



**LEWIS**  
**COUNTY**  
NEW YORK

# Community Services

## 2023 Annual Report

Lewis County Community Services  
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# Message from the Director

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2023 marks my ninth year working in the Lewis County Community Services Department. Working with and for persons in our community’s behavioral health care system is an honor and privilege. Over the past few years, we have seen the need for behavioral health services increase. Our service providers are also having difficulty attracting and retaining workforce. This results in people waiting to be seen or seeking services outside of the county.

It is the Lewis County spirit and strong sense of community that supports our community members in their time of need. The community partnerships and knowing who to call when someone needs help, is one of Lewis County’s finest qualities. It isn’t easy living with or recovering from a behavioral health condition. It isn’t easy asking for help. But I can honestly say I have seen people rise above and succeed when everything was at its worst.

2023 certainly had its ups and downs. I am confident we will continue to move forward to serve our community by working together.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Fralick, MBA, CASAC  
Director

## Department Overview

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### Mission Statement

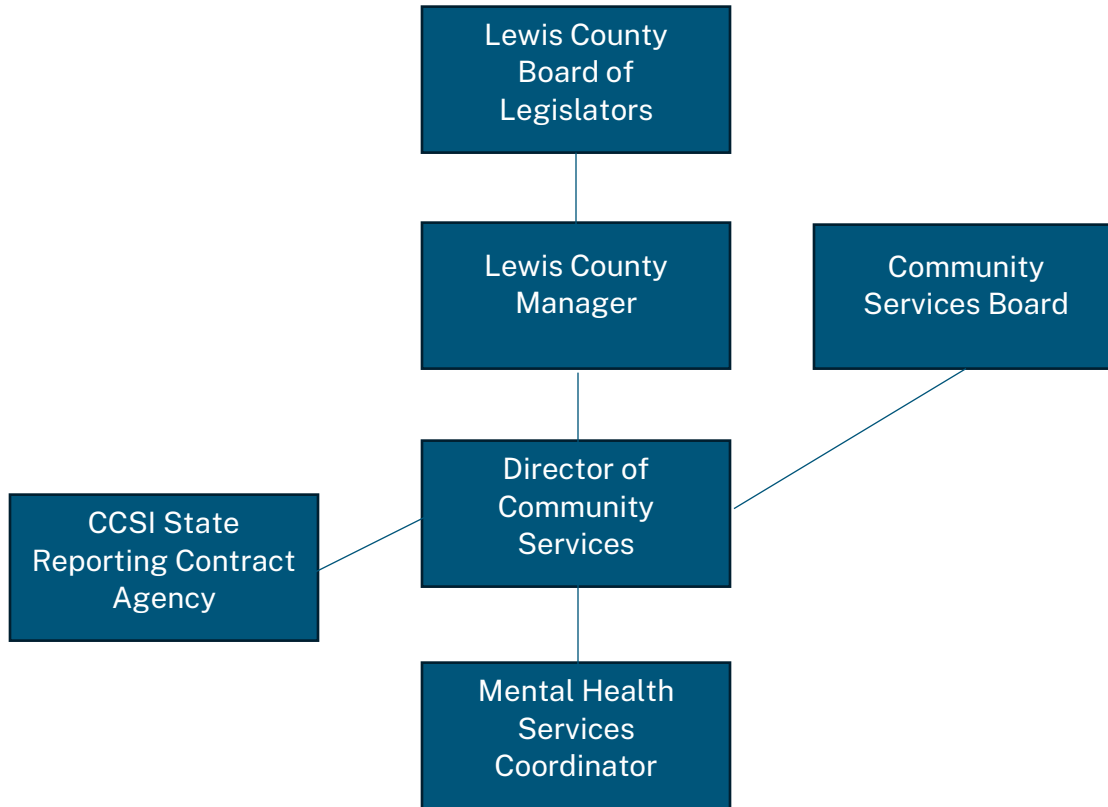
“To serve the community by building a comprehensive array of preventative, treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery mental hygiene services in order to maximize individual functioning, reduce sufferings, and enhance family and community life.” \*

\*2015 Community Services Board Manual

### State Funding

New York State Agency	2023 State Aid	2022 State Aid	2021 State Aid
New York State Office of Mental Health	\$1,944,566.00	\$1,680,758.00	\$1,594,516.00
New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities	\$18,777.00	\$21,730.00	\$17,130.00*
New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports	\$378,620.00	\$359,817.00	\$305,406.00

# Organizational Chart



## Community Services Team

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### Staff

Patricia Fralick, MBA, CASAC  
Director

Full Time Mental Health Services Coordinator\*  
\*2024 position will remain unfilled, and the department will recruit a Deputy Director.

### Community Services Board

**Karen Boliver, Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (Chair)**

**Anna Platz, Lewis County Public Health (Vice Chair)**

Julie Grau, South Lewis Central School

Rose Larkins, The ARC Oneida Lewis

Mark Waterhouse, Transitional Living Services

Wyatt Wagner, Northern Regional Center for Independent Living

Lisa Virkler, Lewis County Legislator

Melanie Saber, Transitional Living Services

Dr. John Wat, Lewis County Health System

# Substance Use Disorder/Mental Health Subcommittee

**Mark Waterhouse, Transitional Living Services (Co-Chair)**

**Anna Platz, Lewis County Public Health (Co-Chair)**

Matt Morrow, Lewis County Probation

Cassie Robbins-Forbus, Mountain View Prevention Services

Julie Grau, South Lewis Central School

Ed Steckly, First Mennonite Church of New Bremen

Amanda Martin, Northern Regional Center for Independent Living

Leah Schneider, Community Member

Ashley Wilson, Mental Health Association of Jefferson County

Deanna Edick, Lewis County Department of Social Services

Debra Susice, Community Member

Melanie Saber, Transitioning Living Services

John Exford, Volunteer Transportation Services

Lisa Virkler, Lewis County Legislator

## Developmental Disability Subcommittee

**Karen Boliver, Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (Chair)**

Tina Cummings, Disabled Persons Action Organization

Wyatt Wagner, Northern Regional Center for Independent Living

Eliza Boliver, Beaver River Central School

Erin Largett, Life Plan

Rose Larkins, The ARC Oneida Lewis Chapter

Dixie Lehmann, Northern Regional Center for Independent Living

Louise Fox, Community Member

## Services

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The Lewis County Community Services Department oversees the development of the Local Services Plan, Assisted Outpatient Treatment, Single Point of Access, Criminal Procedure Law 730 Evaluations, and other aspects of New York State Mental Hygiene Law. The Department also monitors relevant data.

### Local Services Plan

In 2023, the Local Services Planning Process underwent comprehensive changes. Rather than submitting a new Local Services Plan (LSP) each year, local government units are now responsible for creating a LSP with a four-year timeline and submitting annual updates or addendums to the four-year plan. The Community Services Department worked closely with the Community Services Board and subcommittees to finalize the 2024-2027 plan, in 2023.

The goals identified in the 2024-2027 Lewis County Local Services Plan include

1. Attract and retain qualified workforce
2. Reduce stigma
3. Development of a data informed multiyear suicide prevention strategy
4. Crisis services

5. Use of opioid litigation and abatement funds
6. Improve transportation options for clients
7. Improve access to affordable housing
8. Increase utilization and access to respite services
9. Meeting the behavioral health needs of refugees and immigrants

Each goal includes several objectives with target completion dates, most of which do not start until 2024.

## Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT)

In August 1999, the Governor signed Kendra’s Law (MHL 9.60), creating statutory framework for court-ordered outpatient treatment to ensure that individuals with mental illness and a history of hospitalizations or violence participate in community-based services appropriate to their needs. Kendra’s Law established new mechanisms for identifying individuals who, in view of their treatment history and circumstances, are likely to have difficulty living safely in the community without close monitoring and mandatory participation in treatment.

Specific criteria must be met for an individual to be considered for AOT. If the individual meets AOT criteria, he/she is examined by a psychiatrist who determines whether the individual will benefit from court ordered treatment. The AOT petition, psychiatrist’s evaluation and proposed treatment plan are then sent to the Supreme Court so a court date can be scheduled. Individuals present for the hearing include the psychiatrist, County Attorney, Mental Hygiene Legal Services (on behalf of the individual), and Director of Community Services. The Judge either grants the AOT Court Order or does not. He/She does not have the power to change the treatment plan.

An alternative to AOT is an Enhanced Service Agreement. An Enhanced Service Agreement is also designed to reduce the need for inpatient hospitalization and assist an individual who has a difficult time following through with recommended services, but includes less intensive services than AOT. The Enhanced Service Agreement does not involve the court system.

Year	# of AOT Petitions/Referrals Received	# of AOT Clients Monitored	# of Enhanced Service Agreements
2021	0	1	1
2022	2	1	2
2023	2	1	0

## Single Point of Access/Entry (SPOA/E)

The purpose of the Single Point of Access (SPOA)/Single Point of Entry (SPOE) is to provide a forum for improved collaboration among community service providers to identify community-based solutions to address barriers. The Systems of Care Framework (SOC) was incorporated into the regular SPOA process and includes regular follow-up contacts by the SPOA Coordinator. These follow-up contacts address any other issues that arise and expedites connecting the referred individual(s) within the family unit to additional support services.

In 2023, the Lewis County SPOA/E Coordinator received 94 referrals. While there was a small decrease in children referred when compared to 2022 data, there was an increase in the number of adults referred. Of the 94 total referrals, 54 were housing referrals. This was an increase of 25 referrals from the previous year. Overall, the total number of referrals received remained relatively stable from 2021- 2023, as seen in the following table.

Year	Children Referred	Adults Referred	Unique Individuals
2021	31	63	94
2022	36	55	91
2023	34	60	94

## Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) Article 730 Evaluations

It is the responsibility of Lewis County Community Services to arrange the court-ordered CPL 730 evaluations. The evaluation is ordered to determine if the individual in question has the capacity to understand the legal proceedings against them. The completed exam reports are sent to the court and the judge determines if the defendant is fit to stand trial or placed in a forensic hospital for restoration.

Year	730 Evaluations	Average Days Spent in Restoration
2021	1	*
2022	3	*
2023	3	58

\*Data not available

## Other Data Monitored

Year	Safe Act Reports	Pick-Up Orders	Fatal Overdoses	Suicides
2021	90	25	1	4
2022	103	30	2	6
2023	76	24	*	*

\*Data unavailable at time of submission

# Contract Agencies

Lewis County Community Services is responsible for managing state aid from the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) and Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). The state aid is used to support contracts with local service providers who serve their respective populations.

## The ARC Oneida Lewis Chapter

Lewis County Community Services contracts with the ARC Oneida Lewis Chapter for Supported Employment services, or the ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are necessary to obtain and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in employment. The goal of supported employment is job placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the individual’s employment factors.

Year	Individuals Maintained in Competitive Job Situations	Program Participants Given Services in the Areas of Intake, Job Exploration and Job Development
2023	6	3

## Credo Community Center

Lewis County Community Services contracts with Credo Community Center for outpatient alcohol and substance abuse treatment services.

Service	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Outpatient</b>				
Number of Clients Screened	29	33	38	33
Number of Clients Admitted to Treatment	12	13	28	22
Units of Service	1187	887	1012	1108
<b>Off Site Services</b>				
Number of Clients Served	8	8	4	22
Units of Service	16	9	5	70
<b>Jail Services</b>				
Number of Clients Served	16	9	10	13
Unites of Service	80	17	14	77
Opioid Treatment Program	13	12	19	18



## Transitional Living Services (TLS)

Lewis County Community Services contracts with TLS for outpatient clinic treatment programs for children and adults. Services are also provided for children and adolescents with emotional/behavioral needs in schools. We also contract with TLS for various community-based programs.

TLS - Behavioral Health and Wellness	
Service	2023 totals
Total Number of Clients Admitted	179
Total Number of Clients Discharged	366
5-day Appointment for Psychiatric Hospital Discharges	96
Crisis Interventions In-Person	56
Crisis Interventions Phone	213

## Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL)

Lewis County Community Services contracts with NRCIL for several services, including Family Peer Support, Advocacy/Support and Transition Management. We also contract with NRCIL for a Psychosocial Club, MICA Network, Recovery Center, Self-Help Program and Outreach.

Service	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of Consumers Screened for Services	310	290	321	350
Number of Unique Consumers Agreeing to Services	183	166	213	225
Units of Service	7,696	6,612	7,474	9,806

## Mountain View Prevention Services (MVPS)

Lewis County Community Services contracts with MVPS for prevention services. These services include community prevention focused on preventing or delaying substance use and abuse in individuals, families, and communities, as well as Prevention Counseling.

Service	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Primary Prevention</b>				
Total Number of Youth Served	962	951	*	*
Classroom Presentations	150	142	*	*
<b>Prevention Other</b>				
Total Number of Youth Served	5	1	*	*
Total Number of Student Cases Open	3	1	*	*

\*Data unavailable

## Mental Health Association of Jefferson County (MHA)

Lewis County Community Services contracts with MHA for administration of the Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer to Peer Program. The mission of this program is a drop-in, non-clinical, community-based Outreach Center, with staff and trained volunteers providing advocacy, resources, and support with life's circumstances to all Veterans of all eras regardless of discharge status. The program is led by local Veterans who have been trained by the Academy of Peer Services to promote wellness by improving coping skills, reducing concern, and fostering social networking. They also offer referral services in a confidential setting.

Other services provided to Veterans through this program include a Veteran Crisis Response Vehicle, Peer-based emotional support, emergency food pantry/hygiene/clothing supplies, computer, internet and wi-fi, Veteran advocacy and referral to appropriate additional Veteran services and community agencies, and faith-based Veteran clergy/spiritual support. The Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer to Peer program operates two Veteran housing units that can be utilized by local Veterans who do not qualify for housing through other means. In 2024, the organization will be recruiting for members of their Advisory Board.

## Community Services Board

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Each county in New York State is required under NYS Mental Hygiene Law to have a Community Services Board (CSB). The primary function of the CSB is to develop and approve the local services plan and advocate for services in Lewis County. Members are appointed by the County Legislature and shall represent the community interest in all the problems of persons with mental disabilities and shall include representatives from community agencies for persons with mental illness, developmental disabilities, alcoholism, and substance use.

The CSB has separate subcommittees for Substance Use Disorders (SUD), Mental Health (MH) and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). As of late 2023, the SUD and MH Subcommittees have merged. Members of both subcommittees attend the same, bi-monthly meeting.

Each subcommittee consists of nine members each with four-year terms. Each subcommittee has six community member seats and three CSB representative seats.

## Substance Use Disorder/Mental Health Subcommittee (SUD/MH Subcommittee)

The SUD and MH Subcommittees of the CSB have historically met separately to discuss issues relevant to each field. However, with the increase in individuals suffering from both a substance use disorder and mental health condition, about mid-way through 2023, these groups decided to start meeting together. Another reason for this decision was the determination that this diverse group of stakeholders would serve in an advisory role for distribution of opioid settlement funds received by Lewis County. In 2024, the SUD/MH Subcommittee will focus on developing a plan for distribution of the funds.

## Developmental Disability Subcommittee (IDD Subcommittee)

In 2023, the IDD subcommittee focused on workforce development and respite services, to improve the IDD system for persons and their families. To do this, the members increased meeting frequency to monthly for 6 months. Initial focus was on an Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) administrative bulletin regarding respite programs and reimbursement. Committee members identified how the new expectations would impact current programming and a family's ability to pay. Citing additional barriers such as transportation, reduced resources and complexity of requirements, members engaged in advocacy efforts to inform policy makers of outcomes stemming from the requirements.

The other concern had to do with qualified workforce. Agencies are still struggling with attracting and retaining staff. Conversations were had with Jefferson Community College, who is offering a mini credentialing program that was designed to address this issue. The program is currently funded by OPWDD. Early reports regarding the program have been positive, with the college pursuing future cohorts and funding. IDD Subcommittee members agreed to continue this focus into 2024.

## Other Initiatives

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The Lewis County Community Services Department is also involved in several other initiatives.

### Jail Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program

Our department worked very closely with the Lewis County Jail, Credo Community Center, NRCIL and Larry Palinski, Family Nurse Practitioner, to ensure that inmates at the Lewis County Jail who suffer from a substance use disorder, receive the appropriate medications. After multiple years of planning and the completion of physical plant renovations at the jail, administration of medications began in late 2023. Lewis County was one of the first counties to implement the Jail MAT Program and the program is highly regarded by New York State.

## Systems of Care

Systems of Care (SOC) focus on children, youth and young adults receiving services from multiple systems. SOCs support the goals of continuity and coordination of services over time and across systems. At the service level, families and youth are active partners in determining services and supports they will access, as well as incorporating the use of natural supports.

*“System of Care” is not a program — it is a philosophy.*

The SOC framework is a coordinated network of services and supports that are organized to meet the physical, mental, social, emotional, education, and developmental needs of children and their families, so they can achieve their own definition of success and equitable outcomes.

Lewis County received a \$25,000 SOC infrastructure grant in 2022 and was able to carryover unused funds to 2023. Part of these funds were used to develop the Northern New York Community Schools website: [nnycs.org](https://www.nnycs.org). The website offers information about services, resources and family activities in Jefferson and Lewis counties.

Additional funds were utilized to conduct SOC Adult and Youth Summit at the Lewis County Department of Social Services on November 4, 2023. Topics covered included internet safety, healthy relationships and risks of smoking and vaping. Presenters for these sessions were from Seaway Valley Prevention Council, Planned Parenthood of the North Country, New York, and the North Country Prenatal Perinatal Council. The summit also included lunch with various community experts, including a pastor, family and peer recovery advocates, staff from the Q Center at ACR Health, a school safety officer, the local District Attorney, the Director of Probation, and the Deputy Director of Public Health. Feedback for this event was extremely positive and there are plans in place to for a second event on November 4, 2024.

The remaining SOC funds were used to hold two community events in partnership with Families Together of the North Country. In October, Staff Orientation Training took place at the Lowville Elks Lodge. 28 agencies provided program and services information to 70 staff from various Lewis County agencies. On December 6, 2023, a holiday event was held at the Croghan Fire Hall. 13 agencies offered many different activities and information for those in attendance.

## Looking Ahead to 2024

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### Mobile Crisis

Lewis County has received one-time start-up funding to help support the development of behavioral health Mobile Crisis services. Mobile Crisis services are comprised of four components:

1. **Telephonic Triage and Response** determines the need for further evaluation and makes recommendations for next steps, which may include additional telephonic support, mobile crisis response or emergency response.
2. **Mobile Crisis Response** is an in-community response for evaluation, intervention and disposition for an individual experiencing a behavioral health crisis.
3. **Telephonic Crisis Follow-Up** provides telephonic support for continued stabilization in the community.
4. **Mobile Crisis Follow-Up** provides in-community support for continued stabilization in the community.

Lewis County Community Services are in preliminary talks with Jefferson County Community Services, with the goal of developing a bi-county approach to mobile crisis, and Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO), to act as a project manager for the development of these services.

### Opioid Settlement Fund Distribution

Lewis County joined a class action lawsuit against pharmaceutical companies in 2020. The suit alleged that opioid manufacturers caused the opioid crisis through deceptive marketing practices, misrepresenting that opioids had a low risk of addiction, and touting benefits without disclosing the medication's risk. Several drug makers and distributors have agreed to billions of dollars in settlements. Based on funds we have already secured and current projections, we anticipate Lewis County having at least \$55,000 in Opioid Settlement Funds available each year until 2040. As an LGU, we are expected to meet with stakeholders to determine how best to utilize the funding to address local needs and the approved use of funds guide. We have tasked the SUD/MH Subcommittee of the CSB with developing a utilization plan for these funds.

## Hospital and Community Connections

In late 2023, New York State Office of Mental Health introduced “Hospital and Community Connections”. This initiative is an approach for implementing locally identified solutions to increase collaboration between acute and ambulatory behavioral health programs and meet the needs of people we serve. In 2024, we will be working with FDRHPO’s Behavioral Health Committee to gain consensus on the local challenges and barriers to the identified goal, prioritize which challenges to solve, and then identify local solutions and opportunities for the prioritized challenges.