

Report of the NYQM Community Wellness Working Group

July 2025 for the NYQM Quarterly Meeting

Overview

In late 2024, after several years of discernment, New York Quarterly Meeting launched a Community Wellness Program. As our first pilot year concludes in September, the Community Wellness Working Group recommends continuing into a second year with targeted improvements. The program has provided needed, meaningful and impactful support to monthly meeting pastoral care, ministry and counsel, and relief committees, serving approximately 23 community members of our estimated 609¹ members and regular attenders.

Background and Context

In recent years, members of the New York Quarterly Meeting (NYQM) community, including the Concern for Quaker Living (CQL) working group, Ministry and Counsel Committee, and NYQM staff members identified emerging support needs that exceeded the capacity of individual meetings' Pastoral Care, or Committees. Community members could use help accessing NYC Services such as applying for public housing, enrolling in Medicaid, applying for EBT/food stamps, accessing low cost therapy, and more. Previously, pastoral care committees were managing these complex social service needs alongside their spiritual care responsibilities, often without specialized expertise. Additionally, NYC Quakers expressed interest in educational and personal development programs specifically tailored to our communities.

Our First Year

To address these needs, NYQM partnered with University Settlement (US) in September 2024. US connects people with NYC services while providing health and wellness programming. NYQM Community Organizer, nova sturup, oriented US staff to NYC Quaker community practices. During fall 2024, US team members attended Meeting for Worship at each NYC meeting to introduce themselves and connect directly with Friends.

We formed a Community Wellness Advisory Working Group composed of representatives from local meetings' Pastoral Care and Ministry & Counsel Committees and NYQM Staff nova sturup, Ted Bongiovanni and Jess Hobbs Pifer. Members included representatives from

¹ NYQM yearbook number as of 2020. We know these numbers have grown and are considering how we can better count the size of our community.

Flushing, Morningside, Manhattan, 15th Street, and Brooklyn Monthly Meetings, NYQM M&C and Relief Committees,. US staff regularly attended meetings with the NYQM Community Organizer, Community Wellness working group, Relief Committees, and attended business meetings as needed.

The community wellness program has three key components: 1) support and advising for committees that provide pastoral care to our communities 2) providing direct case management services and referrals to members and attenders of our meetings and 3) workshops on topics that our community identified.

In terms of impact, committee members across Relief, Pastoral Care, and Ministry & Counsel committees expressed feeling supported by the relationship with US. Committee members affirmed that this relationship allowed Meetings to assist members of the community with complex needs to be met by a complicated network of available services that the Relief, Pastoral Care, and Ministry & Counsel committees do not have the resources or range of experience to aid on their own.

In terms of direct services, US provided individual case management support, developed relationships with meeting members and local leadership, processed member referrals, and delivered direct social services support. 23 community members used US resource sharing or case management services. US noted that Friends differed in their willingness to accept help, and suggested that we work towards further committee support to help coordinate care.

Throughout the year, US facilitated workshops on physical and mental health, benefits and entitlements, end-of-life planning, and access to resources, averaging 8 participants per workshop. We see workshops as important for raising program awareness and will explore ways to increase attendance and improve access through recordings for those unable to attend.

In June, the Community Wellness working group convened to evaluate the partnership and discuss contract renewal. The advisory group identified several opportunities for program enhancement: restructuring workshops to strengthen in-person community connections, clarifying potential collaboration and overlap with the ARCH program, deepening relationships between US and individual monthly meetings, and establishing clearer processes for case tracking and follow up procedures.

Reflecting on the inaugural year, the advisory group came to a general consensus that the partnership showed significant promise and recommends continuing the relationship with US for a second year.

Year One Impact

Direct Services:

- **23 community members** utilized resource sharing or case management services
- **4 educational workshops** averaging 8-10 participants each

- **Sustained capacity:** Maintained 4 active case management cases while completing numerous resource sharing cases

Common Needs Addressed:

- Mental health resources and legal support
- Healthcare system navigation
- Food insecurity and daily living support
- Benefits and entitlements systems navigation

Community Integration:

- US staff regularly attended Community Wellness Working Group meetings, borough Advisory Committees, and Relief Committee meetings
- Conducted in-person office hours at Brooklyn Meeting House and virtual office hours
- Developed ongoing relationships with meeting members and leadership across all NYC meetings

Quarterly Progress Summary

Fall 2024 (Sept-Nov): Program launch with 2-3 active cases, community orientation, and workshop interest surveys completed by 14 Friends.

Winter 2024-25 (Dec-Feb): Reached capacity with 4 active cases, conducted workshops on holiday mental health (7 participants) and homecare access (12 participants, 100% over age 60). Expanded surveys to 29 Friends providing input on future programming.

Spring 2025 (Mar-May): Maintained full capacity, completed multiple cases, conducted end-of-life documentation workshop (5 participants). US noted varying Friend comfort levels with accepting help, suggesting need for enhanced committee coordination of care.

Key Successes and Challenges

Successes:

- Strong community engagement with positive reception across all meetings
- Effective referral system generating consistent case flow
- Specialized expertise now available for complex social service navigation
- Pastoral care committees can focus on spiritual care rather than social service coordination

Areas for Enhancement:

- Strengthen in-person community connections in workshops
- Clarify collaboration with existing ARCH program
- Deepen individual monthly meeting relationships
- Establish clearer case tracking and follow-up procedures
- Develop strategies to support Friends in different stages of accepting help

Recommendations for Year Two

The Community Wellness Working Group reached consensus that this partnership shows significant promise and recommends contract renewal with these improvements:

1. **Enhanced Workshop Model:** Restructure programming to increase in-person participation and community building
2. **Deeper Meeting Integration:** Assign US liaisons to specific monthly meetings for stronger ongoing relationships
3. **Care Coordination Support:** Develop protocols to help committees support Friends who struggle with accepting assistance
4. **Program Alignment:** Clarify collaboration opportunities with ARCH and other existing programs

Financial Investment

The cost of the program pilot year was \$42,000. We spent \$10K in 2024 and expect to spend about \$42K in 2025. We expect we will budget about \$46K in 2026. The program represents effective stewardship of community resources, providing professional social work expertise that would otherwise require significant committee volunteer hours or go unaddressed.

Community Wellness Working Group Members

The Community Wellness Working Group includes representatives from monthly meeting Pastoral Care and Ministry & Counsel Committees, Members of the Community Wellness Working Group along with NYQM staff. The group met biweekly to support the pilot program.

Name	Meeting/Affiliation
Charlene Ray	Concern for Quaker Living/Morningside
Leslie McCarthy	Brooklyn - Pastoral Care
Anne Pomeroy	9am Brooklyn Meeting
Bing Ji	University Settlement
Ed Edler	Morningside M&C
Kevin Lovelady	NYYM - ARCH (Aging Resources Consultatio Help)

Beverly Archibald	NYQM M&C/Manhattan
Jennifer Vallone	University Settlement
Joan Malin	Concern for Quaker Living
William Hutson	NYQM M&C/Flushing
Margery Cornwell	NYQM Relief Committee / 15th Street
Ted Bongiovanni	NYQM/Brooklyn Meeting
nova sturup	NYQM/Brooklyn Meeting
Jess Hobbs Pifer	NYQM