

\$85M Center for Young Adults with Complex Needs Enshrined in State Budget

Elizabeth Seton Children's, a Westchester nonprofit organization providing long-term care for children with medical complexity, has received the state's blessing to build a center for young adults who age out of its pediatric center.

The state budget, which passed in April, included provisions to allocate an undetermined amount of funds to establish the young adult center and defined the population eligible for such care as between 18 and 35 years old. It also permitted existing youths who had lived in the inpatient pediatric facility for at least 30 consecutive days to continue receiving services, even if they age out of the group.

"Prior to this legislation, for children with medically complex needs, once they turn past 21, they cannot continue to receive care at our pediatric centers and will have to go to geriatric nursing homes," said Pat Tursi, CEO of Elizabeth Seton Children's.

The center receives Medicaid reimbursement for providing pediatric care, but the state had defined the group as up to age 21.

"The system had never expected these kids to live past 21 years old, but with medical advances, they are," Tursi said.

There isn't a facility in the state that can accept young adults with complex medical needs, and when moved into a geriatric nursing home without the right equipment to support them, the mortality rate can be high, she added.

The young adult center is estimated to cost \$85 million. The 4 story, 90,000-square-foot facility will contain 72 beds. There will be about 265 full-time employees, of which 162 will be nursing staff. The certificate-of-need application should be submitted next month, Tursi said.

Although the state budget enshrines funding for the project, no definite amount has been set. The typical understanding of state funding for such projects requires the organization to raise at least 25% of the equity and other working capital before the state steps in, Tursi said. That would translate into a need to raise about \$30 million, she noted. However, there is precedence of nonprofits raising 15% of the equity for their construction projects before the state filled in the rest, Tursi said. That would spell about \$12 million in needed fundraising, she said, adding that the organization has raised \$4 million so far.

"We're hopeful that the state will recognize the specialty nature of our organization, that we don't have an endowment, and nearly all of our money goes into patient care," she said.

Elizabeth Seton was founded in Manhattan in 1988 before moving to Yonkers in 2012. It serves more than 3,000 children with complex medical needs annually and has a 169-bed inpatient center as well as a rehab facility.