

# New York State Academy of Family Physicians

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July 19, 2022

James Alexander, MD, MBA  
Medical Director, Onondaga County Health Department  
421 Montgomery St.  
Syracuse, NY 13202

Dear Dr. Alexander,

Thank you for raising awareness of mental health care for BIPOC communities in your letter recognizing National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. In your letter, you mention that minority communities are “More likely to use emergency rooms or primary care (rather than mental health specialists)”.

Although we understand that the spirit of your statement was to encourage better access to mental health services for minority communities, the NYSAFP wants to point out that turning to one’s family doctor is always a good place to start when in need of care for any reason, including mental health concerns. Family Physicians can then help patients access specialty care when needed, though we all know how difficult it can be to access mental health specialty care, particularly for underserved populations.

Additionally, Family Physicians regularly help patients coordinate all the care they need. This is especially important for patients with multiple chronic conditions who may receive care from several sub-specialists.

Once again, thank you for addressing equitable mental health care for underserved populations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Symons', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Andrew Symons MD, FAAFP  
President, NYSAFP