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Clinic approach coming to New Mexico could be new model for behavioral health

By Gabrielle Porter gporter@sfnewmexican.com

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Jessica Callow, admissions advocate supervisor, looks at a urine sample Monday analyzed earlier in the day while explaining the initial intake process for clients at the Santa Fe Recovery Center.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

Navigating the U.S. health care system can be daunting on a good day.

For someone in crisis, it's a lot to ask.

“When I’m sick or when I’m having what feels like a crisis in my own personal life, it can be really difficult to know where to start or what to do,” said Barry Ore, chief prevention and recovery officer for the Santa Fe Recovery Center.

The center is one of a half-dozen organizations in the state trying to address that and other problems by becoming “certified community behavioral health clinics,” a federally designated model that involves offering a comprehensive range of outpatient services. New Mexico is one of 10 states currently in line for an infusion of federal Medicaid funding to help participating providers get there, the state announced last week.

A key part of the model is a heavy emphasis on care coordination, Ore said — in other words, hiring staffers who will help clients get the services they need, arranging follow-up appointments and connecting them with other organizations.

For example, a Santa Fe Recovery Center client today might enter detox, then go through a residential treatment program for drug addiction before departing and going home. They then might try to set up an appointment with a mental health provider.

“If I was able to successfully contact a psychiatric provider, I might have to wait months for that appointment,” Ore said. “[This model] aims to have somebody there ... to help you kind of navigate it, to help reduce some of the ambiguity.”



Timmis Prigmore prepares paperwork and medication for a client who is being transferred to detox at the Santa Fe Recovery Center on Monday.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

Care coordination is one piece of the puzzle. But the community behavioral health clinic model requires providers to provide a comprehensive array of services, some of which are already happening at the recovery center, which Ore said is the largest residential substance use treatment provider in the state with a presence in Santa Fe and in Gallup.

Other services, he said, it plans to develop or provide via partnerships with other organizations. The model calls for qualified centers to offer 24-hour mobile crisis team responders, for example. Ore said the center is hiring to build a mobile crisis response team in Gallup. In Santa Fe, the center may rely on a partnership; the Santa Fe Triage Center already offers mobile crises response out of the county's La Sala Center.

"We don't want to duplicate services," Ore said.

The model also requires centers to offer specialized services for military members and veterans and to offer primary care health screening and monitoring to all clients. It also places a greater emphasis on prevention services.

“We’ve done, very effectively, the residential treatment component,” Ore said. “With [certified community behavioral health clinics], our priority will be to expand more front-end services, or prevention and early intervention services, as well as more services on the back end ... like recovery engagement.”

In a key shift, Santa Fe Recovery Center will also move from serving adults to serving New Mexicans “across the life span,” Ore said, including children — another requirement from the federal government Ore said will majorly increase the organization’s footprint in an area of need.

“When you look at that, it is a pretty good-sized expansion,” he said.

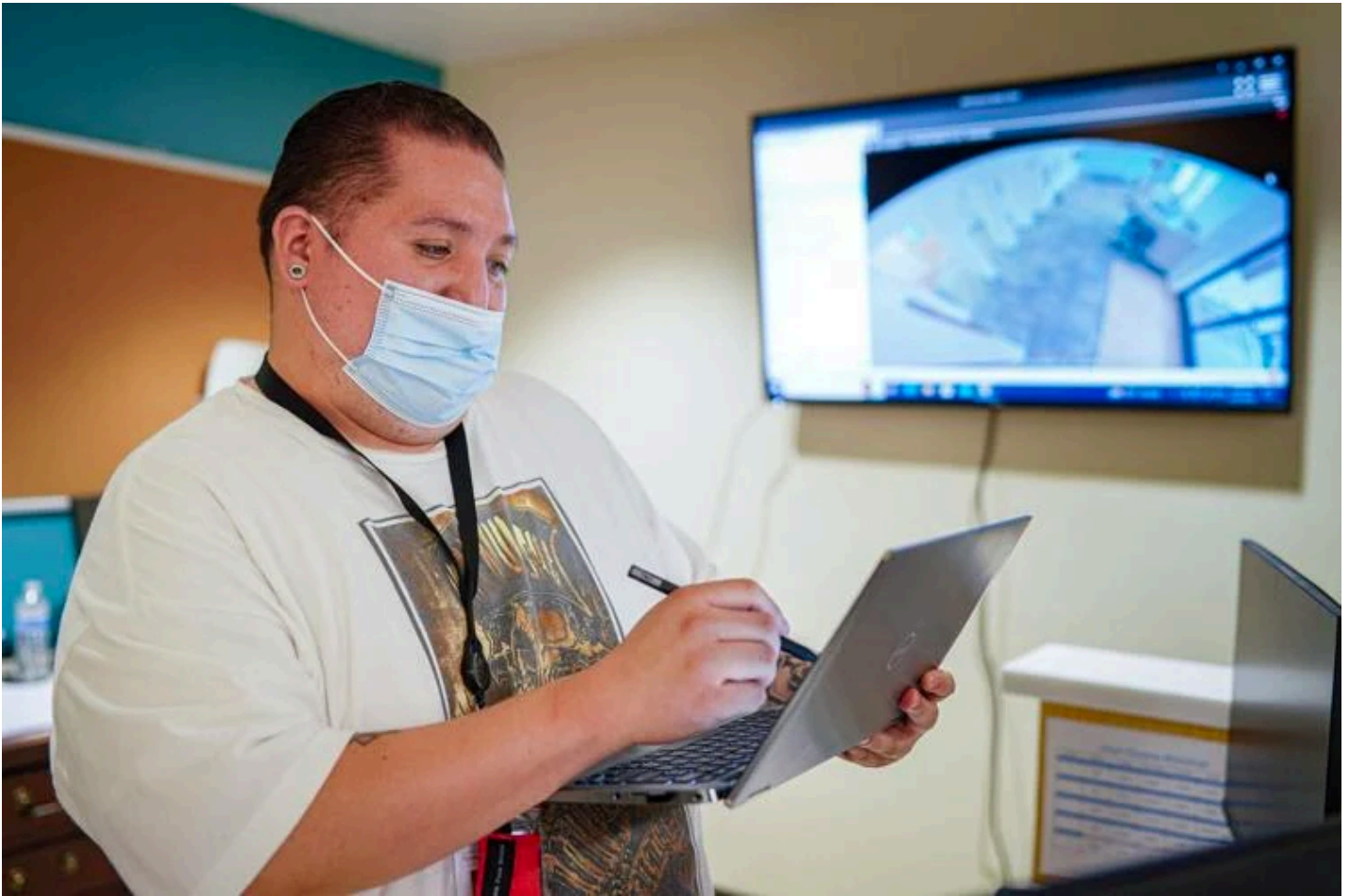
The community behavioral health clinic model as a whole is new for New Mexico. But it dovetails a broader movement within the world of Medicaid to address the needs of low-income residents in a more comprehensive way.

“CCBHCs are pivotal to our strategy to expand and improve access to evidence-based behavioral health services in our state”, said Dana Flannery, New Mexico Medicaid director, in a statement. “Through a no-wrong door approach, these clinics will offer 24/7 crisis services and comprehensive mental health and substance use treatment for New Mexicans.”



Barry Ore, chief prevention and recovery officer, stands in the lobby of the Santa Fe Recovery Center on Monday. The center is one of a half-dozen organizations in the state trying to address that and other problems by becoming “certified community behavioral health clinics.”

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican



Josh Lopez prepares a client's paperwork while working the desk at the Santa Fe Recovery Center on Monday.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

In addition to the Santa Fe Recovery Center, five other providers serving Bernalillo, Sandoval, Eddy, Curry and Doña Ana counties will have the option of participating.

The funding coming New Mexico's way isn't a set dollar amount; state Human Services Department spokeswoman Marina Piña said in an email the program offers an approximate increase of 8% in federal matching funds for the state's Medicaid program. The state estimates the program will bring in an additional

\$22 million per year over four years to support expanded behavioral health services.

The funding will help the recovery center scale up services in Santa Fe. The organization is using funds from a federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grant that covers the Gallup site's development, Ore said, which provides \$1 million per year from 2023 to 2027.

The program technically launches at the beginning of 2025, when Piña said the providers will be able to submit bills through the program.

“Between now and Jan. 1, [the Human Services Department] is collaborating with provisional sites to support their readiness through technical assistance and ongoing engagement,” she wrote.

Ore said some changes at Santa Fe Recovery Center are already in the works. A new clinic space will open in Gallup in the next couple of months, for example. Ore expects the services to be fully available at Santa Fe Recovery Center in 2025.

“It still won’t be quite a flip the switch on in January, necessarily,” Ore said. “But there’s already a lot of work being done at the state level and at the provider level ... to develop the infrastructure to get this model going.”

Takeaways

New Mexico is one of 10 states in line for extra federal Medicaid dollars to help it build out a network of “certified community behavioral health clinics.”

The clinic model, which several existing behavioral health treatment centers will be pursuing, involves a comprehensive approach to care.

The approach dovetails a push to address Medicaid patients’ needs in a more holistic way.

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