



# CN Guidance to offer rapid treatment for people with mental health, substance disorders



Jeffrey Friedman, chief executive of CN Guidance & Counseling Services, at the nonprofit's headquarters in Hicksville on Thursday. Renovations are to start for a new center to help people in crisis. Credit: Debbie Egan-Chin

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"Hope Starts Here" is the motto of CN Guidance & Counseling Services' new community crisis center, set to open next spring, to provide rapid assessment,

stabilization, treatment and connection to any additional services someone with a mental health or substance use disorder may be experiencing.

During a ceremony Thursday marking the imminent start of renovations to create space for the new center at CN Guidance's headquarters in Hicksville, officials said they aim to eliminate the long waits and "trauma" some people in crisis may face when trying to get into treatment.

"Navigating our [behavioral health] system is hard, especially when you are in crisis," said Jeffrey Friedman, chief executive of the nonprofit CN Guidance, explaining the need for what is categorized by the state as a "crisis stabilization center."

New York State has prioritized increasing mental health services, establishing a \$1 billion, multiyear plan in the 2023-2024 fiscal budget, with an additional \$118 million in new money included in the 2024-2025 budget, to boost mental health services.

"We'll be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Right now if you're in crisis, you have nowhere to go," Friedman said in an interview. "Sometimes you can wait days, weeks, months to get into treatment. Here you can bring your loved one in. You can come with your family and get treatment immediately, on demand," he said. The center will serve people from both Nassau and Suffolk counties.

The center's development was the result of three years of research, said Jaclyn McCarthy, CN Guidance's vice president of program excellence, in collaboration with the state Office of Mental Health, and the state Office of Addictive Services and Supports, both of which have licensed the center, and other stakeholders, she said.

Friedman said that while there are other community-based programs helping those with mental health and/or substance abuse needs, CN Guidance's licenses for the center from the two state agencies will enable it to offer a higher level of care. Brian Peterson, Long Island field office director of the state Office of Mental Health, said in an interview at Thursday's ceremony that a similar center is "in process" in Suffolk County by the Family Service League.

"The people we serve have spoken out, raising two critical concerns," Friedman said to a large audience of elected officials, mental health and

substance use disorder specialists, law enforcement officials among them. He said clients raised concerns about the "incredibly daunting challenge" of getting treatment services. "And second, far too many individuals find themselves in the emergency room only to be told that the care they seek is not available," he said.

CN Guidance's new center, which Friedman said they hope to complete by the Spring of 2025 or early summer, seeks to offer a welcoming environment where children and adults — the center will take children starting from age 5 — will be assessed to determine their needs and to provide treatment.

The center is to encompass 10,000 square feet of a back portion of the CN Guidance headquarters in Hicksville that is to be renovated, Friedman said in an interview.

Sharayah Sanon, the center's program director, said during the ceremony that there will be two wings of the center, one for children, "which will have two family rooms," she said, the other for adults, which she said "will have six hope rooms," where they will be assessed and treated.

"The community crisis center is an urgent response for clients that are experiencing an acute mental health or substance abuse crisis," Sanon said in her presentation. "The purpose of this program is to provide rapid access to . . . a number of services, assisting with hospital diversion and also to prevent the need for a higher level of care," she said.

"When someone arrives at the crisis center, they will be greeted by peers," Sanon said, calling them a crucial component of the crisis center. Then patients will be screened by nurses "to ensure they are appropriate for the program and not in need of a higher level of care," she added.

A CN Guidance spokesman said the agency was awarded \$8.6 million in state aid and startup funding for the project, and another \$1 million in capital funding to develop the center. And during the program, Anissa Moore, Nassau's deputy county executive for health and human services, said the county has "committed approximately \$12 million through our opioid funding to make sure this vision becomes a reality."



*Courtesy of CN Guidance*

## **In Hicksville, a groundbreaking for a community crisis center**

**Adina Genn** // November 15, 2024 //

In Hicksville, CN Guidance held a groundbreaking for the Community Crisis Center. The new intensive stabilization center will be designed to alleviate mental health and substance use crises on Long Island, by providing a 24/7/365 walk-in care alternative to emergency departments and jail.

The center, slated to open in spring or early summer of 2025, aims to provide the help people get the help they need to get stabilize, and then get directly connected to more comprehensive services.

More than 100 public officials and local leaders, including from the mental health and business community, attended to learn about the need for the center and the services it provides.

“Our new Community Crisis Center will address a critical need for crisis support on Long Island by enhancing access to care and helping families avoid unnecessary ER visits,” Jeffrey Friedman, CN Guidance CEO, said in a news release about the new center.

“We are very grateful to the State of New York, as well as our local governments and regional partners, for their support in keeping the Community Crisis Center on track to open in 2025 and serve those in need,” he added.

The center will serve walk-ins, referrals and anyone voluntarily brought by family, friends, police or a mobile crisis unit. It will also serve both children and adults with a known or suspected mental health condition or substance use disorder in their families.





# Breaking ground on much-needed LI mental health facility

**P** By [Long Island Press](#) Posted on [November 11, 2024](#)



Rendering of Community Crisis Center. (Photo provided by JRDA Landscape Architecture)

By Drew Saunders

A lack of access to mental health facilities and professionals creates some of the biggest barriers for people to get help, especially when it isn't obvious where someone in the middle of a mental health episode or substance abuse problem is supposed to go. Central Nassau Guidance and Counseling Services is aiming to eliminate that problem with the construction of its new 24-hour mental health, urgent care facility, which will have its groundbreaking ceremony Nov. 14.

The groundbreaking will take place from 10 a.m. to noon. CN Guidance leadership and an unspecified number of local officials will attend the event, which is open to the public.

“The purpose of the community crisis center is for adults and children on Long Island who are experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder crisis to receive assistance. Staff will provide triage, assessment, evaluation, observation, treatment and discharge planning services in a home-like environment,” program director Sharayah Sanon told the Long Island Press.

The centrality of the 950 South Oyster Bay Road location is key to the project. The fact that it will be in a centralized place on the border between Plainview and Hicksville is meant to give Long Islanders who don’t know how to get help for themselves or a loved one a one-stop location without having to go to the city or be put on a long waiting list. The 6,000-square-foot facility will share its location with the existing CN Counseling’s Certified Community Behavioral Health Center.

“According to recent studies, a typical visit to a Long Island emergency room now takes just under four hours — 75 minutes longer than the national average — data that experts say show hospitals are struggling with patient volume, staff shortages, and outdated facilities,” Sanon said. “This facility, in partnership with police and local providers, will produce a needed 24-seven, 365 [days a year] walk-in care alternative to Emergency Departments and jail for people experiencing mental health and/or substance use crises.

There they will be able to get the help they need and stabilized before being directly connected to more long-term comprehensive services.”

The six Hope Rooms and two family rooms staffed with professionals in mental health and addiction treatment that the facility will provide is sorely needed. In 2022, 1,765 New Yorkers died by suicide, the latest year that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data are available. That is an increase from the 1,660 who died in 2021, and the 1,642 deaths reported in 2020.

“Mental health is a crisis that plagues Long Island just like any other demographic area in the country. Residents of Long Island have noted

that mental health concerns are at the top of their list of concerns,” Sanon explained. “Substance use rates have skyrocketed in the past few years following COVID and a high anxiety environment in general.”

Stigma is another barrier to help. That is why CN employs peer advocates, who have gone through mental health problems or addiction themselves, and can provide a level of understanding that can ease the way of people seeking treatment through advocacy and advice through mutual experience and their professional certifications.

According to CN marketing director Andrew Weissberg, CN is working with Long-Island-based Fusion Architecture on the project. They plan to wrap up construction and open doors to patients in 2025.

Attempts to interview the Nassau County Mental Health Department were not successful.