

OBSERVER-DISPATCH

New methadone clinic opens in Utica

By Amy Neff Roth

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A second outpatient methadone clinic for the treatment of opioid use disorder has opened in Utica.

Beacon Center, which has operated a methadone clinic in Rome since 2016, opened a new clinic on Aug. 31 at 1508 Genesee St. and already has about 25 patients admitted to the program, said Admir Spahic, director of program operations.

The program has the capacity for 150 patients, she said.

The nonprofit Helio Health has operated a methadone clinic on the grounds of the McPike Addiction Treatment Center in West Utica since 2018.

But the city has enough need to justify the second clinic, Spahic said.

“We opened this clinic for a couple of of reasons,” she said in an email. “First and foremost was to provide access to opioid use treatment in Utica and surrounding areas. Our county still has a high prevalence of overdoses.”

Beacon Center had first tried to open a methadone clinic in South Utica in 2018, but that plan was derailed after neighbors objected and the property owner changed his mind about renting the property to Beacon Center. The center’s plans for the new clinic were delayed by the onset of the pandemic, Spahic said.

The other reason for the second clinic, Spahic said, is because a “high number” of Utica residents have been traveling to Rome for treatment.

“We felt that it would be best,” she said, “to offer treatment to patients closer to their home and decrease any barriers that patients may have.”

Methadone is an opioid painkiller that can also be used as medication-assisted treatment to help wean people off opioids. The medication buprenorphine (frequently combined with the drug naloxone under the brand name Suboxone) is also used for this purpose. Methadone treatment involves more controls and restrictions, but some patients do better on it.

Before Beacon Center opened its methadone clinic in Rome, some area patients were traveling to Syracuse and other cities for treatment.

When the Rome clinic opened, demand was high because it was the first such clinic in the county, Spahic said. But the clinic still has a waiting list, she said.

“Part of our opening plan for Utica was to transfer patients who reside in Utica or closer to Utica,” Spahic said via email. “This will allow treatment for patients who are on the waiting list for Rome. The Utica area and Oneida County still have an alarming number of overdoses and untreated opioid use disorders.

“I hope that this clinic can reach those patients so they can have a chance for recovery.”

For more information, call 315-367-1285.