



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

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CITY ANNOUNCES OPENING OF THE EAST HARLEM SUPPORT AND CONNECTION CENTER, WITH BRONX CENTER TO OPEN LATER THIS WINTER

First center of its kind in New York City will provide police officers with an alternative to avoidable emergency room visits or criminal justice interventions for people with mental health or substance use needs

First Support and Connection Center will begin serving New Yorkers next week

February 19, 2020 — The Health Department, Police Department, and Mayor’s Office of ThriveNYC today announced the opening of the East Harlem Support and Connection Center, the first of its kind in New York City. Previously called a diversion center, the facility will offer short-term, stabilizing services for people with mental health and substance use needs who come into contact with the police, giving officers an alternative to avoidable emergency room visits or criminal justice interventions. The East Harlem Support and Connection Center, located at 179 East 116th Street and operated by Project Renewal, will begin serving New Yorkers on Wednesday, February 26th. A second center in the Bronx, located at 3050 White Plains Road and operated by Samaritan Daytop Village, will open later this winter. The Support and Connection Centers will only serve people within the local precinct: the 25th precinct in East Harlem and the 47th precinct in the Bronx. Each center will serve up to 25 people at a time and will operate 24/7. Together, the two centers are projected to serve about 2,400 people annually and will cost about \$10 million annually over 10 years.

“Support and Connection Centers create a stronger system of care for New Yorkers with behavioral health issues who might otherwise have cycled through police custody or emergency departments,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot**. “These health interventions have the potential to be transformative for the people they will serve.”

“These Centers will serve as another important intervention New York City provides to those in need,” said **NYPD Assistant Chief Terri Tobin**. “This is an important evolution in collaboration between police, the healthcare community, and local neighborhoods.”

“These Centers provide a real pathway to ongoing treatment for people in need. They present a way for police officers to address problems without enforcement, putting another tool in their toolbox,” said **Susan Herman, Director of the Mayor’s Office of ThriveNYC**.

The Support and Connection Center program model was developed by the Health Department in consultation with partner agencies and with feedback from members of the community and

experts. Police will transport people to the center who have non-emergency mental health, substance use, and health needs. The program is voluntary. The Center will offer mental health and substance use services, including screening and assessments; counseling services; short-term case management; links to ongoing health and social care; medically supervised substance use withdrawal services; and access to naloxone. In addition, people can access other services such as food, showers, laundry, overnight shelter, and support from peers.

The length of stay at the Center will vary from hours to days depending on the person's needs, with a maximum stay of 10 days. Once the person is stabilized, Center staff will work with the person to develop a discharge plan that aims to connect or reconnect them to health care, social services, and other supports.

Since the leases for the Centers were signed late last year, both sites have undergone renovations, which included adding showers and a laundry facility. Officers at the local precincts – the 25th precinct in East Harlem and the 47th precinct in the Bronx – have undergone Crisis Intervention Training, which enables them to better recognize and manage the behaviors and symptoms related to a mental illness and substance use crisis. Project Renewal and Samaritan Daytop Village have hired staff, established a local community advisory board, and conducted community briefings.

The total investment for both Centers is about \$100 million over 10 years. The City, with support from ThriveNYC, will provide about \$8 million per year, and the State will provide about \$2 million per year.

Drop-off diversion centers with similar models have proven to be successful in Los Angeles; San Antonio; Phoenix; Kansas City, Missouri and Dutchess County, New York.

New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez said, “Facilities like this are an important way to help connect people to the mental health and substance use disorder care that they need, while at the same time avoiding involvement with the criminal justice system, or unnecessary emergency room visits. Those admitted to this facility will be able to access important resources related to addiction treatment and recovery and will also be connected to ongoing supports and services. OASAS is happy to provide funding for this project, and we look forward to the benefits that this will bring to the community.”

“Project Renewal is proud to be the City's partner in this innovative program that fills a key gap in the system of care and response to our neighbors in need. Our team of trained peers, nurses, psychiatrists, and social workers at the Support and Connection Center is committed to continuing Project Renewal's 54-year track record of helping New Yorkers overcome homelessness, mental health challenges, and substance use disorders. We commend Mayor Bill de Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray, and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for this visionary investment, we thank Council Member Diana Ayala for her support, and we look forward to continue working with the New York City Police Department and our community partners in East Harlem,” said **Eric Rosenbaum, President & CEO, Project Renewal**.

“The East Harlem Support and Connection Center will help people with behavioral health challenges access vital resources, such as emergency shelter, primary healthcare, mental health and substance use treatment, counseling, and care management,” said **Council Member Diana Ayala**. “As the Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, I am thrilled to welcome this transformative model to the neighborhood so that individuals can get the services they need to gain stability and successfully reenter their community.”

“I commend the NYC Health Department, NYPD, and ThriveNYC for opening the vital new Support Connection Centers in East Harlem and the Bronx,” said **Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda**. “We must stop criminalizing mental health, and these centers will provide life-saving resources to people struggling with mental health and substance use, preventing destructive cycles through the justice system. Further, alternative approaches actively address underlying needs and build a sustainable pathway to health and care. Thank you to Project Renewal and Samaritan Daytop Village for your work in helping transform lives with critical support programs like these.”

“CASES commends the City for opening its first Support and Connection Center in East Harlem,” said **Ann-Marie Louison, CASES’ Chief Strategic Initiatives Officer**. “The Center will provide a vital new 24/7 resource the NYPD can use to link people with behavioral health needs to immediate mental health, primary care, and substance use treatment. CASES is thrilled that the NYPD will now have the option to take these individuals to a safe setting in the community where they can get the help they need, including connections to longer term treatment, housing, and support services.”

About Project Renewal

[Project Renewal](#) is a New York City-based nonprofit organization that works to end the cycle of homelessness by empowering adults and children to renew their lives with health, homes and jobs. Project Renewal’s innovative programs are designed to end the revolving door of emergency rooms, jails, shelters and the streets. For more than 50 years, Project Renewal’s pioneering approach has created uniquely integrated and comprehensive programs that are replicated around the nation, helping even beyond the 16,000 homeless New Yorkers Project Renewal serves every year.

About Samaritan Daytop Village

What began as one community’s compassionate effort to reach struggling youth, [Samaritan Daytop Village](#) has evolved into a comprehensive human services agency serving 33,000 people annually with more than 50 locations across New York City and beyond. Samaritan Daytop Village offers a rich array of programs including treatment for substance use disorder, innovative services for veterans, and programs for homeless individuals, women and children, seniors and families.

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