



Goals and Objectives 2024 Columbia County Department of Human Services

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Goal 1

Goal 1: Title Additional safe, affordable housing options will be created for all specialty populations

Goal 1: Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2027

Goal 1: Description Like other rural New York State Counties, Columbia County has a long history of a lack of affordable housing options. The housing landscape of Columbia County has, and continues to be, greatly influenced by the pandemic. The County has also experienced changes in demographics and the economy, which is similar to the changes in the surrounding Counties and in New York State. In the simplest terms, there is a lack of and an imbalance in the housing supply and the housing needs of the residents are not being met.

Columbia County is very rural in nature and as in many rural counties, especially with limited infrastructure including water, sewer, and broadband, the development of new housing, specifically multi-family and affordable housing is very difficult. Furthermore, rural counties tend to have an older housing stock. According to the CEDC's 2022 Housing Brief, 54% of the housing stock in Columbia County is over 50 years old and 31% was built prior to 1940.

Other impediments and barriers to the development of affordable housing include community opposition, the cost of development, regulatory restrictions, lack of suitable federal, state and local financial incentives and grants, and the increasing expense associated with housing development.

Despite the significant challenges and barriers to increasing Columbia County's affordable housing stock, there is opportunity to improve upon the current housing landscape. More specifically, we have identified the goal of developing safe, affordable housing options for all specialty populations in Columbia County by:

1. Assisting Twin County Recovery Services (the only OASAS-licensed treatment provider in Columbia County) with the planned relocation and expansion of their Residential program;
2. Exploring partnership opportunities with Oxford House, Inc. to bring recovery-focused, peer-led housing to Columbia County;
3. Partnering with local housing experts to continue to advance the creation of a 'Wellness Hub';
4. Strengthening partnerships with the City of Hudson and Columbia County Housing Committees, along with other housing-focused grassroots groups, to work more efficiently and avoid duplication of efforts in this area.

Goal 1: OASAS? Yes Goal 1: OMH? Yes Goal 1: OPWDD? No

Goal 1: Need Addressed 1 Housing

Goal 1: Need Addressed 2

Goal 1: Need Addressed 3

Goal 1, Objective 1: Title Assist local OASAS-licensed outpatient treatment program in moving and expanding their current residential program.

Goal 1, Objective 1, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2025

Goal 1, Objective 1, Description In order to accommodate the growing SUD needs in Columbia County, Twin County Recovery Services (TCRS) is planning to relocate and expand their current Red Door Community Residence. This move would increase capacity from thirteen (13) to twenty (20) beds. Though this project has been underway for many years, it has recently gained momentum and we will work collaboratively with them in the coming year to see the project to fruition.

Goal 1, Objective 2: Title Explore potential partnership with Oxford House, Inc. to provide recovery-focused, peer-led housing.

Goal 1, Objective 2, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2025

Goal 1, Objective 2, Description In early 2023, the Director of Community Services (DCS) and Community Services Board (CSB) met with representatives from Oxford House, Inc.--a nationally-known nonprofit organization that assists in the creation of housing for individuals in SUD recovery. The concept, which has proven to be evidence-based, describes a democratically-run, self-supporting and drug free home. Oxford Houses local to the Columbia County area can be found in both Albany and Orange Counties and Dutchess County is currently in the process of creating one as well. Both the DCS and members of the CSB are in agreement that this housing model is needed in Columbia County, which currently lacks a

step-down program for individuals who are ready to leave the OASAS-licensed Residential program, but not quite ready to go home.

In the coming year, we will focus on identifying funding to create one Oxford House in Columbia County. We will also work with the County Board of Supervisors and local housing experts to identify an available structure by the end of 2025.

Goal 1, Objective 3: Title Partner with local housing experts to advance the creation of a 'Wellness Hub'

Goal 1, Objective 3, Target Completion Date Sep 30, 2025

Goal 1, Objective 3, Description For the past two years, local stakeholders in Columbia County have been meeting to devise a plan to change the way homelessness, addiction and mental illness are treated in the County. These meetings culminated in the decision to create a 'one-stop shop' for residents in crisis, and/or those seeking homeless housing, mental health and/or substance use treatment. Currently dubbed 'the Wellness Hub', this yet-to-be developed 'hub' will address persistent problems faced by the County while helping those going through crises, as well as taking pressure off local police and the emergency room thereby decreasing costs.

To date, a 5-acre parcel of land, centrally located in the Town of Greenport, has been donated to house the Wellness Hub. Additionally, building plans have been drafted and a Project Coordinator has been hired to identify and secure funding for the Wellness Hub and facilitate the ongoing work of the Wellness Hub workgroup. In the coming years, efforts will be made to partner with local housing experts (i.e. RUPCO, etc) to advance the creation of the Wellness Hub.

Goal 1, Objective 4: Title Strengthen partnerships with City of Hudson and Columbia County Housing Committees, along with other housing-focused groups, to work more efficiently and avoid duplication of efforts.

Goal 1, Objective 4, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2024

Goal 1, Objective 4, Description

Goal 2

Goal 2: Title Access to behavioral health services will be improved through increased awareness of local resources.

Goal 2: Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2027

Goal 2: Description Though Columbia County is a small, rural County with limited behavioral health resources, a common theme that has emerged in public forums over the past few years is the general public's lack of understanding about how to access the specific resource they're looking for at any given time. Several attempts to address this have been made (i.e. a hard copy resource list was created, creation of a mobile app was explored, etc.), but none of these have offered the permanent solution we're looking for.

In the coming years, we will create and publicize a 'front-door' for behavioral health services. Though it's unclear at this time what form this will take, some suggestions that have been proposed include an electronic database or creation of a position dedicated to this task.

Goal 2: OASAS? Yes Goal 2: OMH? Yes Goal 2: OPWDD? Yes

Goal 2: Need Addressed 1 Other

Goal 2: Need Addressed 2 Cross System Services

Goal 2: Need Addressed 3

Goal 2, Objective 1: Title Create a comprehensive, updated workable list of all local behavioral health resources.

Goal 2, Objective 1, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2025

Goal 2, Objective 1, Description

Goal 2, Objective 2: Title Identify an agency, or establish a position, to act as the information and referral center for all local behavioral health services.

Goal 2, Objective 2, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2025

Goal 2, Objective 2, Description

Goal 2, Objective 3: Title Explore regional resources and identify potential partnerships.

Goal 2, Objective 3, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2024

Goal 2, Objective 3, Description Several regional resource and referral initiatives have been introduced recently which are expected to include Columbia County (i.e. United Way, 9-8-8). We will identify what assistance is being offered to Columbia County residents through these services and explore potential partnership opportunities.

Goal 3

Goal 3: Title Services and resources for individuals with IDD will be strengthened.

Goal 3: Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2027

Goal 3: Description According OPWDD Medicaid Data, 512 individuals in Columbia County received Medicaid services and payments totaling \$42,658,474 in 2021. Despite the high Medicaid expenditures, services for individuals with IDD are limited in Columbia County. Staffing shortages continue to be prevalent in this field, specifically among the DSP staff, where wages often do not reflect the intensity of the work. In addition to advocating for increased wages in the IDD workforce and

collaborating with the local community college to increase educational and advancement opportunities for staff, Columbia County is committing to re-launching the Think Differently initiative. Through a combination of these efforts, we will strengthen and services and resources for individuals with IDD in our County.

Goal 3: OASAS? No Goal 3: OMH? No Goal 3: OPWDD? Yes

Goal 3: Need Addressed 1 Other

Goal 3: Need Addressed 2

Goal 3: Need Addressed 3

Goal 3, Objective 1: Title Work collaboratively with Columbia County government and other agencies to re-launch the Think Differently initiative

Goal 3, Objective 1, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2024

Goal 3, Objective 1, Description

Goal 3, Objective 2: Title Continue to explore credentialing programs to upskill the direct care workforce

Goal 3, Objective 2, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2025

Goal 3, Objective 2, Description

Goal 4

Goal 4: Title Creative ways to recruit and retain staff and/or maintain service provision with current staffing levels will be identified.

Goal 4: Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2027

Goal 4: Description Though Columbia County has one of the lowest unemployment rates in NYS (~4%), significant workforce shortages continue to be reported across the continuum of care in all three disability areas. These shortages can be tracked to both declining birth rates and migrational trends. Recent labor statistics from the Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) show that from 2010-2020, 35% of Columbia County residents (ages 0-18) left the area. During these same years, the County's population over age 65 increased by 32%. In 2021, there were only ~500 seniors in all six Columbia County school districts combined, a number that has significantly and consistently decreased in recent years.

In addition, lack of affordable housing, public transportation, and affordable childcare continue to be the primary barriers to working in Columbia County.

Local labor experts suggest that areas of focus for providers include retention of staff, advocacy for higher wages, and collaboration among agencies.

Goal 4: OASAS? Yes Goal 4: OMH? Yes Goal 4: OPWDD? Yes

Goal 4: Need Addressed 1 Workforce

Goal 4: Need Addressed 2

Goal 4: Need Addressed 3

Goal 4, Objective 1: Title Advocate at the state and local levels for increased wages for behavioral health workforce

Goal 4, Objective 1, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2026

Goal 4, Objective 1, Description

Goal 4, Objective 2: Title Examine opportunities for agency collaboration to provide services with current staffing levels

Goal 4, Objective 2, Target Completion Date Dec 31, 2025

Goal 4, Objective 2, Description

Goal 4, Objective 3: Title Establish and share recruitment and retention best practices among local behavioral health providers

Goal 4, Objective 3, Target Completion Date

Goal 4, Objective 3, Description



Office of Addiction
Services and Supports

Office of
Mental Health

Office for People With
Developmental Disabilities

2024 Needs Assessment Form Columbia County Department of Human Services

Cross System Services Yes

Applies to OASAS? Yes

Applies to OMH? Yes

Applies to OPWDD? Yes

Need Applies to: Both Youth and Adults

Do any of the Goals on the Goals and Objectives Form address this need? Yes

Need description (Optional):

Housing Yes

Applies to OASAS? Yes

Applies to OMH? Yes

Applies to OPWDD? No

Need Applies to: Both Youth and Adults

Do any of the Goals on the Goals and Objectives Form address this need? Yes

Need description (Optional):

Prevention Yes

Applies to OASAS? Yes

Applies to OMH? No

Applies to OPWDD? No

Need Applies to: Both Youth and Adults

Do any of the Goals on the Goals and Objectives Form address this need? No

Need description (Optional): There is limited data that exists on youth substance use in Columbia County and the data that is available is suppressed to maintain confidentiality. However, data that provides an accurate depiction of problem behaviors relating to youth substance use can be found through the New York State Kids Well-being Indicator Clearinghouse. In 2021, 41 adolescents in Columbia County, all under the age of 18, were arrested for drug use/possession/sale.

For individuals over the age of 20, overdose rates and fatalities in Columbia County are alarmingly high. According to Columbia-Greene Addiction Coalition's opioid dashboard, which is funded through the Overdose Data 2 Action grant (OD2A), 29 Columbia County residents died from opioid related overdoses from 2019-2021. The data from this source includes overdose and fatality rates collected in real time from Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAPS) and local coroners and appears to show a correlation between opioid related deaths and age, which could be attributed to the initiation of substance use at a young age. In 2022 in Columbia County, 14% of overdose deaths occurred among people under the age of 30, half of the deaths (50%) occurred in people aged 40-49 years old and an additional 21% of deaths occurred among people in their 30s.

As a result of the above mentioned overdose death rate, Columbia County was a recipient of State Targeted Response (STR) monies from OASAS. The County will continue to receive OD2A funding from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). Columbia County was also included in the HEALing Communities Study (HCS), a multistate study, funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) and led by Columbia University that began in the fall of 2019 and will conclude in the spring of 2023.

Despite the recent influx of opioid-related funding, Columbia County continues to lack the Prevention funding necessary to have a significant impact on subsequent substance use. In addition, at the end of 2022, Columbia County's long-time Prevention Provider, Catholic Charities, decided not to renew their OASAS-funded Prevention contract, which left the County without a Prevention provider for the first 6 months of 2023.

Substantial efforts are underway to address Prevention in Columbia County, which is why it is not included in the 2024 Local Services Plan. First, Twin County Recovery Services, the County's sole OASAS-licensed provider, has been awarded the County Prevention contract, which will be in effect starting July 1, 2023. Additionally, the Columbia-Greene Addiction Coalition (CGAC), which began in 2012 and identifies prevention as a primary area of focus, became a 501c3 nonprofit organization in January 2023. Not only has this solidified its efforts under the direction of an Executive Director and a Board of Directors, it has allowed CGAC to apply for prevention-specific funding for both Columbia and Greene Counties. To date, CGAC has applied for OASAS' Community Preventions Coalition funding and the CDC's Drug Free Communities funding.

Residential Treatment Services Yes

Applies to OASAS? Yes

Applies to OMH? Yes

Applies to OPWDD? No

Need Applies to: Both Youth and Adults

Do any of the Goals on the Goals and Objectives Form address this need? Yes

Need description (Optional):

Transportation Yes

Applies to OASAS? Yes

Applies to OMH? Yes

Applies to OPWDD? Yes

Need Applies to: Both Youth and Adults

Do any of the Goals on the Goals and Objectives Form address this need? No

Need description (Optional): There is widespread agreement in Columbia County that there is a need for increased transportation services for both medical and non-medical (grocery, pharmacy, food pantries, employment support, socialization, etc.) purposes. The Columbia Greene Workforce 2017-2020 Local Plan notes, "The lack of public transportation in our rural area is always an issue that limits not only access to the Career Center, but also access to other workforce preparation services, and job opportunities for many of our most in-need residents." This long-standing lack of transportation negatively impacts quality of life for all residents in Columbia County, particularly individuals who struggle with mental health, substance use or intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Columbia County runs several public transportation routes, requiring four active vehicles. In addition to public transportation, numerous public and private, not-for-profit agencies in the County provide transportation services to Columbia County residents. Collectively, these agencies utilize over 100 vehicles and more than 50 full-time and part-time staff to deliver in excess of 40,000 trips per year. However, according to the 2022 Columbia County Transportation Planning Analysis, almost all transportation providers reported difficulty keeping up with the demand and suggested that County residents would benefit from increased service delivery. The lack of additional vehicles and staff are the two greatest limitations on scaling up these programs.

In addition, though the Federal and State governments provide significant financial support for Columbia County's Public Transportation program, it has historically been difficult for Columbia County to utilize available funds fully, primarily due to the fact that the County has not consistently had a staff person with the high level of specific knowledge, adequate training, and capacity required to constantly monitor

funding opportunities and apply for those deemed suitable.

Despite the significant hardship that the lack of adequate transportation provides Columbia County residents and the barriers identified above, it is not listed as a goal in the 2024 Local Services Plan (LSP). A County Transportation Committee has been formed to compile and analyze local data, identify barriers, and recommend solutions. This Committee has been very active in recent years and is in the process of updating the most recent County Transportation Plan. This Committee is better equipped to provide recommendations that will have a significant positive impact on the public transportation system in Columbia County.

Workforce Yes

Applies to OASAS? Yes

Applies to OMH? Yes

Applies to OPWDD? Yes

Need Applies to: Both Youth and Adults

Do any of the Goals on the Goals and Objectives Form address this need? Yes

Need description (Optional):

LGU Representative: Melissa Scheriff

Submitted for: Columbia County Department of Human Services