### Goals and Objectives 2024 Columbia County Department of Human Services

Melissa Scheriff, Planner/Contract Manager (melissa.scheriff@columbiacountyny.com)

#### 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 commnity 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.

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

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

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

# **Update to 2024-2027 Goals and Objectives Columbia County Department of Human Services**

Melissa Scheriff, Planner/Contract Manager melissa.scheriff@columbiacountyny.com

Goal 1			
Title	Additional safe, affordable housing options will be created for all specialty populations		
Update	Though identifying and securing safe, affordable housing continues to be a challenge, much progress has been made in the past year. Twin County Recovery Services, our County's only OASAS-licensed outpatient substance use treatment program, continues to make progress to relocate their Men's Residence (The Red Door). The new location will be able to accommodate an increased number of beds.  Additionally, development of a 'Wellness Hub' is progressing at a consistent pace. The 'Hub', which will consist of a homeless shelter, supported housingand eventually a triage welcome centerwill be developed on a 5-acre parcel of land that has been donated specifically for this purpose. A full-time Wellness Hub Coordinator has been retained to identify potential sources of funding, facilitate partnerships and ensure that progress continues. Most recently, RUPCO, which has led the development of many successful housing developments in our area, has agreed to partner with the County on the project. The extensive knowledge, skills and experience that they bring to the team cannot be overstated.  Columbia County has also made progress to provide recovery-focused housing for individuals who struggle with substance use disorder. Columbia and Greene Counties have each committed funding to establish an Oxford House in each County. In its simplest form, an Oxford House describes a democratically run, self-supporting and drug free home. Each house represents a remarkably effective and low cost method of preventing relapse by providing a safe, affordable option for individuals transitioning between inpatient and outpatient treatment or simply for those who need to be in a sober living environment. Columbia and Greene Counties are in the process of executing contracts with Oxford House, with an anticipated start date of July 1, 2024.  Finally, we continue to facilitate and strengthen partnerships that increase residents' access to safe, affordable housing. The Columbia-Greene Housing Coalition continues to be an active coalition that		
OBJECTIVES			
Assist local OASAS-licensed outpatient treatment program in moving and expanding their current residential program.		Ongoing	
Explore potential partnership with Oxford House, Inc. to provide recovery-focused, peer-led housing.		Complete	
Partner with local housing experts to advance the creation of a 'Wellness Hub'		Ongoing	
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.		Ongoing	
OBJECTIVE (	JPDATES		

Goal 2				
Title	Access to behavioral health services will be improved through increased awareness of local resources.			
Update	Despite many attemptsand exhaustive efforts to increase awareness of, and access to, behavioral health services, we have been unsuccessful to date. However, recently there is some progress to report. Throughout 2023, community forums were held throughout the County to discuss the opioid epidemic, its impact in the County and, more generally, what resources and services are available (and, more importantly, NOT available) to address the issue. These forums provided valuable information about the public's level of awareness of local programs, resources, and services. It became apparent immediately that the majority of people could discuss the enormity of the addiction epidemic and its effect on their community, but there is a general lack of understanding about how to access the behavioral health system. After much discussion, it has been decided that the Columbia County Department of Human Services/Mental Health Center will act as the 'front door' for all calls regarding mental health and/or substance use. This is a recent decision, so many details have yet to be established. However, it has been determined that the Mental Health Center's crisis team will be tasked with taking the calls and referring the individual to the appropriate agency for services. Simultaneously, an updated list of local resources will be created to increase the crisis team's ability to appropriately handle each call. It has not yet been determined whether this will be a hard copy or an electronic version.  Finally, it's important to note that, while regional services, such as United Way's 211 system, have been explored, it has been determined that they are not the best option for our small, rural County. The Call Centers are often located in a different part of New York State and they are only aware of the programs and services that we make them aware of. Things change quickly and constantly and it is almost impossible to keep these centers notified of every critical change in services.			
OBJECTIVES				
Create a comprehensive, updated workable list of all local behavioral health resources.		Ongoing		
Identify an agency, or establish a position, to act as the information and referral center for all local behavioral health services.		Ongoing		

Explore regional resources and identify potential partnerships.	Ongoing
OBJECTIVE UPDATES	

Goal 3			
Title	Services and resources for individuals with IDD will be strengthened.		
Update	Columbia County continues to increase efforts to better serve individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. In the past year, Columbia County has partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia & Greene Counties (CCE) and the Andersen Center for Autism to launch the Think Differently Initiative. CCE has hosted workshops to introduce the community to Think Differently. They've also hosted events, including: a sensory-friendly space at the Columbia County Fair, sensory-sensitive movie screenings and, most recently, a sensory-friendly 'meet-an-animal' program. They're currently developing a cooking/nutrition program geared towards neuro diverse individuals.  While Columbia County continues to explore new and better ways to serve the IDD population, it has been decided that Objective #2 is no longer a reasonable expectation for the Local Services Plan. OPWDD is partnering with the SUNY system to offer credentialing programs and classes at community colleges throughout New York State. Though representatives of Columbia-Greene Community College (CGCC), our local community college, have met with SUNY representatives, CGCC has not been able to launch this program. However, we are pleased to note that Coarc is participating in the NADSP's e-badge program to elevate their Direct Support Professionals.  Finally, the Community Services Board (CSB) remains committed to surveying the landscape of services provided to individuals with IDD, highlighting successes and identifying and addressing gaps. The CSB also recently welcomed the new CEO of Coarc as a new Board member and this has already shifted the discussions to be more inclusive of that sector.		
OBJECTIVES			
Work collaboratively with Columbia County government and other agencies to re-launch the Think Differently initiative		Ongoing	
Continue to explore credentialing programs to upskill the direct care workforce N/A		N/A	
OBJECTIVE (	IPDATES		

Goal 4			
Title	Creative ways to recruit and retain staff and/or maintain service provision with current staffing levels will be identified.		
Update	The recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce continues to be the challenge of our times. Despite the enormity of this challenge, there is progress to note. At this time, the Columbia County Mental Health Center is (almost) fully staffed—something that could not have been imagined a year or two ago. Though it is tempting to claim that this is the result of some new and unique recruiting efforts, that is simply not true. Instead, we've experienced slow, steady progress by relying on tried-and-true recruitment methods (i.e. advertising, recruiting interns, word of mouth). The Healthcare Worker Bonus and COLAs have undoubtedly assisted with recruitment as well.  The importance of retaining staff has never been higher. Agencies, including the Columbia County Mental Health Center, continue to be as flexible as possible to offer staff the best possible working environment—offering a condensed work week, flexible hours, etc. as allowed.  Behavioral health provider agencies in Columbia County continue to explore opportunities for collaboration whenever possible to maintain high quality care. A recent example involves the Mobile Crisis Assessment Team (MCAT), a program of the Mental Health Association of Columbia & Greene Counties. MCAT continues to struggle with staffing shortages that impact their ability to handle telephone calls during specific hours. Upon learning of this, the Columbia County Mental Health Center offered to take crisis calls during those hours.  Finally, the CSB and Subcommittees continue to focus on workforce retention and recruitment strategies. Workforce experts have served as guest speakers for several meetings and provider agencies regularly share recruitment and retention successes and failures.		
OBJECTIVES			
Advocate at the state and local levels for increased wages for behavioral health workforce		Ongoing	
Examine opportunities for agency collaboration to provide services with current staffing levels		Ongoing	
Establish and share recruitment and retention best practices among local behavioral health providers		Ongoing	
OBJECTIVE U	PDATES		

## 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

### 2025 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? 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):

#### 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): Transportation continues to be a significant need in Columbia County. While the County does operate some public transportation, it is very limited in scope. Despite the significant hardship that lack of transportation causes among our residents, it is not listed as a Goal on the 2024-27 LSP, as we have historically been able to do very little to move the needle on this overwhelming need. The County continues to work on transportation through the Transportation Committee and we will stay apprised of any progress made in this area.

#### 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