

Path to Promise Executive Overview as of July 2019

Dutchess County is launching a multi-year effort to ensure all young people in the county – from birth through age 19 – have the assets they need to achieve their full potential as they grow into young adults.

The blueprint, called “Path to Promise,” was announced by Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro in his 2017 State of the County address.

Working with Public Consulting Group (PCG), a community-led project team has subsequently engaged in dialogues with youth, parents, service providers, funders and the public at large to analyze existing programs, develop a universal asset framework and an implementation plan to build on what is working, resolve duplications, and close any gaps in services and supports.

In particular, this ground-up approach included comprehensive and strategic outreach to youth to better assess their needs – and ways for the county to deliver these services.

The motto “Nothing About Me Without Me” emerged as an unbending reminder of our commitment to youth – *all* of them.

In addition to a variety of direct and contract services designed to strengthen families, the county has identified \$4 million in annual discretionary funds for youth programs. Over the next six months, the county will develop an implementation plan for Path to Promise in conjunction with the formation of the 2020 county budget. This effort will include more outreach to mobilize the community -- and to encourage participation in positive youth development efforts.

Among the county’s plans are:

- Creating a position of Assistant Commissioner for Youth Services at the Dutchess County Department of Community and Family Services. This person will be responsible for implementing Path to Promise to ensure the various facets of it stay on track.
- Empowering a community outreach coordinator to build a groundswell of support for Path to Promise. With the backing of other county resources, this person will go out into the community to explain the benefits of the initiative -- and why taking such a holistic approach is imperative to the well-being of our youth.
- Establishing a “Path to Promise” Committee within the Youth Coordinating Council to provide a sustainable structure to help with implementation and for continuous improvement practices.
- Utilizing identified domains, from the necessity of providing basic needs such as food, water and safety, to nurturing family and social relationships and addressing mental and physical health issues, and a “cradle to career” approach to positive youth development.

- Continuing to evaluate youth programs and services to ensure desired outcomes are met and aligned with the vision of the Path to Promise.
- Focusing on grant funding by the public and private sectors to increase the number and quality of accessible programs for youth of all ages and abilities.
- Developing performance measures, setting benchmarks and monitoring mechanisms. For instance, working with its partners, Path to Promise will judge its success by whether the county can lower the poverty level, see an increase in graduation rates and reduce the number of youth involved in the justice system. The county also will set standards for the collection of data across departments to create a more cohesive tracking and monitoring of outcomes. And it will improve information-sharing among providers and funders for the better coordination of services.
- Identifying partners to enhance youth facilities and perhaps create new ones, using these physical assets for youth to play and socialize, engage in the arts, learn skills, and explore careers – from farming to computer technology.
- Capitalizing on what already works. Dutchess County youth success stories abound. Many students are high scholastic achievers and participate in a variety of after-school and community-minded programs. Replicating these successes through education and by helping those in need of assistance will be a driving force behind Path to Promise.
- Studying the feasibility of developing a user-friendly website to provide the data and the resources for the community.
- Putting the county's financial muscle into the effort through the 2020 budget process -- and beyond.

Path to Promise's fate hinges on whether the county and the various stakeholders and Dutchess communities can work together in a cohesive, constructive fashion. As noted in the PCG report, "Performance indicators should be determined by individual communities as opposed to the county at large because benchmarks, rates of progress, and outcomes likely vary among communities."

Realizing the breadth of this undertaking, the county will track youth developmental milestones in sub-age groups, 0-3; 4-5; 6-12; 13-17; and 18-19 years old.

Regarding the budget process, the county will need to review its portfolio to align services and resources and attempt to reallocate funding for prevention services, especially for the youngest age groups.