency resources were shifted to the COVID-19 response and fewer people sought health care. Responding to the mental health needs of people impacted by the pandemic, the Mayor launched *Mental Health for All*, a comprehensive website and public education campaign that coordinates mental health resources across City agencies, including DOHMH.

ISSUES FACING THE AGENCY

- Pandemic Budgetary Impact:** Almost \$1 billion in COVID-19 federal funding is budgeted in FY 2022; three-quarters of the funding is dedicated to COVID-19 vaccinations and epidemiology (see Figure 1). Cases have spiked with the identification of the new omicron variant, and the duration of the pandemic remains unclear, along with its lingering effects on public health in general, and on those communities hardest hit specifically. Spending in DOHMH is forecast to return closer to prepandemic levels in FY 2024 and FY 2025.
- Mental Health Spending:** Spending increased from \$185 million in FY 2013 to an estimated \$500 million in FY 2022 (see Figure 2). The City has made other investments in mental health services including the launch of NYC Thrive, recently established as the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health, which support the delivery of new mental health services across City agencies such as DOHMH, H+H, Department for the Aging, Department of Education, Fire Department and the Police Department, as well as community-based organizations.
- Public Health Programs:** DOHMH will continue partnering with H+H in the delivery of health and mental health services. These agencies will manage the new NYC Public Health Corps (PHC), placing public health workers in communities most affected by the virus. The City has identified initial funding of \$235 million (from federal and City funds) for the program. The City is also required to create a citywide primary care and navigation program (PCNP) but it remains unclear who will manage the PCNP, how the program will function and what its financial impacts will be. It is uncertain when DOHMH will resume prepandemic levels of core public health services.

FIGURE 1

DOHMH COVID-19 Federal Funding (in millions)

SOURCES	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
FEMA	475	-	-	-
COVID Relief Funds	479	196	87	57
Total COVID-19 Relief	\$954	\$196	\$ 87	\$ 57
USES				
Vaccinations	477	36	18	-
Epidemiology/Lab	250	98	6	-
Public Health Services	174	-	-	-
Mobile Mental Health	23	43	47	47
All Other	31	18	16	9
Total Uses	\$954	\$196	\$ 87	\$ 57

Sources: NYC Office of Management and Budget; OSC analysis
Note: Numbers may not add up to total due to rounding.

FIGURE 2

DOHMH Spending on Mental Health

