



For Immediate Release

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Grant funds fuels expansion of program for victims of crime

NEW BRITAIN– A recent increase in federal funding through the Office of Victims Services has fueled an expansion of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) program at The Hospital of Central Connecticut (HOCC).

VOCA, overseen by the Hartford HealthCare Behavioral Health Network, has expanded services to Southington. In addition, services in New Britain have been expanded, according to Kim Hughey, LCSW, clinical manager of the HOCC outpatient clinic.

VOCA is an outpatient program helping individuals who have or continue to experience the following types of abuse:

- Domestic violence
- Childhood abuse or neglect
- Adult physical or sexual assault
- Elder abuse
- Stalking or harassment

"We are confidential and focused on protecting and helping the victims of abuse. We don't ask for evidence or police reports to qualify people for our services, all of which are free," Hughey said.

Services include individual and group therapy, and help with medication management, although medication itself is not covered. HOCC also offers various services that are funded by OVS, including:

- Emergency gift cards for food or clothing
- Bus passes
- Emergency transitional housing
- Information on connecting with OVS for additional services such as additional compensation and legal assistance

Hughey said many people who experience violence of some sort struggle with the resulting shame as well as such behavioral health issues as depression and anxiety. VOCA team members support clients as they help them rebuild their own strength and the confidence needed to move into recovery.

"If people experience routine triggers like having to come into contact with their abuser, they may experience high anxiety, hypervigilance, hopelessness and difficulty creating new goals for their future because they feel very stuck in the past, almost as though what happened has the potential to reoccur or is happening all over again," said Bethany Michaud, LCSW, psychiatric clinician at the HOCC outpatient clinic who runs VOCA's group therapy for survivors of sexual assault, molestation or domestic abuse.

"Support groups can offer a safe space where people can tell their personal story and feel heard, but not blamed," she added. "Survivors also have the opportunity to see other people with similar histories of abuse or assault taking positive steps forward in life and this creates a sense of empowerment."

Through therapy, clients learn grounding skills such as meditation, mantras, positive self-talk or yoga. They also identify support systems they can tap for help when needed and safety plans.

For more information on the VOCA program, call the HOCC Counseling Center at 860.224.5267.

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