



NEWS / HEALTH

Only in Newsday

Community Crisis Center, a 'safe place' to stabilize those with mental health issues, opens in Hicksville next month



CN Guidance & Counseling Service will open its new 24-hour Community Crisis Center in Hicksville on Dec. 6. Credit: Debbie Egan-Chin

By Tiffany Cusaac-Smith tiffany.cusaac-smith@newsday.com@T_Cusaac

November 21, 2025 5:00 am

On a recent Thursday, Dana Pope stood in awe of a room at the soon-to-be-opened Community Crisis Center in Hicksville.

The family room, which the staff calls the "in the clouds" space, features taupe walls to promote calmness, a colorful hot air balloon mural, a video game table to keep children experiencing mental crisis engaged, and a couch so their families can remain by their side. All of it felt like a

world apart from Pope's first emergency room hospitalization for suicidal ideation at 13, which she described as "the scariest experience of my life."

Hospital officials, she said, took her clothes, kicked her mother out and made her wait 48 hours before she could see visitors. She ended up doing schoolwork in the psychiatric ward because of her monthslong stay. Now, Pope, 52, believes the family room — and the crisis center — will serve as a barrier to such traumatic experiences, a means for people dealing with acute mental health issues to get care without going to the hospital.

"This is a safe place," said Pope, a peer specialist from East Rockaway, who has been diagnosed with several ailments that include schizoaffective disorder, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. She noted later: "There's no stigma. There's no shame."

WHAT NEWSDAY FOUND

- **On Dec. 6, CN Guidance & Counseling Services will open** the Community Crisis Center, which will provide round-the-clock urgent care for people wrestling with mental health or substance use issues.
- **The center, located at 950 S. Oyster Bay Rd., will stabilize patients** and guide them to mental health and other community-based care, officials at the nonprofit say.
- **To build the facility**, the nonprofit received about \$3.5 million from the state and Nassau County.



Dana Pope, a peer specialist, talks about her personal mental health journey, Thursday in Hicksville at the soon-to-be opening of CN Guidance's Community Crisis Center Credit: Debbie Egan-Chin

On Dec. 6, the nonprofit CN Guidance & Counseling Services will open the Community Crisis Center, which will provide round-the-clock urgent care for people wrestling with mental health or substance use issues. The center, located at 950 S. Oyster Bay Rd., will stabilize patients and guide them to mental health and other community-based care, officials at the nonprofit said.

All in all, the facility seeks to provide care so that people can avoid unnecessary hospital psychiatric ward visits. It also aims to help patients navigate an often-complicated behavioral health system and streamline access to care, moving past waitlists and other common barriers to get to a mental health provider.

"We want to see people not fall through the cracks," said Jeffrey Friedman, CEO of CN Guidance & Counseling Services. "It is so hard to navigate the mental health and substance use system here, and this will change things considerably."

To build the facility, the nonprofit received about \$3.5 million from the state and Nassau County. Operating funds include \$1.5 million from the state and \$3 million in yearly funding from the county's opioid settlement fund.

Nonprofit officials said the way the 6,600-square-foot facility was funded means they will be able to provide care, even if a patient does not have health insurance or cannot afford to pay. The nonprofit expects more than 20 people to walk through the doors each day.

To run the 24/7 operation, staff at the facility include several psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, care specialists and substance abuse professionals.

"Our neighbors and our family and our friends know that this is a resource where they can come to with no judgment and get the help and the treatment they need," Friedman said.

When patients and their loved ones walk into the facility, they are met by a receptionist and a peer specialist who has lived with mental health issues. The clients will be asked for brief intake information: name, date of birth and preferred language.

Patients can stay just under 24 hours. Family and loved ones are allowed to accompany the person into the facility, unlike in many emergency rooms. A nurse will then examine the severity of the patient's crisis. If the person is in severe drug withdrawal, they will be transferred to a hospital for more medical care.

The crisis stabilization facility also features a special area where law enforcement can discreetly bring in patients or come in for their own care. The center also features "hope" rooms, which

have chairs that slide out to beds, where patients can meet with a therapist, loved one or other staff.

Patients can go into a community room to watch TV, play games or get a snack. The facility also provides laundry services and clothing and has bathrooms with showers. It has a children's area, serving people age 5 to 21, with its own family rooms and bathroom.

All these features, Pope said, would have made a difference in her ability to access care. After her first time in the psychiatric ward, she was reluctant to talk about other mental health issues, fearing that it would lead her back to the hospital.

Pope said being in the hospital meant being placed with people who have different issues and who are not always agreeable.

"So my crisis could be, I need a med adjustment, but then you have a paranoid schizophrenic who's trying to fight everyone, or you have someone who is suffering because" they are dealing with domestic violence, she said.

At the crisis center, she said, "You have your own space, and you get to have your family, and you're not feeling abandoned like you do in the ER."

Since her last hospitalization 10 years ago, Pope has been doing better with treatment from CN Guidance & Counseling Services and mental health housing. She lives alone in a one-bedroom apartment with her emotional support animal, a cat named Muffin. She typically goes to counseling once a month.

Even with the greater stability she has found in life, she said, the opening of the Community Crisis Center remains a calming presence.

"To know that I can come someplace and not have the fear of just being thrown to the psych ward is very comforting," she said.



By [Tiffany Cusaac-Smith](#)
tiffany.cusaac-smith@newsday.com@T_Cusaac

Tiffany Cusaac-Smith is a general assignment reporter for Newsday.
She previously worked at USA TODAY and is an alum of Howard University.