GMHC Opens Substance Use Clinic Next to Its Mental Health Clinic

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Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC) opened its Substance Use Clinic on September 27 in Midtown Manhattan. It’s available to adult New Yorkers regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, income level or HIV status.

“Access to affordable, quality substance use services is a crucial component of health care, especially in comprehensive HIV care,” said GMHC CEO Kelsey Louie in a press release. “What’s even more exceptional and significant about this clinic is the ability to directly work with those who have a dual diagnosis of substance use and mental health issues. The Substance Use Clinic and Carl Jacobs Mental Health Clinic—housed next to each other at GMHC—will address the emotional and psychological needs often experienced by people living with or at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. These clinics will help all clients served lead healthier lives.”

GMHC serves more than 12,000 people living with and affected by HIV, and the clinic will offer services that help people with HIV remain in care and virally suppressed, as well as help those at risk of contracting the virus to stay HIV negative.

Mental health and substance use issues are often entwined; about a third of people who experience mental health issues also have substance use problems. Similarly, according to the National Alliance of Mental Illness, about a third of all alcohol users and half of drug users report experiencing mental illness.

“Drug use and mental health issues represent two of the most significant challenges to ending the AIDS epidemic in New York City,” said Demetre C. Daskalakis, MD, deputy commissioner of disease control at the New York City Health Department, in the GMHC press release. “Addressing these important drivers in a culturally responsive way is critical to maintaining the health of people living with or at risk of HIV. With a history of exemplary service to our community, GMHC is a trusted and experienced provider. Expanding its mission to take on issues facing substance users represents an evolution that will be a key ingredient to driving down our epidemic.”

According to GMHC, more than 90 percent of clients who test HIV positive at its testing center are

linked to care and achieve viral suppression.

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