



### Mission Statement

The Department of Mental Health, a component of Rockland County Government, shall provide and oversee comprehensive, high quality mental health, mental retardation and chemical dependency services to the residents of Rockland County in an ethical, courteous, timely, safe and cost effective manner.



### **Rockland County Department of Mental Health**

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## **Rockland County Unified Services**



The Rockland County Unified Services System has received the Gold Award in Hospital and Community Psychiatry of the American Psychiatric Association, as well as a Significant Achievement Award for the Unified Services System as an integrated and comprehensive system of care.

## **Overview**

The Rockland County Department of Mental Health is a community mental health center funded by State and County government. The Department delivers a comprehensive array of mental health and chemical dependency services to the citizens of Rockland County. Services are available to anyone in need on a 24-hour basis and are coordinated with other mental health, health and social service agencies as required.

Since commencement of operation on January 1, 1970, the Department of Mental Health quickly achieved a unique status within the State of New York mental hygiene service system and has earned national reputation. Since 1975, the Department of Mental Health has participated in a select planning-funding mechanism with the State of New York known as Unified Services. The Department is the core and lead agency of the Rockland County Unified Services System. As such, the Department is responsible for the planning, coordination, administration and budgetary oversight of a comprehensive and integrated system in which County, State and voluntary not-for-profit agencies deliver mental health, mental retardation and chemical dependency services. The Rockland County Unified Services System received a Significant Achievement Award from the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1983 in recognition of its comprehensive service system, and shared the 1985 APA Gold Award for its contribution to treatment of young adult chronic psychiatric patients.

The towns and villages of Rockland County have not experienced the problems with the mentally ill and homeless mentally ill that has occurred in other parts of the State and Nation. This is due, in large part, to the comprehensive range of inpatient, outpatient, residential and community support services offered by the Department and other Unified Services agencies. These services provide the ongoing treatment and supports necessary to keep these individuals psychiatrically stable and help them function in the community.

# What Is Unified Services?

Unified Services is a system of organizing community behavioral health services under the Rockland County Department of Mental Health as its lead agency.

Unified Services helps the State and the County.

Under Unified Services, the County Department of Mental Health takes responsibility for planning and coordinating all the county's behavioral health services - mental health, mental retardation, chemical dependency.

To compensate the County for taking this responsibility and reducing the use of State facilities, the State provides an enriched formula for State aid.



## Under Unified Services:

- The Rockland County Department of Mental Health takes charge of planning and coordinating behavioral health services.
- County, State and voluntary not-for-profit agencies serving the same populations are brought together in the planning process, through a system of Workgroups, the Unified Services Executive Committee and, ultimately, the Community Services Board.
- Proposals for new programs and program changes are reviewed by the appropriate Workgroup's, then the Unified Services Executive Committee and finally the Community Services Board.
- Problems in service delivery are also addressed within the system.
- The various services are coordinated to provide the most comprehensive community services at the lowest cost.
- Duplications and gaps in services are eliminated or reduced.
- The agencies do not compete for State or County dollars.
- Use of the State Psychiatric Centers and State outpatient services is minimized.

## How Did Unified Services Get Started?

- New York State offered this system to the counties through legislation in 1974-75 - with a 'No exit' clause for counties that adopted the new system.
- Previously, the formula for State aid to all the counties was 50/50. Now, those counties that adopted Unified Services had the chance to earn more State aid - If they could reduce their use of the State inpatient facilities by taking responsibility for their own planning.
- Counties that took up the challenge accepted what is constitutionally a State responsibility to provide services for people with mental disabilities.
- The counties that opted for Unified Services took a major financial risk in adopting this new, untried system. If they had not been able to reduce their use of the State facilities, they could have ended up with far less than 50% in State aid.

## How Many Counties Have A Unified Services System?

Only the five that originally took up the option - and took the risk. Other counties hung back initially, to see how the new system worked. Then New York State placed a moratorium on the option to apply.

## Has Unified Services Worked?

### Yes:

- It has worked for the State by reducing the utilization of State inpatient facilities and outpatient services.
- It has worked for the counties - The five Unified Services counties enjoy an enhanced reimbursement formula and an integrated, coordinated service system and are unanimous in wanting it to continue.
- It has worked for the patients, who have the most effective treatment and the best chance of maintaining community tenure in a well-coordinated system that can provide continuity of care.
- It has worked as a model of policy and program development. New York's Unified Services counties, and the Rockland County treatment system in particular, are known nationwide as a model of high quality, comprehensive, cost-efficient care for people with mentally disabilities and other community members.

**Unified Services Works For The People Of Rockland County.**