

Ensuring all Westchester's children are healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges.

## Child Mental Health Gets A Boost in the 2023 NY State Budget



*According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (HSS), "Before the pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disabilities and poor life outcomes in young people, with up to 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17 in the U.S. having a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder."*

SOURCE: December 2021.  
U.S. Surgeon General Issues  
Advisory on Youth Mental  
Health Crisis Further Exposed  
by COVID-19 Pandemic | HHS.gov

After weeks of intense negotiation, the 2023 New York State Budget made historical investments in programs that will make great strides forward in children's mental health. With millions of dollars in new federal funding, New York has an unprecedented opportunity to shift our State's trajectory and address children's lack of access to behavioral health services. Prior to the pandemic, an alarming number of children and youth struggled with mental health related issues and incidence rates have dramatically increased since then.

This 2023 State Budget delivers funding opportunities to provide wrap-around mental health services in and out of school settings for New York children and youth. **WCA secured an additional \$100,000 for child mental health from Westchester County last year**, and we will keep pushing for children to get access to the mental health services they need with funding from the state and county budgets.

### 2023 New York State investments include:

- \$22 million to provide 200 **additional inpatient beds** in mental health facilities.
- \$6.03 million to support the **New York Office of Mental Health**.
- \$100 million for **mental health grants to public schools** over a 2-year period.
- A \$2.1 billion (7.1%) **increase of funding over School Year (SY) 2022**, including a \$1.6 billion **Foundation Aid increase** and a \$466 million increase in all other school aid programs.
- An additional \$7.5 million of funding for **Residential Treatment Facilities (RTFs)** for children.
- **Expansion of the Child Health Plus benefit package** to include certain services already covered by Medicaid such as behavioral health services.
- **Healthy Steps initiative** to continue to incorporate behavioral health services into pediatric primary care visits.

# 2022 Community Snapshots Are Here... and Upgraded!

On April 20, Westchester Children's Association launched the latest edition of our popular Community Snapshots. Community members and advocates alike have found these county and school district profiles very useful because they provide information for children that is easy to understand and hard to find elsewhere. This year's edition of our favored publication that was started in 2014 features an upgraded, Premium version online!

Early analysis for the 2022 Community Snapshots showed that:

- **Race still plays a significant role in outcomes for Westchester children.** Non-White students were less likely to have broadband internet access at home or graduate on time. They were suspended from school at higher rates as well.
- **WHERE you live can determine HOW you live.** Neighboring school districts, such as Bronxville and Mount Vernon, have vastly different socioeconomic profiles and race was not the only determinant of disparity.
- **Data about mental health is severely lacking considering current trends.** More information is needed that can be broken down by age and race about mental health trends in Westchester County overall.

## There's something OLD and something NEW in the 2022 Community Snapshots, including:

- **More data indicators broken down by race/ethnicity.** Breaking down data by race or ethnicity repeatedly showed disparities that were NOT confined by geography or zip code.
- **New data on digital access at home.** We built on data gathered through our Remote Learning Parent Survey and our recent Digital Access Survey to include rates of internet access at home for students in each district.
- **New data on school supports for children.** Analysis of data about the number of teachers, psychologists, social workers, and security guards employed by each school district showed that there were more security guards employed per student than school psychologists.
- **PREMIUM version of the snapshots.** Snapshots for Westchester County and each school district are available as downloadable pdfs for free from our website. Now, you can get Premium access to an **online interactive, dashboard for a minimum donation of \$25 that features:**
  - Trending data of additional years for featured indicators.
  - Exact counts in addition to calculated percentages for data points.
  - Embedded information on data sources and future updates.

*Special thanks to current WCA staff, former WCA Program and Policy Manager, Josh Prywes, Terence Lake, Sydney Moraitis, and Bruce Segal for providing vital help to make this edition possible.*

Access **FREE** or **PREMIUM** Community Snapshots at [wca4kids.org/snapshots](http://wca4kids.org/snapshots)



## We are proud to announce that we have completed our data collection for the Digital Access Survey created as a collaboration between WCA and Pace University!

We designed the Survey with members of the Digital Access Workgroup to be representative of Westchester’s socioeconomic diversity. The goal was to get feedback from families with students who attend schools in Westchester about their digital literacy, internet access, and comfort level in using these resources. The Survey was made available in English and Spanish, both online and in print. Organizations in our network and diligent employees of the Westchester Library System helped us to collect a representative sample from numerous school districts. After review of all submissions, 507 valid responses were analyzed from parents whose students lived in Westchester County, including 27% completed in Spanish.

Limiting the Digital Access Survey to online formats would have excluded students and families who had the greatest need. To optimize our distribution of printed surveys, we identified organizations that serve families in our target population and partnered with them to deliver the surveys. One organization in particular, Open Door Medical Center, enlisted an AmeriCorps volunteer to share the survey via an iPad in the waiting rooms and clarified questions to those that asked for guidance. Although we did not collect as many responses in print as we hoped, we learned valuable lessons about how to create and distribute surveys in person.

Preliminary review of the responses showed that 58% of respondents had their own electronic device such as computer or tablet at home and 95% had access to the internet beyond their cellular device. Thirty-five percent of respondents paid more than \$100 per month for internet access and 70% of respondents were not aware of internet affordability options. WCA will share more takeaways with stakeholder organizations and our supporters soon.

Thank you to member organizations in the Digital Access Workgroup, survey participants, and Pace University Professor, Dr. Gina Scutenlicu-Todoran for her expertise and support.

Stay tuned for updates at [wca4kids.org/data](http://wca4kids.org/data)

# Digital Access Survey Update



## new faces @ WCA

**Angel Gray** joined Westchester Children’s Association in February 2022 as our new Program and Policy Manager. Over the past 9 years, Angel has provided family support, prevention, intervention and educational services for families and children at psychiatric hospitals, high schools, residential treatment centers and community based mental health programs. Most recently, Angel served as a Program Supervisor for Healthy Families Westchester County, a home visiting program that assesses pregnant women and new parents for risks that could lead to child abuse, poor health, and negative developmental outcomes. Angel is also a social work clinician who works at a private practice in Mount Vernon who has a passion for providing trauma-informed therapeutic services for children, youth, and adults. Angel holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Spelman College; Master’s degree in Organizational Leadership from Mercy College; and a Master’s in Social Work from New York University.



## intern reflections

**Sharee Quinn, BSW**  
When I started my internship at WCA in Fall 2021, I was anxious because I had never worked in an office setting before. Previously, I worked in outreach with boys at Children’s Village shelter and as a peer mentor to young adults with disabilities at WCC. My internship at WCA strengthened my studies at Mercy College toward a B.A. degree in Social Work by showing me how macro-level policies integrate with the field of social work. During my year-long internship, I participated in coalition meetings focused on the Solutions Not Suspensions Act and strategic planning for Raise the Age initiatives. Recently, I presented data on suspensions of students during the pandemic to the Race Equity Committee of WCA’s Board. This was a highlight of my internship as I was able to integrate my work on different issues and educate Board members about the trends in Westchester school districts that will shape upcoming advocacy campaigns and data projects. Thank you to the entire WCA team for training me in leadership, advocacy, and empowerment skills!!!





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What's inside this edition of **ChildWATCH**

- Albany Allocates Funding for Child Mental Health
- 2022 Community Snapshots Are Here...and Upgraded!
- Digital Access Survey Preliminary Results
- New Faces @ WCA and Intern Reflections

Please join us as we imagine all children in Westchester growing, learning, and thriving!

*Imagine a child...*

**WCA's Annual Spring Benefit**

**Wednesday, June 1, 2022, 6:00 PM at The Surf Club in New Rochelle, NY**



**Judge Judy Sheindlin  
and Nicole Sheindlin,  
Her Honor Mentoring**

HONORING



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