

VNS Health to Expand Substance Use and Mental Health Services in the South Bronx

VNS Health has received a grant of \$4 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to expand access to integrated substance use and mental health care for residents of the South Bronx. The funding, to be delivered in increments of \$1 million per year over the next four years, will be used to open a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) that provides rapid access to whole-person behavioral health care, regardless of an individual's ability to pay.

The grant is one of 128 awarded nationwide to establish CCBHCs in high-need areas across the country. "The need for this new VNS Health clinic is especially urgent given the growing mental health and opioid crises in the South Bronx," notes Jessica Fear, VNS Health's Senior Vice President for Behavioral Health. "This area has the highest overdose mortality rate in New York City, 85% of which involve opioids. In addition, one out of six South Bronx residents experience depression, and that rate is even greater for young people."

The new clinic will offer integrated, holistic care for mental illness and substance use disorders, with a range of comprehensive services that includes outreach, screening, assessment, treatment, care coordination, and recovery support. "Our goal is to treat the whole person, and to get

clients into treatment as soon as possible,” says Fear. “We want to eliminate all the roadblocks that keep people from getting into care quickly—and staying in care.”