

Odyssey House is a behavioral healthcare nonprofit dedicated to helping people struggling with addiction, mental illness, and homelessness get back on their feet. We offer a wide range of programs, including residential and outpatient substance use treatment, supportive housing, primary medical care, educational services (e.g., GED), employment training, and mental health services.

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From left: Mother’s Day Celebration 2024 honorees Judge Ellen N. Biben and Eva Pittas; mothers in treatment, Michelle and Elizabeth; honoree Linda Fodera; Prisca Salazar-Rodriguez, Odyssey House Boards of Trustees; and PIX11’s Monica Morales, event emcee.

Celebrating Resilience: Mother’s Day Event Raises Awareness of Services for Women and Families in Recovery

On a beautiful spring day, Odyssey House held its most successful Mother’s Day Celebration to date. Emceed by PIX11 Reporter/Anchor Monica Morales, it raised essential funds that will be directed toward empowering women and families on their recovery journeys. The event honored women in leadership whose dedication to recovery has been instrumental in strengthening families throughout NYC: Hon. Ellen N. Biben, Linda Fodera, and Eva Pittas.

The Hon. Ellen N. Biben, Administrative Judge of New York County Supreme Court, Criminal Term, was honored with the Public Service Award. Judge Biben was recognized for her role in establishing and presiding over the New York County Supreme Court Felony Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) Court, the first all-purpose felony ATI in the country.

Acknowledging her hardworking staff, Judge Biben said, “Our ATI court is predicated on two essential features: the firm belief that people can overcome challenges and the necessity

of community to support and allow those transformations. Recovery thrives in connection and community.”

She continued, “All of you in recovery inspire us. You’re working hard to transform your lives for yourself and your families. You remind us that hope is not a solitary endeavor. It flourishes within the embrace of community. No one does this work alone. Let us all continue to work together but build on each other’s strength and hope.”

“No one does this work alone. Let us all continue to work together but build on each other’s strength and hope.”
— The Hon. Ellen N. Biben

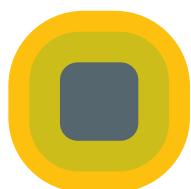
Linda Fodera received the Community Service Award. She is a Senior Vice President at Gallagher Benefit Services, where she provides consulting services to



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Odyssey House

Odyssey House Launches New Initiatives to Support Vulnerable Populations

We are excited to announce two groundbreaking initiatives: one aimed at reducing substance use disorders among perinatal women, and the other supporting homeless individuals with serious mental illness. These initiatives, funded by the Elevance Health Foundation and the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), respectively, demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing comprehensive, compassionate care to those in need.

Empowering Mothers



Odyssey House has been awarded a \$300,000 grant over three years from the Elevance Health Foundation to combat substance use disorders among perinatal women. This grant will support the Connections to Care Expansion program, focusing on vulnerable women in the Bronx.

Highlights of the program include:

- **Family Care Coordinator (FCC):** The grant will fund an additional FCC to join an existing team comprised of one FCC and a Family Peer Advocate. This team operates from the NYC Administration for Children's Services office in the Bronx.
- **Targeted Outreach:** The new FCC will focus on outreach to hospital systems, harm reduction settings, and opioid treatment programs. The goal is to screen, assess, and refer perinatal women to appropriate treatment and resources.
- **Addressing Barriers:** The program aims to mitigate the fear of the child welfare system, which often prevents perinatal women from seeking the help they need.

Transforming Lives



Our supportive housing initiative is set to make a significant impact in the Bronx, New York. This OMH-funded project will provide a safe, stable, and supportive environment for 60 homeless individuals living with serious mental illness. By creating an integrated setting, the initiative aims to help these individuals remain stably housed while receiving the

necessary support to thrive.

Key components of the program include:

- **Evidence-Based Programs:** Tenants will benefit from trauma-related services such as Seeking Safety, and programs like Wellness Self-Management Plus to build life-skills.
- **Individual Service Plans:** Each tenant will have a personalized plan that provides access to a variety of onsite and community-based services. These services include housing case management, counseling, crisis intervention, life skills training, health education, public benefits management, and social/recreational activities.
- **Culturally Competent Care:** Services will be strengths-based and sensitive to the cultural and linguistic needs of the tenants.

The initiative's operating budget of \$1.9 million includes a robust staffing plan. This plan comprises a full-time Program Director, three full-time Case Managers, an Entitlement Specialist, and a Peer Specialist.

These initiatives underscore our dedication to innovative, evidence-based approaches in addressing the complex needs of our community members. By providing supportive housing and targeted outreach, we aim to create lasting, positive change in the lives of those we serve.

Make Recovery Real for a Fellow New Yorker

Thanks to supporters like you, Odyssey House has been helping people achieve healthy and sustained recoveries for over 50 years.

By donating to our programs, you enable us to pursue our mission of providing top-quality treatment for men, women, and children struggling with addiction, empowering them to achieve their dreams of living healthy, productive lives.



Donate online at
odysseyhousenyc.org/donate

Exciting Updates from the Odyssey House Art Project



Made Together: Art from Our Community

Feb 16–Mar 29, 2024
MoMA

Odyssey House artists shine at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) “Made Together” exhibition.

Our talented artists recently participated in MoMA’s “Made Together: Art from Our Community” project, showcasing their creativity alongside works from other NYC community organizations. This collaborative initiative celebrates the artistic potential of New Yorkers with disabilities, providing a platform for self-expression and fostering an inclusive museum experience. Speaking at the show’s opening reception on February 23, Odyssey House President Dr. Peter Provet congratulated the artists and thanked the MoMA event organizers Theresa Rodewald and Lara Schweller, Associate Educators Access Program and Initiatives, “for the workshops and art instruction you all provided that led up to this beautiful show.”



Odyssey House Haven tenant Glenn with his framed artwork at the MoMA exhibition opening.



Exploring printmaking with MoMA educators

Our collaboration with MoMA continued to bring creative expression to clients in treatment. Earlier this summer, Jamie Mirabella led an inspiring workshop series, introducing our artists to printmaking techniques like relief printing, collagraph, and cyanotype. The sessions emphasized experimentation and creative play, producing a vibrant collection of prints, drawings, and collages. Look out for these works in our upcoming annual art exhibition this fall!

MoMA educator Jamie Mirabella (far left), visited Odyssey House to lead print-making workshops with our clients.

Sculpting memories with clay

Visiting artist Riley Strom recently conducted an eight-session clay workshop at the George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery. Participants learned hand-building techniques, starting with pinch pots and progressing to personalized sculptures reflecting their New York experiences. Riley praised the participants’ creativity and dedication, noting the high quality of their finished projects.

These engaging art initiatives continue to empower our community, fostering self-expression and artistic growth among Odyssey House residents.



A mom and her daughter work on their sculptures.



Odyssey House moms Elizabeth and Michelle (center, holding their daughters) with Gretchen Kleinsmith, Program Director, George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery (left) and Angeliqye Diaz, Clinical Manager, Healthy Mothers, Healthy Families Program.



Colleen Beagen, Odyssey House VP, Director of Human Resources (center), with event sponsors Tania Mistretta (left) and Wendy Mellk of Jackson Lewis. Ms. Mellk was honored at the 2023 Mother's Day Celebration.



John Tavolacci, EVP, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director of Odyssey Foundation (center), with representatives from LabCorp, a longtime sponsor of Odyssey House.

companies. Ms. Fodera joined Gallagher in September 2015 and has worked with Odyssey House ever since. She specializes in helping companies design and tailor benefit programs that meet the needs of their employees and the organizations' financial goals.

Eva Pittas received the Leadership Award. She is the co-founder, President, and COO of Thoropass, a compliance and audit solution company where she leads customer experience and internal operations. She and her family have been involved with Odyssey House for nearly a decade. Ms. Pittas has firsthand experience with the challenges families face when dealing with mental illness and substance use disorders and has witnessed the impactful work Odyssey House performs to support families and individuals.

"When we began our journey to get our daughter help 10 years ago, my husband and I relied heavily on the advice and counsel of Odyssey House. They helped us get our daughter on the path to recovery," said Ms. Pittas. "The work that Odyssey House does is so meaningful and such an important part of who we are as a family. We will be forever grateful for the support that you all have given us, and we will continue to give back."

Erasing barriers, creating hope

The event is a unique opportunity to recognize the incredible strength and resilience of the mothers in our programs. Many of these women have overcome immense challenges to break the cycle of addiction and rebuild their lives. Two of these mothers, Michelle and Elizabeth, movingly spoke about their struggles with addiction and the joy of parenting in recovery.

Michelle is the mom of an energetic little girl and has been in treatment for six months. After a long history of drug use and losing several family members and friends to overdose, Michelle was determined to give her daughter a better life. "I wanted to get help, but I didn't know where or how." A counselor recommended Odyssey House, and she never looked back. "Being in Odyssey House has helped me understand and cope with my emotions and identify my relapse triggers.

"My relationship with my daughter has flourished while being here. I learned to be the mother I was meant to be and the mother my little girl deserves," she said.

Elizabeth found out she was pregnant when she was three months along. She immediately stopped using substances, but, she relapsed in her third trimester. This led to every new mom's worst nightmare. "Two days after my delivery, my daughter was taken away from me. A week later, I was admitted to the George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery.

"I cannot believe such a beautiful place is where I'm starting my family's journey. I get so much guidance from the staff, and

the other moms have become my support system. Becoming sober has been intense. After using substances for 14 years, I really didn't know the person I would be sober. But now I'm grateful for being a sober mom, a sister for my siblings to be proud of, and the woman who gave birth to the miracle that is my daughter."

Visit [youtube.com/odysseyhouseny](https://www.youtube.com/odysseyhouseny) to find out more about Michelle and Elizabeth in our Mother's Day campaign, "Erasing Barriers, Creating Hope."

"I'm honored to be here today to accept this award, but today really isn't about me. It's about the amazing women here who have overcome so many obstacles."

— Linda Fodera

"The work that Odyssey House does is so meaningful and such an important part of who we are as a family."— Eva Pittas

DATA SHOWS THAT ACROSS THE COUNTRY:

70% | of women entering treatment have children

Only **13%** of treatment programs offer services to pregnant people and only **7.5%** offer childcare services.

THANK YOU

to the

Elizabeth and Baretts O. Benjamin Foundation
for sponsoring our Mother's Day Celebration.

We are grateful to the Benjamin Foundation Trustees for their ongoing support in memory of George Rosenfeld, former Chair of Odyssey House and Odyssey Foundation.

Committed to Community Wellness and Recovery

We are committed to bringing positive change and enriching the wellness and recovery of individuals and communities we serve through housing, substance use and mental health treatment, and other community-based initiatives.

Our programs and services aim to help low-income adults and families with special needs, including those struggling with substance use and mental health issues, by providing integrated care, counseling, job training, and other support to aid in their recovery and reintegration into the community.

As a panel member at the opening of the new Chase Community Banking Center on East Fordham Road in the Bronx on April 26, Dr. Provet expressed our commitment to community-building and enhancing services for vulnerable New Yorkers across the city. “Odyssey House values are firmly rooted in helping the most



Dr. Peter Provet, President and CEO of Odyssey House (second from right), with JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon (center), Bronx community and business leaders, and officers of Chase Community Bank at the opening of Chase Grand Concourse Community Banking Center.



Dr. Provet welcomes JPMorgan Chase representatives Andrea Principe (white jacket), Melissa Bastan (red shirt), and Amy Laljee (white shirt) to the George Rosenfeld Center for Recovery (GRCR) on Wards Island, Upper Manhattan.

Joining Dr. Provet are Jeremy King, VP of Residential Treatment Services (far left), Gretchen Kleinsmith, program director (far right), and two clients in treatment at the GRCR, Magalis and Joseph (both in blue shirts).

vulnerable in our community survive and thrive. It is what we ask of ourselves and our partners in government and the private sector.”

JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon added, “We’re proud of our commitment to lifting up communities. For every person you lift up, for every community you lift up, you make the world a better place.”

Partnership for change

As a significant financial institution in New York City, JPMorgan Chase can help us expand community access to our services and support us as we also invest in the Bronx.

“We are pleased to work with JPMorgan Chase in developing community initiatives in New York City and delighted to welcome representatives of the bank to a tour of our family treatment center on Ward’s Island,” added Dr. Provet.

Renowned Neuroscientist Dr. Moriah Thomason Joins Boards of Trustees



Odyssey House is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Moriah Thomason to its Boards of Trustees. Dr. Thomason brings a wealth of expertise and a profound commitment to advancing mental health and developmental neuroscience. Her dedication to improving the lives of individuals and families through research and advocacy aligns with our mission.

“My connection to Odyssey House is part passion, part profession, and deeply personal. I am a neuroscientist committed to conducting research that can improve the lives of families, especially those challenged by substance use disorders, discrimination, and exposure to trauma,” said Dr. Thomason.

“I am also a person with a very close family member that I almost lost during the height of his addiction battle, who now serves the field, working with others suffering the same condition.

My hope is that my service on these Boards will create an enhanced dialogue between research and service, a badly needed interface for making positive change in the world.”

Dr. Thomason is a Barakett Associate Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at New York University (NYU) Grossman School of Medicine, where she specializes in developmental neuroscience. Her pioneering research focuses on understanding the early development of the brain, particularly how prenatal and early life experiences shape long-term mental health outcomes.

“We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Thomason to our Boards of Trustees,” said Dr. Peter Provet, President of Odyssey House. “Her expertise in developmental neuroscience and her passion for mental health advocacy will be invaluable as we continue to enhance our programs and services.”

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Moriah Thomason to the Odyssey House family. We look forward to the positive impact her knowledge and experience will bring to our community.

Q&A: Teens and Marijuana



A national survey of teens found that adolescents who experienced a major depressive episode were more likely to have used drugs, smoked marijuana, or engaged in binge drinking. WBUR's "Here & Now" program aired a segment with Dr. Peter Provet about how substance abuse affects a teen's mental health. Here are the takeaways from the conversation:

How does marijuana affect teens' brains?

The most important variable here is that the active chemical in marijuana that makes people high, THC, has increased dramatically from something like 2% in the 1990s to well over 15%-20%. It's a substantially more potent drug, which increases problems like social isolation, low motivation, various types of brain impairment in addition to psychosis, and, to some degree, suicidality.

How do parents know if their child is suffering from drug or alcohol abuse?

Significant changes in behavior can alert the parent to potential drug use. In the teen years, we see great changes in the way children function; however, we try to key into those that are more abrupt, such as suddenly losing interest in hobbies, isolating much more, and having angry outbursts.

What advice do you have for parents who have kids that are using drugs or alcohol?

The important thing is to try to help a teenager feel comfortable in their own skin. We know, at that age, being accepted in social groups is a key force, which can lead to drug use when kids get involved with the wrong group.

What does recovery look like for a teen recovering from substance abuse?

The best treatment and recovery are those that help the person find purpose and reason to move forward in life. Just stopping drugs is not the answer. Yes, we want to help you stop substance use. At the same time, we want to help someone get excited about positive things in their life and envision who they want to become as they get older.

To listen to the entire segment, visit [odysseyhousenyc.org/news](https://www.odysseyhousenyc.org/news)

Executive Receives Leadership Award



John Tavalacci, Odyssey House Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director of Odyssey Foundation (left), receives the Innovative Leadership Award from Joseph Turner, President and CEO of Exponents, at their Annual Gala earlier this spring. Exponents is a New York City-based nonprofit organization serving those impacted by HIV/AIDS, substance use, incarceration, and behavioral health challenges.

John's distinguished career includes 25 years as an executive management team leader of Odyssey House's clinical programs and development, where he instituted exercise and wellness programs, among other initiatives, to enhance the client experience. He also served as past President of the New York Chapter of Treatment Communities of America, holds current Board membership in several behavioral health organizations, and is a recognized leader in addiction and mental health treatment.

Mark your calendars and lace up your running shoes!

Saturday, September 28, Icahn Stadium, Randall's Island

Odyssey House is thrilled to announce our Run for Your Life 5K will be held on Saturday, September 28. This family-friendly event promotes community health and wellness, celebrates individuals in recovery, and reduces the stigma associated with the disease of addiction.

This annual event is not just a run; it's an opportunity to make a significant impact. September is National Recovery Month, a time to celebrate resilience, hope, and the power of community in overcoming addiction. Run, walk, or cheer—all are welcome to participate in this fun and meaningful event.

Registration
& Information:





120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

odysseyhousenyc.org
212-361-1600

Odyssey House

Where recovery gets real

Get Real About Recovery

If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, call us at **866-888-7880**.

We can help. Residential, outpatient, and housing services available immediately.



It is the mission of Odyssey House:

Visit our blog for more news and updates from Odyssey House!
odysseyhousenyc.org/news



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To provide comprehensive and innovative services to the broadest range of metro New York’s population who:

- Abuse drugs
- Abuse alcohol
- Suffer from mental illness

To provide high quality, holistic treatment impacting all major life spheres: Psychological, physical, social, family, educational and spiritual.

To support personal rehabilitation, renewal and family restoration.

In all of its activities, Odyssey House undertakes to act as a responsible employer and member of the community, and manage the assets of the organization in a professional manner.