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## Hartford HealthCare adds drug treatment program to Southington office



Jessica Collins, regional director of behavioral health at Hartford HealthCare, talks on Tuesday about the new mental health and substance abuse treatment center at 98 Main St. in Southington. Below, the downtown building. Photos by Dave Zajac, Record-Journal

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**SOUTHINGTON** — A mental health and substance abuse program is the latest addition to Hartford HealthCare's offices in the center of town.



The new program will mirror drug addiction treatment programs offered at Hartford HealthCare's offices in Cheshire, Avon and other towns and cities. Hartford HealthCare officials say the addition is in response to the growing need for accessible substance abuse treatment in the face of rising opiate usage.



Licensed clinical social workers saw their first patient at the new offices at 98 Main St. late last month. The second floor of the building has been leased by Hartford HealthCare for years. Recently space became available when some services moved to the new health care building on Queen Street.

Gary Havican, president of the hospital group's central region, said the program is an example of Hartford HealthCare responding to community needs. Mental health and addiction treatment were among the services residents said they most wanted when surveyed.

"We're committed to grow our health care delivery system in Southington," Havican said.



Drug abuse treatment will include medication such as suboxone for those dealing with heroin or opioid withdrawal symptoms. It will also offer group and individual therapy.

Christine Scully, former director of behavioral health for the Hospital of Central Connecticut, said patients seeking treatment for mental health ailments or drug addiction will hopefully find the offices welcoming and convenient.

"We wanted to pick a warmer environment, not have it at a hospital setting," she said.

For similar reasons, Hartford HealthCare opened a drug addiction program in Cheshire two years ago. Program leaders said that the rising opioid crisis was a "classless" problem. Patients from Southington have used the Cheshire location, according to Jessica Collins, behavioral health services director for the Hospital of Central Connecticut and MidState Medical Center. Both hospitals are part of Hartford HealthCare.

Health care officials have found that patients are more likely to attend treatment recommended by a primary care doctor if it's close by. A doctor's introduction to a social worker in person can also help overcome the stigma of seeking mental health or drug treatment.

The building, at the corner of Main Street and Columbus Avenue, is owned by local developer Mat Florian.

Seed money from the Bradley Henry Barnes and Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust helped start the program, according to Havican.

The trust is administered by the Main Street Community Foundation and is used for improving health care in Southington. Havican said the program is "exactly in line with the intent" of the Barnes' wishes for their trust.

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