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## Orchard Park Bee Lifestyles

Thursday, August 31, 2023

ithout fairness in health care, there is a risk of groups of people being left sick and unattended. The Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs program has been charged with bridging disparity gaps in health care. It was reintroduced into the Erie County Office of Health Equity this past July after a decade-long hiatus.

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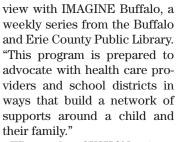
It is a federal program that is based on the Maternal and Child Health bureau, and every county in New York State has a CYSHCN program. Evanna Ramos, program coordinator for the Office of Health Equity, explained this free resource is meant to improve the coordination of care for families with children, from birth to 21 years old. "The program helps families that have children who have any

birth to 21 years old. "The "There is no 'one-size-fits-all' program helps families that solution for the complex issues have children who have any that some children in Erie medical, behavior-County face," said al, emotional or Commissioner healthcare Health needs, and Dr. Gale making Burstein sure that in an infamiterlies are pretty much linked to community organizations and services that

ithout fairness in can help them," she said.

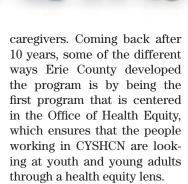
According to the health department website, CYSHCN will connect families with community resources, including: Medical referrals, providers and specialists; medical supplies and equipment; medical appointment scheduling and transportation; mental and behavioral health resources; and health insurance.

They also provide education resources such as GED, tutoring, college planning, employment resources, vocational counseling, working papers, career planning and interview skills, translation and interpretation services, transition to adult services (medical, education, housing, medical providers), and play/support groups.



What makes CYSHCN unique, Ramos explained, is that it does not require a diagnosis like other programs. Any change in a child's physical or social development could raise questions and concerns for parents

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Equify bridges Connection to health

"So not just looking at the health care and how they are currently, but how did we get there; looking at where they live, where they go to school, looking at their family composition. Looking at mom and dad or whoever their caregivers are," Ramos said. "Looking at those adverse childhood experiences — how can we help these families have great health outcomes, but also help them with some of the social determinants of health.

"The systems that we live in, for everyday people, can be a little overwhelming. And so that's where we come in; to be able to be that team, that bridge that helps," Ramos said. "If you

are navigating a health care insurance website, for example, that can be frustrating to someone who does not understand how to print out a PDF of what providers accept their insurance. That can sometimes lead to frustration. Or if someone feels they're stuck with a certain provider or doctor that they maybe don't have a good relationship with, and that's where we can come in and help."

Five months in, Ramos explained that a lot of what CYSHCN is focused on is centralized in the City of Buffalo, as they are in talks with different organizations. Ramos added the focus for next year is to focus on southtowns and rural areas to work with area organizations that can also provide CYSHCN services, "to make sure that families are feeling supported and have the support that they need," she said.

To apply or learn more, visit erie.gov/cyshcn, call 716-858-1920 or email healthequity@erie.gov.

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