

St. John's Episcopal Opens Expanded Behavioral Health ED Wing

St. John's Episcopal Hospital has opened a revamped behavioral health wing in its emergency department to expand its capacity to care for patients experiencing mental health crises, it announced Friday.

The 2,300-square-foot space has the capacity for 11 patients, up from seven in the Far Rockaway hospital's old behavioral health wing. It also include rooms for evaluations, private interviews and exams as well as a "quiet room," where patients can self-manage symptoms.

Funding came from a \$10.2 million state Department of Health grant that St. John's received in 2016 to expand its emergency department, under the agency's capital restructuring financing program. Work on the behavioral health wing started in 2017 and cost \$670,500, hospital spokesman Tom Melillo said.

The wing, which opened to patients Thursday, will be staffed by at least five providers at all times, including a psychiatrist and a behavioral health technician trained in de-escalation strategies.

Terri Coyle, a licensed clinical social worker who serves as St. John's vice president of behavioral health, said the larger facility will be more comfortable and offer patients space to move around. Coyle said both are key to helping patients, whether it is someone with schizophrenia dealing with a psychotic episode or someone with depression experiencing suicidal thoughts, at the height of a mental health crisis.

Once patients are stabilized, a behavioral health navigator on staff will connect them with outpatient services at one of St. John's clinics or another provider.

St. John's Episcopal Hospital has 257 beds and serves an estimated 130,000 residents on the Rockaway peninsula, plus patients from southern Queens and southwestern Nassau County.