

For Release Upon Receipt

August 14, 2020

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Spectrum Health Receives Grants to for COVID-19 Needs and Housing Program:

New and Enhanced Programs Support Changing Community Needs

Spectrum Health and Human Services, an Office of Mental Health and Office of Addiction Services and Supports Housing provider and a Certified Community Behavioral Health Center providing mental health, addiction and 24/7 crisis services throughout the Western New York region, was recently awarded **\$546,430** from the City of Buffalo Emergency Solutions Grant- CV to launch a Housing Empower Empowerment Program, **\$449,369** from Erie County Emergency Solutions Grant- CV and a **\$86,937** grant from the WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund.

“These three opportunities are particularly significant,” said Cindy Voelker, Spectrum Health’s Associate CEO. “We are living through unprecedented times, where significant community needs are evolving. These three grants allow our agency to be agile, responsive, and effective in serving people in need in our community.”

The two Emergency Solutions Grants awarded to Spectrum Health’s Supported Housing Services will help individuals and families prevent being homeless and will assist in finding and maintaining permanent affordable housing if homeless.

“We’re very grateful for the City of Buffalo’s and Erie County’s grant awards,” said Voelker. “Spectrum Health’s team is well qualified for these programs and through the years, the team has created effective protocols which increase the likelihood of individuals who are homeless successfully obtaining and maintaining housing in the community.”

New positions - Housing Specialists, Outreach/Benefits Specialist, and a Data Technician supervised by Managing Director of Housing – will be created to serve this program. Services will be compliant with all HUD requirements and City of Buffalo and Erie County requirements, and may include assistance in completing rental applications, making security and utility deposits and providing case management related to housing matters, along with making referrals to supportive learning experiences such as budgeting classes, landlord/tenant mediation, and other appropriate services that support long-term permanent housing.

The grant from the WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund was used to support Spectrum Health’s commitment to provide telehealth services to its clients when they were unable to attend appointments in person. “Telehealth is an ideal way to use technology when physical distancing is a ‘new normal,’ but many Spectrum Health clients are at or below the poverty line and don’t have ready access to computers. “Providing our highest need clients with basic laptops and tablets and internet access for a period of time was key to successful telehealth treatment,” said Voelker. Clients were able to continue their essential behavioral health treatment which may have been neglected due to lack of access to reliable and consistent communication. Clients could also stay connected to other professional supports, including a primary care provider. “Maintaining good physical health is a necessary complement to behavioral health,” said Voelker. These same clients also may find themselves in need of household basics, such as groceries, childcare needs, and medical supplies: the grant also allowed Spectrum Health to provide limited support where it was needed most.

Additionally, the grant supported acquisition of specific PPE for Spectrum Health’s Community Team of nurses and other practitioners that provided limited on-site and emergency care to clients. Voelker said, “Our nursing staff needed to meet with clients in person, too, to administer and monitor medication and other face-to-face interventions. Support from the WNY COVID-19 Community Response Fund let us meet these critical needs.”

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About Spectrum Health and Human Services:

Founded more than 45 years ago, Spectrum Health’s mission is to respectfully partner with adults, children, and families as they recover from behavioral, emotional, mental health, and/or substance abuse-related disorders and to promote hope, empowerment and self-defined improvements in their quality of

life. Learn more at HYPERLINK "www.shswny.org" www.shswny.org.

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