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## **Covenant House seeks to expand mental health services**

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Covenant House New York, which provides shelter and support to 250 young people in the city each day, is seeking to expand its mental health services.

The nonprofit operates a homeless shelter and federally qualified health center at the corner of West 41st Street and 10th Avenue.

During the past several years, it has grown its mental health services team to about a dozen social workers and clinicians in Manhattan and the Bronx. It would like to build out the team further, including at its Midtown health center.

Covenant House has filed a certificate-of-need application with the state to certify mental health services as a medical specialty there.

"The need for readily accessible forms of health care for the homeless has been greatly exacerbated by the unprecedented increase in the number of homeless adults and children in New York City over the past several years," Covenant House wrote in its filing.

The nonprofit cited an estimate by the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services that, on any given night, there are some 3,800 homeless teenagers in the city.

Many of those young people identify as LGBTQ. And homelessness in youth has been correlated with drug use, previous incarceration, risky sexual practices, prostitution or victimization, and mental illness.

"Provision of mental health services is essential," Covenant House wrote, "for meeting the complex and multifaceted needs of homeless youth."

Dr. Andrew Pearson, a child psychiatrist and director of Covenant House's mental health department, echoed that sentiment.

Covenant House encounters young people who are psychotic, schizophrenic or bipolar, Pearson said. It also sees many young people who have been traumatized and are experiencing suicidal thoughts.

A recent survey, Pearson said, found that homeless teenagers were twice as likely to commit suicide as young people who were housed. And suicide attempts among homeless teenagers were more likely to result in death.

"We can use as much mental health support as possible," Pearson said.

Ultimately, Covenant House would like to build out its mental health staff should the appropriate funding be available.

"One of the things that we're really trying to prevent for these young people is becoming homeless" in the long term, said Samantha Alvarez Benowitz, a licensed clinical social worker and clinical administrator at Covenant House.

It's important to help the teens not only find housing but also address any serious mental health issues, Benowitz said. —Jennifer Henderson

## H+H shifting substance-use care to outpatient model

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NYC Health + Hospitals said it is closing its inpatient detox units at seven hospitals across the city and devoting more resources to outpatient substance-use services as part of a change in the way it treats addiction.

Patients with substance-use disorders often enter the hospital through the system's emergency department. Instead of admitting patients to a dedicated detox unit, H+H has begun treating patients within a hospital's department of medicine. Bellevue and other hospitals have created addiction consult teams that can recommend a patient undergo medical stabilization while detoxing.

Dr. Charles Barron, the system's deputy chief medical officer for behavioral health, said the change was driven by evidence showing patients can be more effectively treated through ongoing treatment outside of hospitals.

"This is a better method of treatment for our patients and gives wider access for patients to come into treatment," Barron said. "It gives our staff a better way of using their expertise and skills to provide this kind of service."

*Crain's* interviewed Barron following [a report published](#) in The City that said H+H would close all its inpatient detox units. Detox units are scheduled to close at seven hospitals, affecting 131 licensed beds. H+H's Harlem and Bellevue campuses have already made the transition with unit closures planned at the Coney Island, Jacobi, Kings County, Metropolitan and Woodhull campuses as well.

Barron said it could convert some of those beds to medical or drug rehabilitation beds pending approval from the state Office of Addiction Services and Supports.

More than 60% of the system's detox beds were routinely empty, the health system said. An H+H spokesman said that under the traditional inpatient detox model, H+H could admit only patients who had used drugs or consumed alcohol within the previous 48 hours.

Barron said the system will not lay off staff as part of the transition. H+H is working to get effective treatment options, he said, such as the use of buprenorphine in connection with addiction counseling embedded into primary care offices, not just behavioral health sites.

John Coppola, executive director of the state Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, said the health system needs to be thoughtful about ensuring there are enough hospital and community resources to support patients needing detox services.

"When we shut down beds in hospitals, where are those places going to be where [patients] can get medical attention?" Coppola said. "It's not as simple as referring them to outpatient programs." —Jonathan LaMantia

## City reaches global HIV/AIDS goals

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The mayor's office said Monday that the city has reached the 90-90-90 goal of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS.

As of last year, 93% of New Yorkers with HIV have been diagnosed, 90% of the people diagnosed with HIV are on treatment, and 92% of people on treatment are virally suppressed, the office said.

New York is the first fast-track city in the country to reach the goal, the mayor's office said.

The fast-track initiative is a partnership of more than 300 municipalities around the world working to achieve the 90-90-90 goal.

In a 2014 report, UNAIDS [outlined the importance](#) of achieving the 90% targets by 2020, saying it would "enable the world to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030"—which would in turn "generate profound health and economic benefits."

"The news of New York becoming the first large city to achieve the UNAIDS 90-90-90 goal—two years ahead of schedule—is reason to celebrate," Amida Care CEO Doug Wirth said in a statement provided to *Crain's*. "New York is a leader in the fight to end the HIV epidemic, and we could well be the first state to end the epidemic in 2020. But we know that the work to get us there is far from over."

That work includes normalizing conversations about sexual health for all New Yorkers, particularly in health care settings, Wirth said. It also includes expanding access to pre-exposure prophylaxis, especially in LGBTQ communities and communities of color, and addressing other needs including access to stable housing and food.

The announcement of the city reaching the goal closely follows the release of the 2018 HIV surveillance report by the city Health Department. According to that report, the number of people newly diagnosed with HIV in the city last year fell below 2,000 for the first time since annual HIV reporting began in 2001. —J.H.

## Northwell improves financial metrics through Q3

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Northwell Health, the state's largest health system, reported operating income of \$130.8 million through the first nine months of the year, an improvement of almost 35% compared with the same period in 2018.

The 19-hospital health system reported a narrow 1.4% operating margin, but its profitability also improved compared with the same period last year, when its margin was 1.1%.

Northwell's net income for the year's first three quarters was \$456.6 million—more than three times higher than it was in the same period last year. That was due to higher investment income, according to [unaudited financial statements](#).

Long Island Jewish and North Shore continue to be the most profitable campuses for Northwell, earning \$94.8 million and \$63.2 million through September, respectively.

Operating revenue, excluding that from the system's discontinued insurance plans, increased 9.3% to nearly \$9.2 billion through the end of September. The system decided in 2017 to exit the insurance business.

Northwell attributed the \$780 million in revenue growth to higher volume, improved rates and better revenue collection. It wrote that the increase in patient volume was "primarily associated

with inpatient discharges and the ambulatory and physician network expansion, including investments in the Northwell Health Cancer Institute and clinical joint ventures."

Operating expenses increased 8.9% due to higher patient volume and higher employee wages as well as investment in facilities and population health management programs. —J.L.

## AT A GLANCE

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**WHO'S NEWS:** Dr. F. Charles Brunicardi will join SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University in late January as its next senior vice president and dean of the College of Medicine at SUNY Downstate. Brunicardi has worked at the University of Toledo since 2016 and was most recently a professor and chair of the department of surgery at its College of Medicine and Life Sciences. In 2018, he became the medical director of the Ebeid Social Determinants of Health Institute at ProMedica health system. Brunicardi has a connection to SUNY Downstate, where he once served as chief resident in general surgery.

**TREATMENT FOR TRAUMA:** Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Monday signed legislation to help connect veterans who have experienced sexual trauma while on active duty or during military training with information and resources for treatment and counseling. The new law requires the Division of Veterans' Services to maintain a Military Sexual Trauma Portal on its website to assist in providing those connections.

**TECH FUNDRAISING:** New York mental health startup Quartet Health said it raised an additional \$7.5 million, bringing its previously announced Series D round to \$67.5 million. Echo Health Ventures, a joint venture between Cambia Health Solutions and the venture arm of Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, and Deerfield Capital contributed to the additional funding, [Business Insider reported](#). Quartet helps connect patients to behavioral health services. Cambia will introduce the product to its members in Washington state.

**INSURANCE DEAL:** CVS Health has agreed to buy the Medicaid and Medicare Advantage lines of business from Centene's Illinois insurer, IlliniCare, [Forbes reported](#).

**PREVALENCE OF PREDIABETES:** Nearly one in five adolescents aged 12 to 18 , and one in four young adults aged 19 to 34, are living with prediabetes, according to a [new study](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published Monday in *JAMA Pediatrics*. The condition, in which blood sugar levels are higher than normal, increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes as well as chronic kidney disease, heart disease and stroke, the CDC said.