

# Mental Health Crisis Walk-In Center opens

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After two-plus years of planning and preparation, the new Center for Mental Health Crisis Walk-In Center in Montrose will open Friday, bringing much-needed behavioral health services to the Western Slope, according to officials. The public is invited to the grand opening and open house from 3-6 p.m.; a ribbon cutting ceremony is planned for 4 p.m.

"I am ecstatic that we're going to have this service in our region for our different communities," center CEO Shelly J. Spalding said Wednesday.

The new facility at 300 N. Cascade Ave. includes a walk-in mental health clinic, a crisis stabilization unit, withdrawal management, a 24/7 regional crisis team, crisis respite services and emergency peer transport. The center, which will employ 30 staff members, will have four people on site at all times, as well as one mobile crisis team member on call. While the organization currently has clinics in Gunnison, Crested Butte, Hotchkiss, Delta, Montrose, Ridgway, Norwood and Telluride, the crisis center is a one stop shop for those in need of mental health and substance use care throughout Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel counties. The walk-in center, which cost approximately \$3.2 million, is open to anyone and can accommodate up to 15 individuals at a time, depending on their respective needs.

"If someone is in crisis, we will see them, regardless of their ability to pay," Spalding said.

CCO Amanda Jones explained there is limited access to mental health and substance use care throughout the Western Slope, especially emergency services, which made this project pertinent. The center has been working with local law enforcement officials and emergency service providers over the past several months to develop new referral protocols, she added.

"We're taking the strain off of first responders, including EMS systems and law enforcement. We're making sure the right people are providing the right services," she said.

Jones said talks with regional police departments have gone well. San Miguel County Sheriff Bill Masters has long maintained that mental health and detox holds are a behavioral health issue, not a law enforcement one. The center provides short-term (three to five days) bed-based stabilization for people age 12 or older who are experiencing a severe behavioral health crisis, and 24-hour non-hospital detox for individuals who are intoxicated, in withdrawal or at risk of withdrawal.

"This decreases the unnecessary use of hospital emergency departments, jails, prisons or other settings not clinically appropriate for mental health or behavioral health emergencies," according to a news release.

The new facility also decreases the long drives to adequate care and allows those in need to remain close to family and friends that are often the individual's first support system.

“Patients in need of urgent behavioral health care, including mental health and substance abuse emergency services, currently travel as much as three hours (good weather permitting) on the Western Slope or five hours to the Front Range to access care,” according to the release. “In addition to putting lives at risk, this distance makes it nearly impossible for families to visit and support their loved ones during recovery. A local facility will impact the lives of people seeking behavioral health services in our community and ensure people can get the critical support they need.”

Plus, there are the mobile crisis management services, which are part of a larger initiative that the center is “aggressively trying to increase” involving the regional clinics, Jones said.

“Part of what we’ve done with our mobile crisis is trying to have our clinicians that are at our regional locations being more available to do mobile crisis evaluation in the community,” she explained.

Twenty-four regional entities contributed money for the acquisition and remodel of the new center’s building, Spalding said. For more information, visit [centermh.org](http://centermh.org) or call 970-252-6220.