



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



West Ridge Center for Addiction Recovery Opens in Rutland

Fourth Regional Treatment Center Joins the Care Alliance for Opioid Addiction



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RUTLAND – Gov. Peter Shumlin and Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD will join other state officials and the leadership of Rutland Regional Medical Center for the grand opening of West Ridge Center for Addiction Recovery today at noon at the Howe Center in Rutland (Scale Avenue, Building 10).

West Ridge will serve Rutland and Bennington counties. It is the fourth of five regional treatment centers to make up the ‘Hub & Spoke’ system of care, now named the Care Alliance for Opioid Addiction. The Care Alliance is a statewide partnership of treatment centers (hubs) and clinicians (spokes) to provide medication-assisted therapy, using methadone or buprenorphine, to Vermonters who are addicted to opioid drugs.

“More than 3,000 Vermonters sought treatment for addiction last year alone, and we need to do everything we can to help them rebuild their lives,” Gov. Shumlin said. “I’ve made tackling substance abuse a priority because it’s the right thing to do to keep families strong and communities safe.”

Vermont is one of only two states to receive a perfect score in the October 2013 *Prescription Drug Abuse: Strategies to Stop the Epidemic* report from Trust For America’s Health. The state was recognized for its public health approach to reducing prescription drug abuse, including the use of medication-assisted therapy as one of the most effective ways to treat opioid addiction.

“Our goal is recovery and our approach is particularly effective because it combines evidence-based treatment with counseling, care coordination and support in the community,” said Dr. Chen. “Having worked as an emergency department physician in Rutland for more than 20 years, I saw firsthand how proper treatment can save lives and enable people to recover and regain their health and quality of life.”

Demand for treatment for opioid addiction has risen from 399 Vermonters in 2000, to 3,472 in 2012. Caseload projections could be as high as 5,300 by 2014, according to the Health Department.

The Care Alliance for Opioid Addiction uses a Hub & Spoke model to ensure that each person’s care is effective, coordinated and supported. As a regional treatment center – or hub – West Ridge will serve patients who have especially complex clinical needs. A physician, who can provide methadone or buprenorphine as part of medication-assisted therapy, will supervise each patient’s care.

Some patients will be referred to a local physician – or spoke – who is part of the Blueprint for Health chronic care initiative. This physician leads a team of nurses and clinicians to treat patients with medication-assisted therapy using buprenorphine. Patients who need more intensive services may have their care coordinated by West Ridge.

Each patient’s care – whether at a hub or at a spoke – is supervised by a physician and supported by nurses and counselors who work to connect the patient with community-based support services. Depending on need, these services may include mental health and substance abuse treatment, pain management, life skills and family supports, job development and recovery supports.

The fifth treatment center, to serve the Northeast region of Orleans, Essex and Caledonia counties, is planned for January 2014.

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