



January 10, 2025

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of the State of New York
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

As you know, New York State is actively engaged in fighting an unprecedented substance abuse epidemic. Through a robust network of on-the-ground service providers, New York State offers a rich continuum of care including prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and long-term recovery. Often not mentioned – but nonetheless critical to this continuum – are the vocational and educational services embedded within government-funded recovery programs. **I am writing today to urge you to include full funding for vocational, job placement, educational, and related support services in the OASAS budget for FY2026.**

Many addiction treatment providers are deeply concerned that funding for vocational services for OASAS-contracted programs may not be included in the FY2026 executive budget. Last year's executive budget did not include funding for vocational services for OASAS-funded addiction treatment programs, although funding was ultimately restored for one year. The possibility of losing funding for vocational services this year is deeply alarming. As mentioned in the InUnity Alliance [statement](#) to the Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board in October 2024, a decision to cut funding for vocational services for addiction treatment programs would result in 20,000 New Yorkers currently in recovery losing access to one of the most beneficial tools in their long-term recovery: the ability to provide for themselves and their families.

My organization, Educational Alliance, has provided high-quality, multi-generational programs and services that enhance well-being and socioeconomic opportunities for individuals and families in Lower Manhattan for over 135 years. As part of our community-centered approach to service delivery, our Center for Recovery and Wellness on Manhattan's Lower East Side provides substance use disorder prevention, intervention, recovery, and treatment services through holistic, innovative programs. We are proud to be a long-standing OASAS-funded and OASAS-licensed organization and offer wraparound services in both residential and outpatient treatment settings.

Vocational services are central to the wraparound supports offered at Educational Alliance's Center for Recovery and Wellness because we strongly believe these services are critical for long-term recovery and help prevent addiction relapse. That is why we ensure that all our clients have one-on-one sessions with a vocational service coordinator. In these sessions, our staff connects clients with 'recovery-friendly' employers; that is, employers committed to safe

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and equitable work environments who are eager to employ the populations we serve. Our clients can begin employment while in residential treatment, allowing them to save money and create networks that help support their reintegration. Vocational counselors also help clients develop skills to navigate employment systems after they leave treatment. Clients may also need to build work-readiness skills like ESOL or complete their GED — which they can do while in treatment with us through our vocational programs.

Integrating vocational services into addiction treatment is not unique to the Center for Recovery and Wellness. Many of New York State's most well-regarded addiction treatment programs incorporate vocational and educational services within residential and outpatient settings. As providers, we know vocational programs help our clients build a network of relationships that provide support following treatment. At the same time, the skills or employment they find while with us enable them to provide for themselves and their families when they leave treatment, a powerful incentive to maintain sobriety long-term. This type of integrated support simply cannot be replaced by traditional workforce development services that serve a broad population.

I hope you will consider this request as you prepare to release your executive budget for FY2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rich Baum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rich Baum
Educational Alliance, President and CEO

Cc: State Senator Brian P. Kavanagh
State Senator Nathalia Fernandez
State Assemblymember Grace Lee
State Assemblymember Phil Steck