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Hillside to Discontinue Services at Varick Campus in 2019

*Agency will not renew lease on facility; transition plan in process
for youth, staff and residential treatment programs at other Hillside residential campuses*

Hillside Family of Agencies announced today it will not renew a 15-year lease of its Varick residential treatment campus when that lease expires in March 2020. Hillside assumed the lease for the residential campus in December 2004, at the request of New York State Office of Children and Family Services leaders after a previous residential service provider ceased operations at that site.

The campus, located on the site of the former Seneca Army Depot in Romulus, New York, currently serves 79 youth from across New York State, and employs 235 full- and part-time staff. A transition plan now underway will relocate some Varick-based services to other Hillside campuses over the next several months. Individualized plans for all Varick youth are being developed, in collaboration with family members and county and state partners, to ensure seamless continuity of care as those youth move to other residential campuses and programs.

Approximately 60 full- and part-time positions will move with those programs to other Hillside campuses. Varick staff whose positions will not be moving to other campuses will be supported in pursuing other positions within the agency or with other employers in the region, if they prefer. Hillside will be engaging with area employers to provide on-site job fairs and other resources in support of affected staff. The transition of youth, staff and programs is expected to be completed by December 31, 2019.

Several key considerations led Hillside leadership to determine the long-term lease should not be renewed: national and statewide trends concerning the demand for residential treatment services; challenges concerning recruitment and retention of direct-care staff on the Varick Campus; under-utilized residential services capacity across other Hillside-owned campuses; and necessary but cost-prohibitive improvements that would be required to the Campus buildings.

Hillside's services are provided in community-based settings—schools, family homes, neighborhood offices and other locations—and on residential campuses where youth receive round-the-clock intensive treatment. Innovations in treatment delivery have led to a gradual shift from residential treatment toward community-based services, creating a reduced need for residential capacity among all child-and-family service agencies.

Varick is the only campus operated by Hillside under a long-term lease agreement; Hillside's other residential campuses (in Rochester, Chili, Auburn, Bath and Greene, New York) are all owned by the agency, and offer sufficient capacity to accommodate anticipated future demand for residential treatment services.

“We have carefully and thoroughly considered all of our options, and have determined this approach will be best for the youth we serve, their families, Hillside employees and our Family of Agencies as a whole,” said Maria Cristalli, President and CEO of Hillside Family of Agencies. “Over the last 14 years, we have created specialty residential treatment programs on the Varick Campus that have advanced our field and improved outcomes for countless youth and families. That work will continue on other Hillside campuses, where staff and youth can work in a safer and more updated environment.”

"While there will always be some youth who need high-quality residential treatment services, there are now more options for meeting the needs of some of those youth. Further, Hillside is facing the same challenges all of our agencies are in recruiting and retaining an adequate workforce because of the low salaries we are funded to offer. I anticipate that our field will see more residential treatment reductions like this in the future," said James Purcell, CEO of the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), the membership organization for nonprofit child-welfare agencies in New York State.

About Hillside Family of Agencies: Founded in 1837, Hillside Family of Agencies is one of the oldest family and youth non-profit human services organizations in the United States. The organization provides child welfare, mental and physical health, youth development, juvenile justice, special education, and developmental disabilities services across Central and Western New York, and in Prince George’s County, Maryland. Hillside served more than 14,000 youth and families in 2018. For more information, visit hillside.com.

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