

**Establishing A Policy Requiring Respite Houses In Ulster County,
And Requesting The Initiation Of The Procurement Process To
Secure Services For Individuals Seeking Mental Health And/OR
Substance Use Recovery Assistance**

Referred to: The Public Health and Social Services Committee (Chairman Lopez and Legislators Bruno, Criswell, Petit, and Uchitelle), The Law Enforcement and Public Safety Committee (Chairwoman Walter and Legislators Fabiano, Haynes, Heppner and Parete), and The Ways and Means Committee (Chairman Gavaris and Legislators Archer, Bartels, Haynes, Maio, Parete, Ronk, and Walter)

Chairwoman of the Law Enforcement and Public Safety Committee, Eve Walter, and Legislator Criswell offer the following:

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 410 of October 15, 2019 established the Ulster County Criminal Justice Reform Task Force (UC-CJRTF) which has set forth to evaluate existing and potential criminal justice programs, to ensure the best and most cost-effective delivery of services, and to explore opportunities for program expansion to help the greatest number of county residents who may be in need of services; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature is in receipt of, and has reviewed, the report of the UC-CJRTF; and

WHEREAS, the report finds that according to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health, people living with mental illness in New York are more likely to encounter the criminal justice system, resulting in a large number of arrests and incarcerations; and

WHEREAS, Ulster County sees an average of 30 opioid overdoses each month, a rate driven consistently higher since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with Ulster County HEAL reporting 526 confirmed opioid-related overdoses and 71 fatalities in our County from May 2020 through May 2021; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, Ulster County lost its only inpatient emergency mental health and substance abuse recovery beds when Westchester Medical Center/Health Alliance of the Hudson Valley moved their beds to Dutchess County to make room for a potential surge in COVID-19 patients; and

WHEREAS, while law enforcement utilizes the psychiatric emergency room when the need arises, many are faced extreme delays in access to intervention services, or a lack of available mental health and/or detox beds, resulting in an estimated 65% of those seen in our regional psychiatric emergency room being directly discharged, supporting the need for non-hospital level services for these individuals; and

Resolution No. 425 October 19, 2021

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WHEREAS, the UC-CJRTF finds that Ulster County is in need of a system of support services and continued care for individuals upon discharge from a hospital, Crisis Stabilization Center, or other mental health and/or substance use facility, or ideally, to prevent this type of emergency use; and

WHEREAS, Respite Houses are 4-8 bed short-term crisis respite homes open and accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year which provide trauma informed, safe communities that allow individuals to work on their personal recovery from mental illness or substance use; and

WHEREAS, a Respite House is a self-referral service, ideally operated by individuals who themselves have had personal success with mental health and/or substance use recovery, designed to prevent hospital emergency use for psychiatric reasons and prevent potential future crises; and

WHEREAS, parameters of a Respite House (also known as a Crisis Residence) are outlined in Part 589 of 14 NYCRR; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, it shall be the policy of Ulster County to have 7-10 day Respite Houses in Ulster County, geographically spread out across the county, providing a minimum of eight beds overall, available to any resident of Ulster County ages 18 years old and over, with staffing for each home to include: administrative staff, crisis specialists, case managers, and administrative support; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature requests the County Executive, in consultation with the Commissioner of Health and Mental Health, develop and initiate the request for proposals (RFP) procurement process to contract for the administration and provision of services at two respite houses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Legislature be advised in writing of any and all RFP's issued pursuant to a respite house in Ulster County,

and move its adoption.

