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Monroe County Department of Human Services LEAD Academy Receives NSDTA Quality Training Program Award

Leadership development program recognized for strengthening supervisors, fostering collaboration, and building a sustainable culture of learning

Salt Lake City, UT — October 6, 2026: The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) is pleased to recognize the **Monroe County Department of Human Services (DHS) LEAD Academy** as the recipient of the **National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) Quality Training Program Award**.

The Quality Training Program Award was presented during the [NSDTA Education Conference 2026](#), taking place October 4–7 in Salt Lake City, UT. The award recognizes innovative approaches to training, organizational development, or workforce development that improve performance, advance the profession, and strengthen the quality of services provided by public human services agencies.

Beginning in 2025, Monroe County DHS in New York partnered with APHSA to transform its vision for leadership development into the LEAD Academy, a comprehensive training program designed to strengthen supervisory skills and support leadership growth across the organization.

With more than 800 staff across its Financial Assistance and Child and Family Services Divisions, Monroe County DHS recognized the importance of intentionally investing in the people responsible for leading its teams. A project management team worked collaboratively with APHSA and incorporated staff feedback to identify the core competencies supervisors need to lead effectively. Those competencies became the foundation for a curriculum consisting of eight full-day, in-person modules and a final transfer-of-learning project that allows participants to apply the concepts and skills developed throughout the Academy.

The LEAD Academy was piloted in fall 2025 with 25 supervisors who participated in the program while also preparing to become future trainers. Their feedback was used to refine the curriculum before the Academy officially launched in January 2026 with two simultaneous cohorts. Two additional cohorts began in spring 2026, bringing participation to more than 100 supervisory staff and establishing a continuous quality improvement cycle designed to keep the Academy relevant and responsive to current practice.

The Academy's impact has extended beyond individual participants. Its cross-team approach has created new communities of support, increased understanding of roles and resources across the

agency, and helped break down organizational silos. Collaboration fostered through the program has also created pathways for new ideas and initiatives, strengthening an organizational culture that ultimately shapes how staff work with and serve the community.

The Academy's train-the-trainer model further extends that impact. Participants interested in becoming future trainers gain additional opportunities for professional growth and skill building while Monroe County develops internal capacity to sustain the program. Combined with continued executive leadership support, the approach creates new pathways for growth while contributing to longer-term succession planning.

"The LEAD Academy demonstrates what can happen when an organization makes a sustained investment in its people," said Tina Wright-Ervin, Senior Organizational Effectiveness Consultant at APHSA. "By combining practical leadership development with cross-team collaboration, continuous improvement, and opportunities for participants to become future trainers, Monroe County has created a model that strengthens individual leaders while building capacity across the organization."

Through the LEAD Academy, Monroe County DHS has created more than a leadership training curriculum. It has built a sustainable approach to developing leaders, strengthening collaboration, and creating opportunities for continued growth in support of a stronger organization and better service to the community.

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About APHSA: The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) supports leaders from state, county, and city human services agencies to advance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities nationwide. As a bipartisan membership association, APHSA works with its members to generate pragmatic solutions grounded in lived experience. For more information, visit aphsa.org.

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