

National Mental Health Coalition Decries NYC Mayor's Plan to Lock Up Homeless People Who Have Psychiatric Disabilities

What's needed is voluntary community-based services and supports, NCMHR says

WASHINGTON DC, US, December 5, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- New York City Mayor Eric Adams' plan to hospitalize unhoused people who are deemed unable to adequately care for themselves,

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Going forward, we will make every effort to assist those who are suffering from mental illness.”

Mayor Eric Adams

“even if they posed no risk of harm to others,” would be disastrous for the individuals that the Mayor says he is trying to help, a national mental health advocacy organization asserts.

In a recent New York Times article, Mayor Adams is quoted as follows: “Going forward, we will make every effort to assist those who are suffering from mental illness.” But

while the Mayor may be trying to help, his plan would be harmful, says the National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery (NCMHR), comprising statewide peer-run advocacy organizations whose members have lived experience of a mental health condition.

“Coercion is traumatic, and turns people against mental health treatment,” said Daniel B. Fisher, MD, PhD, an NCMHR co-founder who himself has recovered from schizophrenia.

“Instead,” Dr. Fisher continued, “the City should invest in voluntary, humane, community-based services and supports, such as Housing First, peer-run crisis respites, mobile crisis outreach teams, and peer bridgers. Sydney, Australia, is a good [model](#): That is how Sydney reduced its unsheltered population by 45% from 2017 to 2022.”

Mayor Adams' plan would violate the Americans with Disabilities Act, upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead decision, which mandates that people have a right to live in the least restrictive environment.

Further, in the week following discharge from a psychiatric hospital, people are at dramatically high risk for suicide. One [study](#) found that women were 246 times more likely than would be expected—and men were 102 times more likely—to die by suicide in that crucial week.

There is additional evidence to indicate that Mayor Adams' plan would be harmful. For example, after Washington State loosened its commitment laws to make it easier to involuntarily commit people with mental health conditions, a five-year study of the results found that "Broadening involuntary commitment laws did not protect the community from dangerous people, it did not solve problems of homelessness, it wasted precious resources, and it created a dependency on the involuntary commitment system that brought people back to it again and again," according to [testimony](#) by the study's co-author, Mary L. Durham, then an associate professor at the University of Washington, School of Public Health and Community Medicine.

NCMHR Board President Braunwynn Franklin concluded: "The NCMHR calls upon Mayor Adams to rescind this plan, and instead to commit the City's resources to community-based services and supports that would truly help unhoused New York City residents."

The National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery (NCMHR) consists of member organizations in 27 states and the District of Columbia, and proudly joined 14 other disability rights groups run by persons with disabilities as a founding member of the National Disability Leadership Alliance.

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