



VANDERHEYDEN

Giving new life to youth, adults and families

FAMILY FOCUSED • TRAUMA INFORMED • COMMUNITY BASED



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VANDERHEYDEN IS AWARDED YOUTH AND FAMILY PEER ADVOCATE GRANT \$275,000 New York Office of Mental Health

Wynantskill, NY July 8, 2025 Vanderheyden has been awarded a Youth and Family Peer Advocate Expansion grant from the New York State Office of Mental Health. Vanderheyden will use the \$275,000 grant to train and credential Youth and Family Peer Advocates in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington counties. Vanderheyden recognizes the importance of the peer advocate workforce and will champion a workforce expansion project to allow a pathway for new peer advocates to enter the workforce.

Peer Advocates provide direct support services to help individuals and families on their healthcare journey. Family Peer Advocates have lived experience as the primary caregiver of a youth who has historically or is currently accessing the behavioral health system, child welfare, substance abuse services, or who displays social/emotional needs that impact their ability to obtain an appropriate education. Youth Peer Advocates use their own lived experience of navigating the above-mentioned systems to assist youth to achieve their goals, encouraging the youth to advocate for themselves, and develop a network of natural supports they can access after service utilization. Peer Advocates can aid in meeting basic needs, navigating healthcare and community services, educating and empowering the family to identify natural supports and community connections, school advocacy, locating transportation, and securing child care.

This new program creates a pathway for individuals with lived experience to make a difference for youth and families actively navigating challenges that impact their daily functioning. This new program allows for financial compensation for completing the credentialing process. The payment structure is as follows:

Stipend 1 (\$250): Awarded upon registration and completion of Level 1 of the Advocate Credentialing Pathway

Stipend 2 (\$500): Awarded upon receipt of a provisional Family or Youth Peer Advocate credential

Stipend 3 (\$1,500): Provided as an employment bonus once the individual is connected to a job and begins delivering peer services using their provisional certification

“Vanderheyden’s mission empowers youth and families to build brighter futures,” says Karen Carpenter, President and CEO of Vanderheyden. “This grant from the New York Office of Mental Health provides another opportunity to support vulnerable families to continue to help them live their best lives.”

About Vanderheyden: Vanderheyden began as the Troy Orphan Asylum in 1833 and has been providing services for more than 190 years. Today our facilities offer a safe haven for youth, adults and families who have experienced family disruption, trauma, abuse, emotional difficulty, developmental disability and learning problems. The Richard A. Desrochers Educational Center at Vanderheyden is a Regents accredited 7-12 grade program. It provides education to individuals who are at risk of not succeeding at school, and those in need of a special education. Vanderheyden is a designated Children and Family Treatment and Support Services Provider (CFTSS). The agency is committed to a family-focused, trauma-informed and community-based system of care. Every day at Vanderheyden, we work to change lives to save lives. For more information, visit www.vanderheyden.org and follow us on social media.

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Vanderheyden is a charitable 501(c)(3) corporation. Charitable gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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