NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE HUDSON COUNTY EXECUTIVE:

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HUDSON COUNTY PARTNERS WITH HEALTH PROVIDERS TO CREATE A STEPDOWN UNIT FOR RECOVERING COVID-19 HOMELESS PATIENTS

Unit will provide relief to county hospitals so they remain focused on critical care and homeless shelters to lessen spread of the disease in vulnerable populations

Jersey City, NJ—Hudson County has entered into a partnership with CarePoint Health and Alliance Community Health, a Federally Qualified Health Care Provider (FQHP), to create a step-down unit for recovering COVID-19 patients who are homeless in two currently unoccupied buildings near Christ Hospital in Jersey City, (169 Palisade Avenue) by the end of this week.

The purpose of the unit is to allow hospitals in Hudson County to discharge patients who initially tested positive for COVID-19 and were admitted but now are deemed fit enough for discharge but who are homeless.

Hospitals can only release patients who can demonstrate they have somewhere to go upon discharge. Having homeless shelters provide this for the recovering patient now would expose vulnerable populations with chronic health issues in the shelters to these still recovering individuals who could transmit the virus to them.

This new unit will help ensure that the health care system remains focused on critical care and able to provide the beds required for that mission and protect the shelter network from the spread of the virus.

The target population is homeless individuals demonstrating mild symptoms, who if they had stable housing would simply be released to recover at home.
The Hudson County Improvement Authority (HCIA) will lease the space from CarePoint Health to set up what is known as a Federally Qualified Healthcare Center (FQHC) for the County in partnership with Jersey City-based Alliance Community Health, Inc., in order to provide this step-down unit for an anticipated 100 homeless clients at one time.

The HCIA will be reimbursed by the County Division of Welfare at the rate Welfare pays for shelter services provided by local hotels and motels with funds provided by the State Department of Family Development during this pandemic. The initial estimated cost to operate the unit will be $296,000 a month.

The step down unit for the recovering homeless will provide the following services to these recovering homeless individuals:

1) 24-hour access to clinical care through a staff of doctors and nurses
2) Regular monitoring of inhabitants respiratory function
3) Monitor for potential relapse so a proactive decision can be made to re-admit a person into the hospital,
4) Medically clear those in the homeless shelter population in isolation so that they can enter shelters again without concern that they might infect anyone in the shelter network, staff, volunteers, vulnerable fellow clients.
5) Professional medical laundry and cleaning services, and medical waste disposal services.

A contractor that provides security at medical facilities in the region will do so for this new unit.

“I believe this is a sensible way to ensure that our hospitals can focus on providing critical care and our homeless shelters remain truly safe havens for those in need of them,” said Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise. “I want to thank the leadership of CarePoint Health, the City of Jersey City and our dedicated team from the Hudson County Department of Family Services and the HCIA who put this together. This unit will help stop the spread of COVID-19. It will save lives.”

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