

# 2024 Annual Report



Bergen's  
**PROMISE**



Healthy Families, Safe at Home

[www.bergenspromise.org](http://www.bergenspromise.org)

Partners Reaching Out to Motivate,  
Inspire, Strengthen, and Empower



# Table of Contents

Executive Reflections p. 1

Agency Achievements p. 2

Inaugural Legislative Breakfast p. 3

Staff Growth & Development p. 4-5

Collaboration and Initiatives p. 6-7

Community Engagement p. 8

Grants p. 9

Family Focused Events p. 10

Staff Focused Wellness p. 11

Donor Partnerships p. 12

By the Numbers p. 13

Youth & Family Outcomes p. 14 -15

Positive Stories p. 16

Behavioral Health Home Achievements p. 17

Fiscal Responsibility p. 18

Get Involved p. 19



# Executive Reflection



## Dean Pastras, ACSW, LCSW Bergen's Promise CEO

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the unwavering dedication and compassion demonstrated by our team at Bergen's Promise.

This year brought both challenges and opportunities, and through it all, we remained steadfast in our mission to serve the youth and families of Bergen County with excellence, empathy, and heart.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of our staff and the invaluable support of our community partners, we've expanded our reach and deepened our impact, ensuring that more children and families receive the care and support they deserve. Together, we've strengthened and refined our wraparound model of care, laying the foundation for even greater outcomes in the years ahead.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment. Together, we are truly making a lasting difference in the lives of Bergen County's children and families.



## Jeffrey Kahn, MS Board of Director President

As we look back on 2024, the Board of Directors is proud to recognize the remarkable work and unwavering commitment of our Bergen's Promise team. We witnessed continued innovation and collaboration in delivering high-quality care to the children and families of Bergen County.

The strength of our organization lies in its people—from the frontline care managers to our community partners and leadership team. Together, we have navigated challenges and created lasting, positive change in the lives of those we serve.

On behalf of the Board, thank you for your dedication, passion, and resilience. We look forward to supporting Bergen County families as we continue to grow and thrive in the future.



# Agency Achievements

## 10K Youth Milestone

On February 9th, Bergen's Promise reached a major milestone - 10,000 youth and families received wraparound care coordination. It is with great pride that we reflect on how many lives we have saved and/or improved in our 22-year history in Bergen County. Our staff are honored to be part of such an accomplishment!



10,000



## Recognition by the Bergen County Board of Commissioners

In May, the Bergen County Board of Commissioners recognized Bergen's Promise for the work we do to support youth and families. A Certificate of Commendation was presented to Dean Pastras, CEO, Shelisa Foster, COO, Jan Schlaier, Director of Health Services, and Nuha Kased-Hamoudeh, Health/Community Outreach Specialist. This is representative of the work that every employee at Bergen's Promise dedicates towards supporting mental health needs.

In addition, an Official Resolution was signed by the Bergen County Board of Commissioners recognizing May 2024 as Mental Health Awareness Month. The Resolution specifically recognized Bergen's Promise stating...*"Whereas we applaud all organizations such as Bergen's Promise that work to provide innovative partnerships and system improvements to achieve sustainable outcomes for youth, families, staff, and other key stakeholders."*



# Inaugural Legislative Breakfast



In May, Bergen's Promise hosted our Inaugural Legislative Breakfast at Biaggio's Restaurant and Banquet Hall in Paramus. We are grateful to all that attended this event in support of collaboration for the benefit of the mental and behavioral health of Bergen County youth and families. Among the nearly 250 attendees were Senator Holly Schepisi, Assemblyman Dr. John Azzariti, Bergen County Sheriff Anthony Cureton, Bergen County Prosecutor Mark Musella, and Bergen County Commissioner Mary Amoroso.

The program, moderated by Dean Pastras, CEO, had opening remarks from Deborah Visconi, President & CEO of Bergen New Bridge Medical Center. The Keynote Speaker, Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter (District 35), delivered an inspiring speech, voicing her support of mental health programs and services. Finally, one family shared their story of the impact of Bergen's Promise support on their life, and the lives of others. The capstone to the family story was a beautiful rendition of "The Greatest Love of All" sung by Alexander, our Bergen's Promise youth.



# Staff Growth & Development

Due to recruitment success and increased retention by 10%, the agency maintained average caseloads sizes at 14, despite increases in overall youth.



Our staff reflects the diversity of the youth we serve. Our employees can comfortably express their ethnicities, religions, sexual orientation and gender identities.

## Growing Our Workplace

Bergen's Promise expanded our office space. In the summer, we acquired more space within our current office building in Hackensack to extend to a 2nd floor. After months of construction, our staff are now enjoying this new space.

This space provides additional offices, cubicles, conference rooms, and kitchen areas. All desks on both office floors are now equipped with sit/stand capabilities as well. We are very excited to give our staff a place to work where they are comfortable and feel they are provided an optimal workplace environment.



- NEW SPACE:**
- 22,312 SQ. FT**
  - 22 OFFICES**
  - 65 CUBICLES**
  - 2 CONFERENCE ROOMS**
  - BOARDROOM**
  - FAMILY ROOM**
  - WELLNESS ROOM HUDDLE ROOM**
  - 2 KITCHEN AREAS**

# Staff Growth & Development

## Internal Promotions

Numerous staff demonstrated professional development and were promoted into new roles in 2024....



## New Positions

New positions were also created to further support agency departments and bolster the service provided to our youth...

EDUCATION  
COLLABORATION  
SPECIALIST

COMPLIANCE  
VERIFICATION  
SUPERVISOR

COMPLIANCE  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
ASSISTANT

YOUTH JUSTICE  
OPERATIONS MANAGER

GRANT  
COORDINATOR

COMMUNITY RESOURCES  
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

In addition, all Supervisors and Directors became certified in ASIST for Suicide Mental health First Aid.



# Collaboration & Initiatives

In 2024, the agency was able to focus on a variety of best practice initiatives that focused on community partnership.

## Youth Justice System

- Created position of Youth Justice Operations Manager and Court Liaison
- Representation at:
  - Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Meetings
  - Youth Services Commission
  - Hosted 2 Juvenile Officers' Association meetings
  - Bergen County Special Victims' Unit MDT meetings



## Schools

- For a two-year period (2024-2026), the DREAMS taskforce is working with (3) school districts (**Dumont, Palisades Park, South Hackensack**). DREAMS (*Developing Resiliency with Engaging Approaches to Maximize Success*) is a collaborative initiative between DOE and Children's System of Care that works collaboratively with school district personnel to develop programs and implement Nurtured Heart in schools.
- Partnered with Dumont School District to provide clinical internship hours for one of our CM Supervisor.



## FEEDBACK FROM OUR SCHOOL PARTNERS



“Dumont and Bergen's Promise partnership is strong and evolves with the needs of our shared youth and families. They are embedded within our school climate and fabric of support. We are indebted to Bergen's Promise quick responsiveness to our needs. We are proud to work side by side with Bergen's Promise to continually assess, intervene, and monitor what could help our families.”

- *Dr. Paul Barbato, Dir. of Special Services, Dumont Public Schools*



“It's been helpful to understand what services are in place at home for our students and to have the Care Manager attend IEP meetings. It gives a better overall picture of what is happening for our students and why they may present a certain way at school, based on what is happening at home.”

- *Laura Impomeni, Social Worker, New Milford Public Schools*

# Collaboration & Initiatives

## Wraparound Fidelity

- 7 Care Managers were promoted to Certified Wraparound Coaches. The Wrap Coach Team developed a new 5-part training to educate new hire staff on Wraparound Model of Care; each new hire CM is matched with a Wrap Coach during their probationary period for support and guidance. This supports our improved retention rate.
- Family Systems Trauma Model – This initiative was established to enhance the engagement phase of the Wraparound Model of Care. The goal is to improve Child/Family Team engagement, by prioritizing the entire family's involvement in the Wraparound process. This approach delivers significant and sustainable outcomes in a shorter time. In 2024, we trained 50 of our staff members with 9 starting the first round of certification. In addition, 15 system partners were trained in the FST approach.



## Other Significant Partnerships

- On-going monthly Bergen County Systems Partners Collaboration meetings, to discuss challenging situations with individual youth, discuss referral trends and resource gaps, and to improve partnerships to serve our county youth and families.
- Intensive Mobile Treatment Services – Pilot program funded through CSOC in collaboration with Rutgers.
  - Bergen County provided with 9 slots for IDD youth/families to receive intensive in-community treatment services through an identified provider (Community Options)
  - Goal of initiative is to reduce OOH treatment for high-risk youth.
- Zero Suicide Initiative - All staff were required to take the LivingWorks safeTALK training to equip staff to be more alert to someone thinking of suicide and better able to connect them with further help.
- In-patient unit liaisons - A Hospital Liaison was designated to collaborate with hospital staff to meet the needs of shared Youth and families. The Liaison also assists the hospitals with connecting resources and making referrals to CMO.



# Community Engagement



Building awareness and being part of the fabric of our community is essential in getting our youth and families the support they need. Our team of “BP Outreach Ambassadors” represented the agency in a variety of events from Back-to-School Nights, Resource Fairs, Wellness Fairs, presentations, and career fairs. Whether speaking to families or professionals, we aim to raise awareness about the possibilities provided by Bergen's Promise, NJ Children's System of Care partners, and BergenResourceNet.org.

**65**  
**OUTREACH AMBASSADORS**  
**IN 2024**

**139**  
**EVENTS ATTENDED**



YMCA Open House



Healthy Bodies,  
Healthy Minds



MSU Career Fair



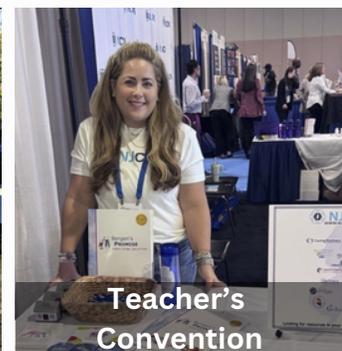
WPU Career Fair



SBJC Info Night for  
Parents & Special Needs



Out of the Darkness Walk



Teacher's  
Convention

## Conference Presentations

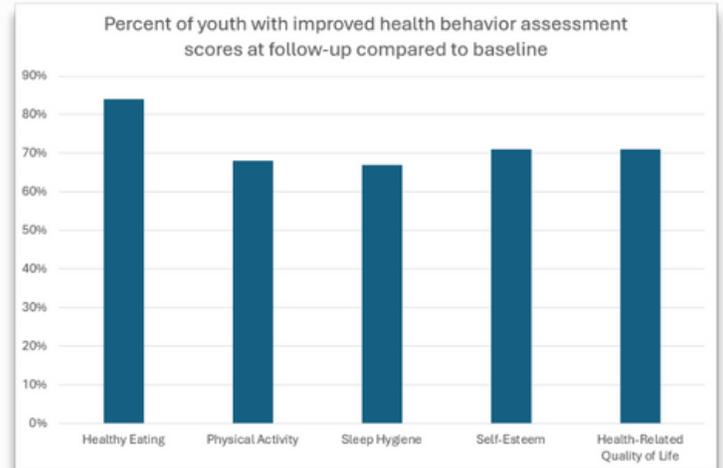
- “Strategies and Solutions to Workforce Shortages: Embracing Employee Health and Wellness”
  - Poster presentation on staff wellness at NatCon24 in St. Louis, MO in April 2024
- “A Model of Hope: Integrated healthcare for youth with mental health challenges and co-occurring overweight/obesity”
  - Oral presentation on grant-funded program American Public Health Association’s Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, MN in October 2024



# Grants

## Health Education Grant-Funded Program:

- A 2-year grant concluded in August 2024
  - (\$100K renewal for the second year was awarded in August 2023)
- Program outcomes were evaluated in partnership with Fairleigh Dickinson University faculty.
- The evaluation was presented by Amy Faus at the 2024 American Public Health Association annual meeting in Minneapolis, MN in October 2024.
- The Health Education Program was awarded the 2024 Louise Chut Award for Program Excellence from NJ Society for Public Health Education



**Youth that completed the program demonstrated statistically significant improvement at follow-up versus baseline in measures of:**

- Healthy eating behavior (REAP-S).
- Physical activity level (PAQ-C/A).
- Self-esteem (Rosenberg).
- Sleep Hygiene (CSHS/ASHS).
- Self-reported Health-Related Quality of Life (PedsQL-Youth)
- Parent-reported Health-Related Quality of Life (PedsQL-Caregiver)



## Renewal of Screen NJ grant for FY2025 Outreach:

- \$1,900+ for community health outreach
- Adolescent Preventive Health information
- 1,500+ youth will have interacted with educational resources.



## Grant Awarded to Baker Street Cares Foundation

Baker Street Cares Foundation (BSCF) was funded in fiscal year 2024/2025 through Bergen's Promise stewardship of Community Resource Development Funds awarded through the NJ Children's System of Care. Funding in the amount of \$67,697.70 was awarded to BSCF to help meet identified needs/service gaps of youth living with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the county.

Elementary-aged youth participate in Executive Functioning Groups designed to promote health and wellness for children diagnosed with a wide array of emotional and behavioral challenges. Participants access programming that focuses on: Social skills, Verbally-based cognitive skills, Computer-based cognitive skills, Domain-specific skills building and Biofeedback therapy. Monthly Parent Training Workshops are available for those enrolled in the program.

# Family Focused Events

We developed a family wellness workgroup to engage direct care staff perspectives in planning health and wellness initiatives for families:

## First Back to School Wellness Night

Hosted by Youth and Family Wellness Workgroup



## Hosted 25th Annual Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds Event

In partnership with Passaic and Hudson Counties



## Family Holiday Party

Hosted at Paradigm Therapeutic Day School



## Arts Access Program

Provided to youth and families at Bergen Performing Arts Center

**520**  
FREE SHOW TICKETS



# Staff Focused Wellness

The Staff Wellness workgroup was re-launched to engage staff voice in wellness activities, reflecting the Surgeon General's framework for workplace mental health and well-being essentials of connection and community and mattering at work. These events include wellness walks, meditation, coloring for wellness, awareness raising activities, recognitions and a variety of educational and team-building focused events.

## Staff Appreciation Breakfast



## Safe + Sound week



## Feed Your Soul



Fosters diversity and inclusiveness with food, aligning with the agency's values.

## Staff Wellness Fair



Theme: Wellness Around the World  
Hosted by Staff Wellness Workgroup

## Technology Wellness

Cyber Security and Technology are pivotal to protecting and efficiently supporting our staff and families...

- Our systems blocked 183K spam and phishing emails in 2024.
- IT Optimized our on-boarding process from 2 days to 2 hours per employee.



# Donor Partnerships

Thanks to our donors we were able to support our youth in a variety of ways this year. They helped address seasonal needs (Back to School, Winter Holidays) as well as ongoing challenges (Medical, Dental, Vision for I/DD youth). We are fortunate to have over 50 different donors support these different drives and funds. We appreciate the support that our community shows for our youth.

## Impact of Donors



**\$30K+**  
VALUE DONATED  
TO SUPPORT  
YOUTH NEEDS

**375**  
TOYS FOR  
THE HOLIDAYS

**362**  
BACKPACKS &  
SCHOOL SUPPLIES



We were able to host multiple events that brought hundreds of youth and families together in a positive environment. These events all provided resources and family friendly activities to create fun memories.

## Positive Story - Donation in Action

**KARINA**



Karina is a 9-year-old girl diagnosed with Kabuki syndrome, a rare disorder that includes intellectual disability and impacts multiple parts of her body like eye problems. She wore glasses and had lost them. It was encouraged to complete an eye exam by the school teacher and school nurse.



However, this population struggles with tolerating medical procedures and tests. Through a donation, this youth was able to afford a specialized eye exam and new glasses. The family was very happy to receive this assistance. The mother says, "Thanks so much for helping out with this. Karina is really happy with the glasses. God bless everyone!"

# By the Numbers

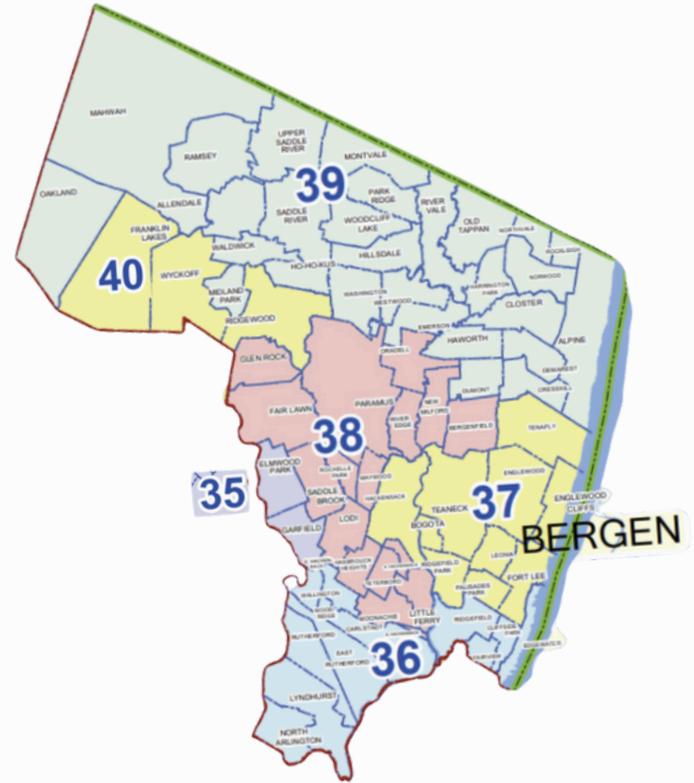


Youth Served in 2024 by:

## Legislative District

- District 37 - 768 youth
- District 38 - 707 youth
- District 36 - 476 youth
- District 39 - 462 youth
- District 35 - 322 youth
- District 40 - 114 youth

\*7% of youth are out of district due to Out of Home or other location situations.



## Regional School District

- SBJC - 771 youth
- Region VI - 498 youth
- Region V - 455 youth
- Region IV - 352 youth
- Region I - 322 youth
- Region II - 131 youth
- Region III - 70 youth

\*8% of youth are out of district due to Out of Home or other location situations.



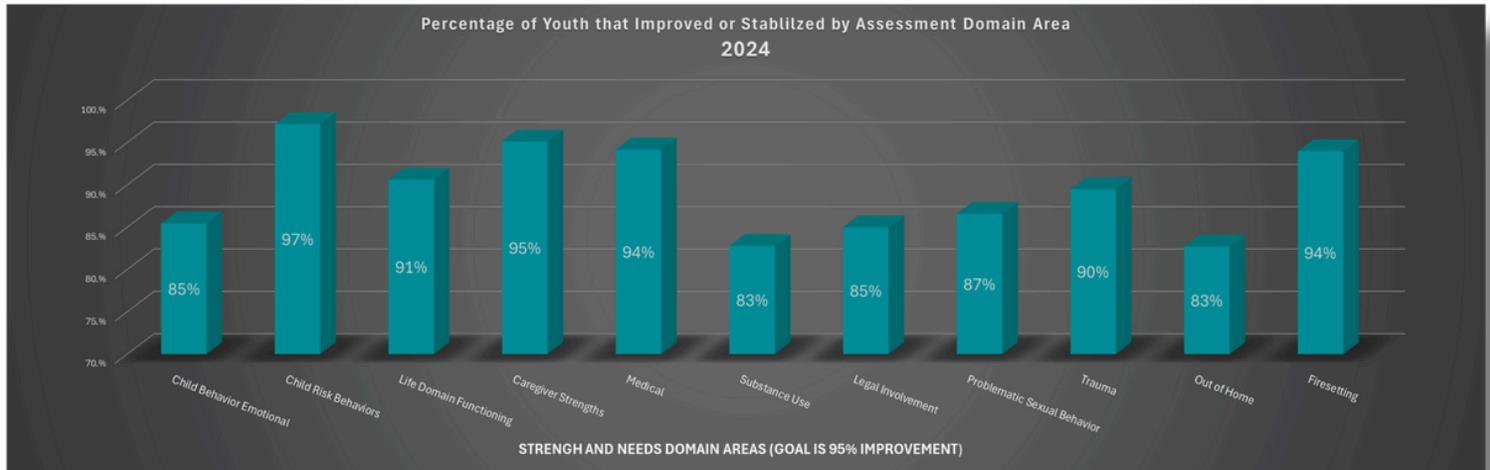
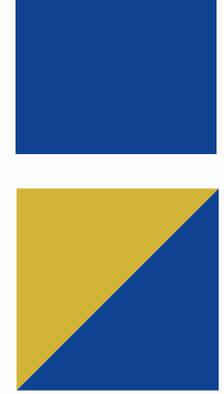
Total Youth Served in 2024:

**3,069**

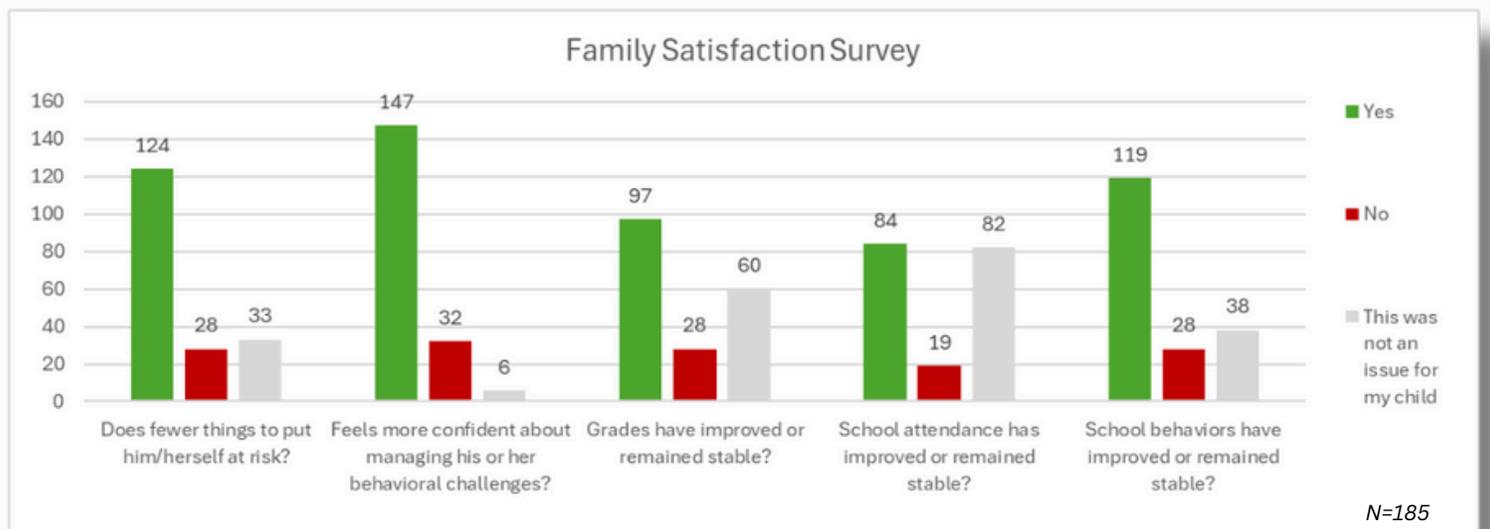
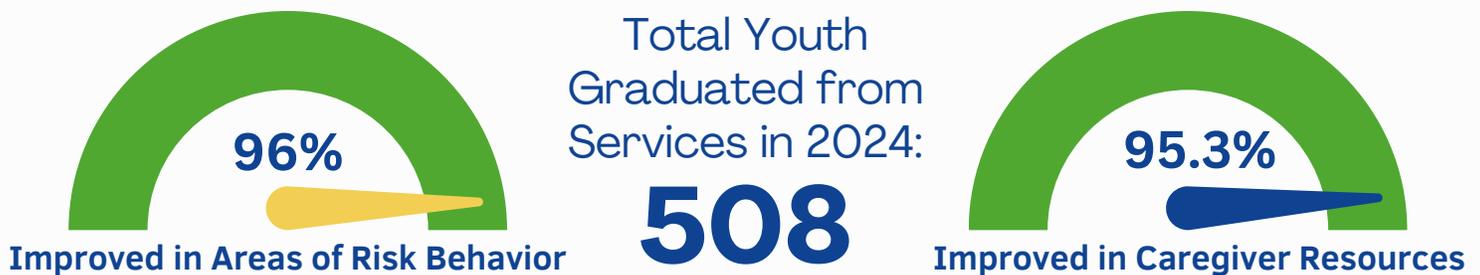
Total Youth Served All-Time:

**11,712**

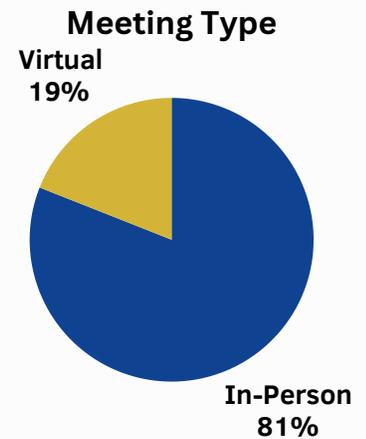
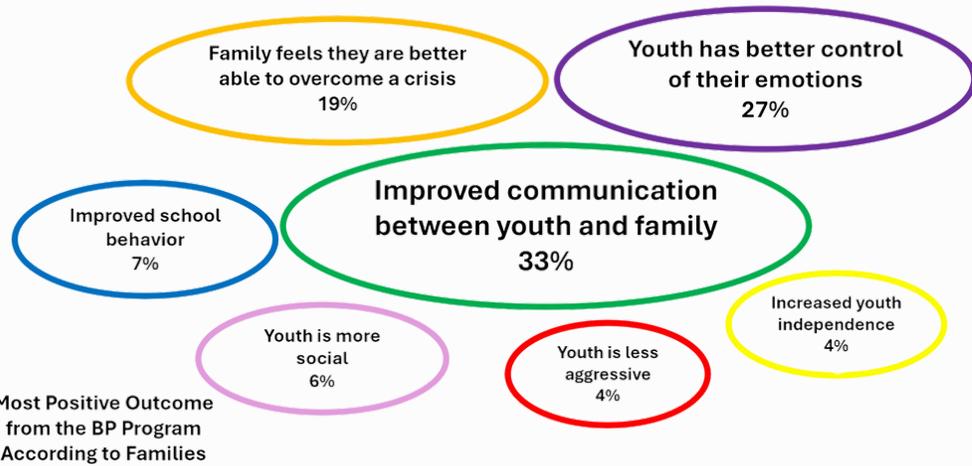
# Youth & Family Outcomes



\*Care Management Organization (CMO) SNA Outcomes Report for youth that were active with CMO between 1/1/2023 and 12/31/2023, for any length of stay. NJ Children's System of Care.



# Youth & Family Outcomes



**20,562**  
TOTAL FACE TO FACE VISITS

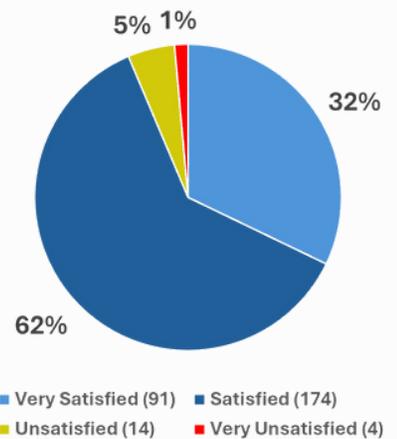
**681**

Quality Assurance Calls  
(30% increase vs. 2023)

**284**

Successful Calls  
(35% increase vs. 2023)

## Level of Family Satisfaction



These increases help us to better understand the needs of our families. Additionally, Care Managers with extremely positive feedback are recognized for their hard work. Some family feedback included:

“

“The program has been fabulous! My family moved from Illinois last year and didn't know anyone or have access to supports. My children are now thriving, happy and receiving all the support they need!”



“

“My son has begun to open up more with the team and my family. I am very optimistic and feel that he will continue to improve. I am also taking advantage of parent coach services. I feel it is very helpful to learn how to improve my approach to parenting.”

# Positive Stories



## OWEN



This youth was experiencing anxiety, unable to eat meals in school, separation anxiety, and unable to attend sports activities without his mom being there.

Through intensive IIC and BA services, as well as a 12-week wellness curriculum with a Wellness Educator, the youth achieved all his goals. While in services, the family worked with providers to develop and practice coping skills and strategies to be used in all settings to manage anxiety symptoms, as well as increase his confidence.

Some of these include breathing techniques, affirmations, a wellness wall in the home to remind of strategies, and a calm box containing items chosen by the youth to use when anxiety is felt. Now he eats before school and in the lunchroom, has tried several new foods, and eliminated separation anxieties by not calling mom throughout the day. Lastly, the youth has gained the confidence in his abilities to succeed.



## CHRISTIAN



This youth came to us with a variety of challenges that included asthma, generalized anxiety disorder, making connections, and managing healthcare needs. This was addressed through an IIH Clinician and a BA.

He has a BHH nurse working with him on weight management, physical/emotional wellness; nutrition education, physical activity, coping strategies and creating relationships. A strategy for achieving these goals was attending a basketball camp; however, the family could not afford transportation.

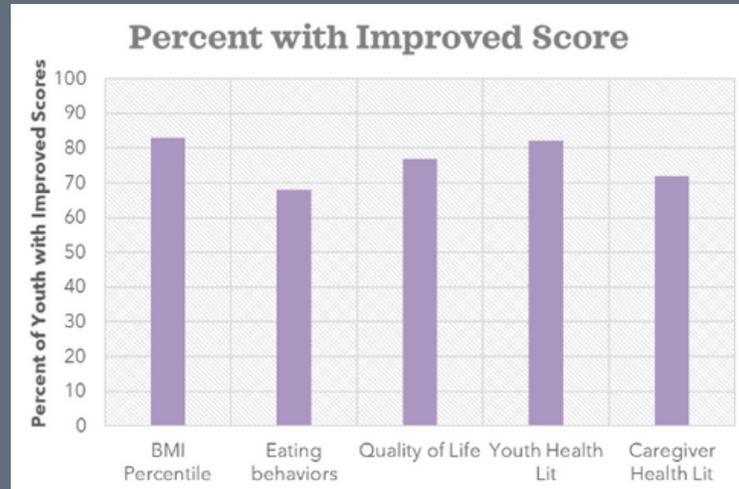
The Child Family Team collaborated with Bergen's Promise to make transportation affordable, resulting in successful participation in the camp! He enjoyed spending time with peers and made meaningful connections while achieving the goal of increasing physical activity and developing a support system. He even got to meet a former NY Knick (John Wallace).

# Behavioral Health Home Achievements

## 203

### UNIQUE YOUTH SERVED

- 83% of youth maintained or improved BMI %
- 68% of youth improved eating behaviors
- 77% of youth increased health-related quality of life (self-report)
- 82% of youth increased health literacy
- 72% of caregivers increased health literacy



Supplemental health promotion initiatives to increase appreciation of integrated care and support youth/family health. This includes:

- Culturally competent parent support groups
- Health education for non-BHH youth
- Quarterly health promotion webinars
- Mental health as public health outreach presentations
- Partnership with Holy Name Hospital
  - Sensory-friendly vaccine clinic
  - Flu and COVID vaccines for staff
- Center for Food Action partnership to address food insecurity



## Hosted 5 Health Promotion webinars in 2024:



LIFTING HEAVY THINGS  
BOOK TALK: TRAUMA-  
INFORMED MOVEMENT,  
WITH AUTHOR LAURA  
KHOUDARI



UNPACKING THE LGBTQ+  
ACRONYM:  
UNDERSTANDING,  
SUPPORTING, AND  
CONNECTING YOUTH TO  
SERVICES, PRESENTED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH NEW  
BRIDGE LGBTQ+ HEALTH  
& WELLNESS CENTER



SET TO GO:  
TRANSITIONING TO LIFE  
AFTER HIGH SCHOOL,  
PRESENTED BY THE JED  
FOUNDATION



TALKING WITH YOUR KIDS  
ABOUT SEXUALITY: FOR  
PARENTS & GUARDIANS  
OF YOUTH WITH  
DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES, PRESENTED  
BY KATHERINE  
MCLAUGHLIN, FOUNDER &  
CEO AT ELEVATUS



SOCIAL MEDIA AND  
YOUTH MENTAL  
HEALTH, PRESENTED  
BY DR. COREY BASCH

# Fiscal Responsibility

## *2024 Fiscal Year Financial Report*

*(July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024)*



- Billing was at 99.7% for 2024 (goal was 98.5%); in 2023 the agency average for billing was 99.4%
- Outpatient Funding Grant – received additional funding for outpatient services, successfully developed new business agreements with specialized OP providers to creatively meeting youth and family needs (that cannot be funded through Medicaid)

# Get Involved

## Donate

- **Support youth with a one-time or monthly monetary donation** that could be used for our annual initiatives, individual family needs, or funding sources to facilitate new program development in areas of need for families served in Bergen County:
  - **Website** - <https://www.bergenspromise.org/donations>
  - **Mail check payable to Bergen's Promise**  
Attn: Community Resources  
3 University Plaza Dr. Suite 300  
Hackensack NJ 07601
- **Participate in our Drives**
  - Email [CommunityResources@BergensPromise.org](mailto:CommunityResources@BergensPromise.org) to contribute!



## Share Your Story

We always want to hear the experiences of our families, staff, and community partners. Have a story you would like to share? Sharing your story can help impact future families and inspire them to become part of the Bergen's Promise family. Contact [CommunityResources@BergensPromise.org](mailto:CommunityResources@BergensPromise.org) to start the conversation. We'll work with you to share it in a way you are most comfortable.

## Be Part of a Team that Changes Lives!

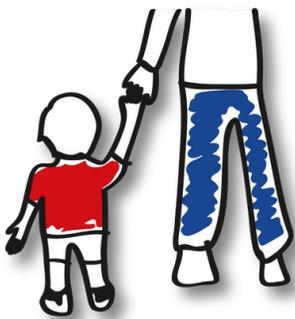


## Explore Our Career Opportunities



[BERGENSPROMISE.ORG/CAREERS](https://www.bergenspromise.org/careers)  
APPLY TODAY





# Bergen's PROMISE

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