

Construction underway to create Children's Advocacy Center mental health clinic in Orange



Children's Advocacy Center Executive Director Jeffrey Trant at the center's new location at the 119 New Athol Road plaza in Orange. The roughly 800-square-foot space, expected to be ready by early November, will house an outpatient clinic providing specialized mental health services for child victims of sexual abuse and their families. STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

ORANGE — Later this year, North Quabbin residents can expect the Health Center Plaza to have an outpatient clinic providing specialized mental health services for child victims of sexual abuse and their families.

The Children's Advocacy Center of Franklin County and North Quabbin is getting a \$86,900 grant from The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts that will go toward suite renovation in the plaza the Community Health Center of Franklin County purchased at 119 New Athol Road in 2020.

Jeffrey Trant, executive director of the Children's Advocacy Center, said providing high-quality youth mental health treatment has been a top priority since the nonprofit was founded in 2016 and having an Orange location — in addition to its existing building at 56 Wisdom Way in Greenfield — will expand services in the North Quabbin region.



A new location for the Children’s Advocacy Center of Franklin County and North Quabbin at the 119 New Athol Road plaza in Orange is expected to be ready by early November. This clinic will be in addition to its existing 56 Wisdom Way location in Greenfield. STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

“We’re presently in the construction phase of the project,” he said, adding that he hopes the 800-square-foot space will be ready by early November.

As a tenant of the plaza, the Children’s Advocacy Center will have two individual therapy suites and one group therapy area, according to Trant. Thayer Street Builders in South Deerfield is the project’s general contractor.

Trant mentioned this project has other sources of funding as well — a \$30,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, \$20,000 from the Bete Family Foundation and a \$4,500 grant from the FirstLight Sustains program.

Dr. Allison van der Velden, CEO of the Community Health Center of Franklin County, said having a mental health outpatient clinic in the plaza aligns perfectly with her organization’s mission.

“We’re really excited,” she said. “We bought the plaza in Orange ... and we knew that we would have extra storefronts, and the dream was the development of like a community center plaza with nonprofits that serves our community in different ways. We’re excited to have [the Children’s Advocacy Center] in that space.

“We provide primary care and dental medical services, but we are all really invested in promoting the overall health of the community,” van der Velden added.

Van der Velden mentioned the health center is also working on the construction of a pharmacy she hopes will open in the plaza by January 2025.

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