

## Central Office Staff

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## Regional Advocacy Specialists

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## New York State Office of Mental Health

# Office of Consumer Affairs

Providing  
advocacy, trainings,  
technical  
assistance and  
peer support  
to assist  
one's journey  
of healing  
and recovery

New York State  
Office of  
Mental Health

Ann Marie T. Sullivan MD  
Commissioner

Office of  
Consumer Affairs

John B. Allen, Jr.,  
Special Assistant  
to Commissioner

New York State  
**omh**  
Office of Mental Health

**T**HE OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS (OCA) is staffed by individuals, who bring their expertise from not only work skills and formal education, but through awareness and experience from being former or current recipients of mental health services. The staff of OCA having first-hand knowledge of what assists or hinders one's journey of healing and recovery focuses on all aspects of the mental health system.

The OCA currently consists of two Bureaus that tackle unique issues and services affecting various targeted groups and integral parts of the mental health system. These Bureaus provide, but are not limited to, advocacy, trainings, technical assistance and peer support.

- **Bureau of Recipient Affairs**— concentrates on all systemic issues regarding recipients of mental health services.
- **Bureau of Family Affairs**— speaks to the unique issues involving Family members of those individuals receiving services from the mental health system.

## Areas of Activity

Collaborating with recipient groups, family groups, individuals and other key stakeholders of NYS, the Office of Consumer Affairs work to promote and include recipients in making sure that mental health services and supports reflect the needs and preferences of

informed recipients and, above all, support and recovery.

Through the Recipient Advisory Committee (RAC) and the Commissioner's Committee for Families (CCF) as well as other means, the OCA provides opportunities for recipients and families to express their concerns and then have those issues reflected in NYS Office of Mental Health policies. The OCA is guided by a belief in the importance of self-help, peer support, and the potential for each person to pursue his or her unique recovery goals.

## Regional Advocacy Specialists

Regional Advocacy Specialists (RAS) are representatives of the Bureau, and are involved in the local communities of their respective regions. They disseminate mental health information to recipients and families regarding jobs, housing, rights, possible funding, entitlements, and NYS Office of Mental Health new initiatives.

## Responsibilities of Regional Advocacy Specialists

The Regional Advocacy Specialists travel throughout their assigned region and are responsible for working with recipient organizations, county governments and service providers to insure recipient input into internal and public processes.

They provide assistance on how to involve recipients and families in all aspects of the mental health system, helping to encourage participation in groups such as local community services boards. By using training and education materials, they help service providers to improve culturally competent models of service delivery.

Regional Advocacy Specialists are also charged with promoting the increased availability of evidence-based practices in routine care, especially the use of self-help and peer support to augment traditionally based service approaches.

For more information, please contact your Regional Advocacy Specialist at the number listed on this brochure.

## Contact information for Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA)

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