

Funds to help those affected by addiction

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WILLIMANTIC — A new federal grant worth nearly \$2 million may soon help Connecticut residents in recovery receive the services needed to find their path to better lives.

U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, visited with Community Health Resources staff in Willimantic Tuesday to celebrate the launch of a five-year, \$1.85 million federal grant to help men, women and families whose lives have been affected by substance abuse and homelessness.

The grant, called COMPASS Home, targets 30 towns in eastern Connecticut and will be based at CHR's Willimantic office.

COMPASS stands for "Cordinated Medical, Psychiatric, Substance Abuse and Social Services" to represent the many dimensions of health critical to long-term recovery, along with permanent housing.

"Often, by the time people seek treatment for alcohol and drug addictions, they are alone, estranged from their families or know they can't go back to homes that won't support their recovery," CHR Chief Executive Officer and President Heather Gates said. "COMPASS Home



U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, center, joined officials with Community Health Resources in Willimantic on Tuesday to celebrate the launch of a federal grant to help men, women and families whose lives have been affected by substance use and homelessness. With Courtney are CHR supporter Phil Tartsinis and CHR President and CEO Heather Gates. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

will help people get the full range of support to help them maintain recovery and lead healthy, productive lives."

The grant will provide intensive services to link individuals with substance abuse, including opioid addictions, with

safe housing and a wide range of support services to get their lives and their families back on track.

CHR will collaborate with many other local partners like Generations Family

FUNDS, Page 4

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CONTINUED FROM FUNDS ON PAGE [1](#)

Continued from Page 1

Health Center, First Choice Health Centers, Planned Parenthood, Genoa Healthcare, the Willimantic Police Department, the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery and more through the grant's implementation.

"Fundamental stability is really the best long-term strategy for turning the momentum around in this problem," Courtney said. "And obviously housing and homelessness, it just doesn't get any more basic than that."

Funding comes from the U. S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Courtney said the grant was extremely competitive and it says a lot about CHR that it was selected.

One of the clients, Bethel resident Edward Clark, said CHR is one of the best places he has sought services from.

"I have to put the work in, but they have to lay it out," Clark said. "I've been pleasantly surprised. I really like the fact that a lot of the staff are in recovery also. They relate to everything I've been through."

CHR staff noted nearly 50 percent of men and 30 percent of women who complete residential treatment in their system have recently

experienced homelessness.

Service director Andrea Hakian said the difference in genders is likely because more supports are available for women, especially women with children.

CHR is one of the state's most comprehensive nonprofit behavioral health care agencies.

It serves approximately 26,000 people a year with 900 employees in 32 locations throughout Connecticut.

CHR's main sites are in Enfield and Manchester, but it has two offices in Willimantic and one in Mansfield among a total of 17 locations. Its Willimantic offices are at 433 Valley St. (860-456-7200) and 1491 W. Main St. (860-456-3215). Its Mansfield office is at 7B Ledgebrook Drive (860-456-0038). For more information on CHR, visit www.chrhealth.org.

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Edward Clark of Bethel, a client of Community Health Resources, speaks during the announcement of a federal grant at the CHR office in Willimantic on Tuesday. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff