



New 24/7 Long Island center opens for mental health and overdose crises

The center will provide crisis stabilization and support without requiring an emergency room visit.



by [Ambar Castillo](#) December 1, 2025



Credit: CN Guidance & Counseling Services

Getting any sort of help for mental health or substance use issues is always hard, and even more so in a crisis. Getting the right level of help can be harder still: A visit to a doctor or an emergency room may not be enough, but the prospect of inpatient hospitalization can scare many patients or families away. Threading the needle between those options is the goal of a new community health care center on Long Island that falls into a relatively new category of crisis stabilization programs.

On Dec. 6, CN Guidance & Counseling, a nonprofit, will open its new Community Crisis Center in Hicksville in Nassau County.

We spoke with **Jaclyn McCarthy**, vice president of program excellence at CN Guidance about the new program.



Credit: CN Guidance & Counseling Services

What the Community Crisis Center is and who it serves

McCarthy said the new center is open 24/7 for anyone age 5 and up dealing with a mental health or overdose crisis. You can walk in or call ahead — no referral or ER visit required.

Unlike hospitals that may accept involuntary psychiatric admissions, the crisis center only serves people choosing to seek help.

Limitations

There are certain levels of crisis the center is not equipped to handle. It's not an inpatient unit, so patients can stay for only up to 23 hours and 59 minutes.



Credit: CN Guidance & Counseling Services

Types of services

Services can include individual therapy, assessments and screening, substance use counseling, peer services, family support and care collaboration. Depending on their needs, patients may also meet with a doctor for an evaluation that may include diagnosis, continuing medication or starting a new medication.

Discharge planning

The center's multidisciplinary team will work with each person on planning for their discharge, coordinating follow-up appointments, medications and transportation if needed and connecting with previous care providers. The goal: to ensure a smooth transition back into their community and prevent unnecessary hospital visits.



Credit: CN Guidance & Counseling Services

Trust during community crises

Seeking help for mental health in health care institutions isn't always intuitive, especially for groups for whom asking for help or struggling with mental health crises carries stigma — and who often regard medical institutions with mistrust.

In the case of CN Guidance, more than 50 years of providing mental health and substance use services on Long Island has helped build trust, McCarthy said. When the nonprofit first received the grant for the 24/7 initiative, it met with over 75 different groups in the community, ranging from previous patients to religious and cultural associations, other nonprofits and local hospitals, to ask about their vision for the center. But the most important informants were patients who had been through the kinds of crises the center is designed to treat.



Credit: CN Guidance & Counseling Services

Learning by listening

One example of the benefit of that feedback can be heard – or not heard – as soon as you walk in the door. McCarthy said that a number of officials had told them, “You should put speakers in all of the rooms and you should have really soothing music play.” CN Guidance’s leadership was all on board.

That changed when they spoke about the idea with people who had been in mental health or substance use crises. “ ‘Absolutely not,’” McCarthy recalled them saying. “ ‘Do not do that, because if I’m sitting in a room, experiencing a crisis, and all of a sudden something comes from above, you’re going to freak me out.’”

So they scratched it off the list.

What they kept: building the center based off of trauma-informed architecture, which incorporates:

- soothing colors such as topaz, browns and blues
- natural light
- landscape-focused artwork
- wood in the flooring or door frames



Credit: CN Guidance & Counseling Services

Helping, not hospitalizing

Success for the center, McCarthy said, will come from seeing that they've helped people avoid unnecessary hospital visits, feel more confident in handling their crises and connect with other community resources once they leave.

To do that, the center will work closely with Nassau County's mobile crisis teams, 988 operators and the police. McCarthy says they've mapped out scenarios to make sure the center complements existing services. The goal is to work together "so that we can all have the same message and support the community in the best way possible," she said.

The Community Crisis Center opens on Dec. 6 next to CN Guidance & Counseling Services at 950 South Oyster Bay Rd. in Hicksville.

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