

H+H opens its first clinic in a homeless shelter

NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst has opened an extension clinic in a homeless shelter.

The clinic, at the 200-bed Meyers Shelter on Wards Island, marks the first such effort by the public health system to bring medical services directly to a homeless shelter. The move is in keeping with its mission to serve the city's most vulnerable patients regardless of their ability to pay, a spokesman for the health system said Wednesday.

The new clinic, which opened in October, is providing primary care, mental health and integrated services to male shelter residents with mental health conditions, according to a certificate-of-need filing with the state Health Department. The shelter's population is particularly vulnerable, and the clinic fills a gap in health care by providing mental health and substance use care in one setting, the spokesman said.

Many of the residents of the shelter stay for months. Developing a continuing care relationship with them can have a lasting impact and aid in their transition to a more permanent living situation, he said.

H+H is running the clinic as a subcontractor to the shelter's operator, HELP USA, a Manhattan-based nonprofit. HELP USA's projected construction costs for the clinic are about \$5.8 million, according to the CON. The clinic is housed in a six-room suite at the shelter and consists of two primary care medical rooms, two behavioral health rooms, one room that can be used as needed and a registration area.

Shelter-based medical clinics can help reduce emergency room visits and result in system savings, said Jody Rudin, chief operating officer of the Manhattan-based nonprofit Project Renewal, which submitted a certificate-of-need application in August to open its fourth clinic in a homeless shelter in the Bronx. Its other three homeless shelter clinics are in Manhattan, including one that houses about 130 women who suffer from either addiction or mental illness or both.

"We absolutely plan to do more because we think it's the gold standard," said Project Renewal CEO Eric Rosenbaum, "and I expect to see more of it."