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News

Community Health Center expands

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BRISTOL — After a little more than a year in town, the Community Health Center of Bristol is expanding.

Director Yvette Highsmith-Francis said the clinic will be in new office space at 395 North Main St. around the end of January.

“We’re doing a complete renovation of the interior,” said Highsmith-Francis.

The site is currently occupied by the Wheeler Clinic, she said.

The expanded Community Health Center will offer behavioral health services, psychiatry, nutritional counseling, diabetes management, podiatry and more, Highsmith-Francis said.

The center, which provides outpatient primary care services, now has 1,500 patients.

“They are all Bristol residents,” she said.

Most of them use some form of public insurance such as Medicaid, SAGA and other programs, she said, although private insurance is also accepted.

“It’s open to everyone,” said Highsmith-Francis, who has called the clinic a “safety net organization.”

Those without any insurance pay sliding scale fees based on household size and income.

The clinic has a “patient portal” online that allows patients to access their medical records, list of medications, lab results, immunizations and other information.

Similar to online banking, Highsmith-Francis said the patient portal saves money because people can get the information that they otherwise would have had obtain by calling or visiting the center.

It will be part of an electronic health exchange, partnering with hospitals and staff in emergency rooms, according to Highsmith-Francis.

If a patient visits an emergency room, she said, a follow-up appointment with a primary care doctor can be scheduled on the spot rather than expecting the patient to set up a visit after leaving the hospital.

That way, care that doesn't require the emergency room can be done at the clinic, she said.

It's all part of streamlining medical services to the most efficient, cost-effective care possible, according to Highsmith-Francis.

The Community Health Center of Bristol is part of a larger network of 14 such centers in Connecticut. It is a primary care medical practice, not an urgent care center or walk-in clinic. Appointments are required.

The center opened in February 2010 in the CVS plaza at 59 North Main St. It faces Laurel Street and is across from Bristol City Hall.

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