

# CHC gets \$739,000 fed grant

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MIDDLETOWN — A city-based agency will be receiving a federal grant to provide health and medical services to individuals in area homeless shelters.

The Community Health Center Inc. was awarded a \$739,000 grant from the Department of Health and Human Services to start a new program to serve the homeless, U.S Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-3, announced Tuesday.

The funding, which the CHC will receive in December, will be used to launch a program called "WYA" or "Wherever You Are" that will create six access points to provide primary and preventative medical services to the homeless in shelters in Middletown, New Britain and Meriden, CHC spokesman Dwight Blint said.

"Providing the poor and underserved with medical services they typically would not be able to access is a moral responsibility of government,"

DeLauro said. "This funding will give CHC the resources necessary to provide primary and preventative medical services to homeless in our communities."

The Community Health Center's grant was one of 105 being awarded nationwide — and one of the largest — by the federal health department, Blint said.

The grants, totaling more than \$63 million, help an estimated 632,000 people, including many without health insurance, to obtain primary and preventative health care services.

"The needs of the homeless in the area of health care are quite significant, and this will go a long way to help us to reach that population and to ease their plight," CHC chief executive officer Mark Masselli said. The Community Health Center Inc. is one of the state's largest providers of medical, dental, and mental health care to the uninsured, underinsured, working poor and pub-

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licly insured.

The health center's team of physicians, nurses, social workers and case managers will be on site at the new access points on a scheduled basis, according to Blint. The team will also visit informal access points such as soup kitchens and outdoor encampments.

The team's "home office" in Meriden will include a welcoming "living room" as well as a shower and changing facility for use when needed, Blint said. A private room for use by the clinical team at the shelters

has been committed for the program by officials at The Eddy Shelter, Middletown; Shepherd Home, Middletown; Shelter Now!, Meriden; Chrysalis Domestic Violence Shelter, Meriden; Salvation Army Shelter, New Britain; and Prudence Crandall Domestic Violence Shelter, New Britain.

"I think its great services will be provided for the homeless," said spokeswoman Heide Erb, of The Connection Inc. The agency oversees the Eddy Shelter in Middletown. "There's always a need for more services. This is just a great thing."

For the homeless, transportation is an issue, Erb said. Having services in-house at the shelter may "create an

impetus for having healthcare," she said.

"Every effort will be made to engage people in care," said Masselli.

Despite CHC's presence in the three communities, the homeless population continues to face huge barriers to health care, Blint said.

Dental care is essentially out of reach for the homeless. Substance abuse and mental health treatment is available, but the homeless face great obstacles such as long waiting lists and eligibility criteria.

WYA is designed to eliminate many of the barriers, to reduce health disparities and reverse the shortened life span that has been documented for the home-

less, according to Blint. Wherever You Are is the ongoing effort between CHC and organizations serving the homeless, Blint said. The program will serve more than 1,500 people per year.

The CHC offers a wide range of services, including pediatric, adolescent, adult and geriatric health care, prenatal and postpartum care and, depending on the availability of resources, many offer dental care, addiction services, and mental health, social services and outreach programs.

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