

- **What is this new residential program?**

GRIT Holyoke is one of 26 new Residential-based Rehabilitation Services programs across the state, funded and licensed by the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, including three programs awarded to MHA. GRIT Holyoke is expected to open in the 4th quarter of 2019.

- **What are the criteria for enrollment in GRIT Holyoke?**

In Holyoke, GRIT is a 16-bed program for adults 18+ who have both a substance use disorder and a moderate-to-severe mental health diagnosis, and who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and/or gender non-binary (LGBTQ). These residents will benefit from the kind of structure and specialized support that GRIT Holyoke provides to make steady progress with their recovery and their mental health.

- **What do residents do at GRIT Holyoke?**

Residents take part in person-driven instructional programming, such as counseling, medical support, connection to community resources, and 12 step meetings. With educational assistance, they get ready for life after GRIT with job readiness training, financial literacy and housing placement support. Residents work together every day preparing their meals and they eat together. Residents live in this residential home for the duration of their treatment, working individually with staff to identify unique case management needs, building the framework for long-term recovery, and developing aftercare plans for a successful return to the community.

- **Education Is The Essence Of GRIT Programming:**

Integrated Dual Diagnosis Treatment is grounded in an evidence-based model of care providing multidisciplinary support, formal instruction and supervised practice in order to effectively teach residents how mental health and addiction influence and affect each other. Clinical mental health and addiction counselors instruct residents on how to effectively cope with symptoms without relying on substances. In addition to clinical treatment, residential staff offer guided direction to support residents in their ability to develop a relapse prevention plan that will be transferrable to the community upon discharge. Plans will include providing residents the opportunity to learn, gather and hone skills related to financial management, cooking, nutrition, parenting, and anything else they might need to be successful. A team of staff is dedicated to supporting residents to secure housing, employment, and education as needed and appropriate for each person. Additionally, residents will have access to a part time registered nurse and a physician assistant to teach residents the role of medication and how physical health affects both mental health and substance use.

- **What is it like inside?**

GRIT Holyoke is an aesthetic homelike environment located in a serene, suburban neighborhood with spacious bedrooms, bathrooms, a kitchen and shared living space. Addiction can often leave people feeling abandoned or isolated, a home-based program like GRIT can resolve this by helping residents to feel less alone and a greater sense of promise and purpose. Because this is a licensed program, MHA must comply with relevant state and city building and safety inspections and code enforcements. This is a grand old Holyoke home and we intend to preserve the warm and welcoming space it provides, inside and out. Residents and staff will be accountable for keeping the inside clean and neat. Our interior buildout is in progress, but you can view a walkthrough of GRIT Springfield by visiting www.mhainc.org/grit/

- **How long will residents call GRIT home?**

Typically nine months. Since each resident has unique needs, a stay at GRIT Holyoke can be shortened or extended in order to provide appropriate care. During their enrollment, residents will receive specialized treatment, education and individualized instruction in order to support their progress in early recovery and learn to effectively manage their mental health.

- **Are residents of GRIT mandated or required to live in the program?**

No. The program is voluntary. People can exit the program whenever they wish.

- **Is this a program for sex offenders?**

No.

- **Is this detox?**

No. The people living here will not require hospital-level care.

- **Does MHA have experience and success in this area?**

Yes. MHA's track record of success in residential treatment programs was a factor in our being awarded contracts by the state for three GRIT programs. In addition to GRIT Holyoke for non-binary individuals who identify as LBGTQ, MHA recently opened a GRIT program in Springfield to serve adult males and will soon open a second GRIT site in Springfield for young adult males. Each of these GRIT programs provides an intensive, specialized experience for the distinct population served. Since these GRIT programs are new, statistics regarding participant success are not yet available. However, other programs using a similar model have had high success rates—notably higher success rates than more traditional inpatient programs.

- **What evidence supports higher success rates?**

There is ample evidence. In one study published by the US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, patients treated in community-based residential programs had lower one- and two-year readmission rates than patients who received hospital-based residential care. Longer episodes of residential care and more outpatient mental health care

were also associated with lower readmission rates. Among patients with co-occurring psychiatric disorders, those in hospital-based care benefited more from longer episodes of residential care and more intensive outpatient mental health aftercare. Residential care, longer episodes of care, and more outpatient mental health care were independent predictors of lower one- and two-year readmission rates after patient-based risk factors were controlled. Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8925349>

- **What if a participant relapses?**

After ensuring that any necessary medical services are provided, we welcome the person back to GRIT Holyoke. We will work to assess and adjust their treatment plan, making necessary modifications to move forward. moving forward.

- **Why is the program needed?**

The opioid crisis has been called the bubonic plague of today. According to official Massachusetts Department of Public Health statistics, there were approximately 2,000 opioid-related overdose deaths in the state in 2018. During the first 3 months of 2019, there were approximately 500 opioid-related deaths. The overall opioid death rate in the state fell 4% from 2017 to 2018, which is good news, but the cities of Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke all saw increases in opioid-related deaths over the same period. Opioid addiction impacts people of all ages, socio-economic categories and ethnic backgrounds.

- **What is the experience and qualifications of staff?**

All GRIT staff members have specialized, proven education experience working with people in recovery and/or with a mental health diagnosis, and possess licensure, and/or training appropriate to their role.

- **Will there be 24 hour staff?**

Yes.

- **Who oversees the program?**

Christine Palmieri, Vice President of Recovery & Housing, oversees MHA's GRIT programs. Christine joined MHA in October of 2014 and has nearly 20 years of experience providing community-based rehabilitative services to adults and adolescents with disabilities. Her extensive leadership experience includes training and supporting staff to empower people with psychiatric challenges to recover and thrive. Christine earned her BA in Psychology and Sociology from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst and her Master of Education in Psychiatric Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling from Springfield College. She is also a Licensed Rehabilitation Counselor.

- **Whose idea was it for programs like this?**

Many people and organizations, including MHA, are involved in the development of these programs across the state. Governor Charlie Baker has been a consummate champion for programs to address the opioid crisis.

- **Is the program discriminatory because it focuses on one population?**

No. This is a clinical treatment model designed specifically for this population, just as some programs are designed to focus on the needs of pregnant women or older adults or young people. MHA can assist people in need of recovery services to find an appropriate program in Massachusetts.

- **Are residents' families ever involved in treatment?**

Yes. Families of GRIT Holyoke residents are encouraged to participate, and they may visit the home from time to time. Regular interaction with loved ones can give residents an important extra layer of support and reinforce connections that are crucial for long-term recovery. Visits are scheduled so families have the opportunity to interact with their loved one and not interrupt clinical treatment time.

- **Will there be any increase in traffic?**

Residents will not have vehicles, so any impact on traffic will be minimal.

- **What about safety?**

Like any property owner, MHA wants to ensure the safety of our residents as well as our neighbors. GRIT Holyoke is a structured, educationally-based residential program, not a secured facility. People living here will not initially be allowed to leave the property without program staff, but opportunities for gradual increases in independence can be earned. Our residents will be provided transportation to work, school, counseling, medical appointments and community activities. All residents are individually searched (including random drug screening) when they return to the property to ensure they comply with program requirements. Cameras will monitor and record common areas in the house and highly trafficked areas outside the house.

- **Why Holyoke?**

MHA often purchases older properties that need renovation for our community-based programs. With multiple bedrooms, a large kitchen, abundant common space, and parking in back, this Holyoke home is well suited for an educationally-based, residential program and centrally located to serve all of the Pioneer Valley.

- **Who owns the property?**

MHA does, and we want to maintain the value of our investment. We also own a dedicated property management company that is responsible for maintenance of our properties.

- **If I wanted to volunteer or be supportive, could I?**

Yes. You could volunteer for the GRIT Holyoke Advisory Council. If you have a unique skill or talent you'd like to share that would benefit our residents, we'd love to hear from you.

- **Who do I call if I have comments, concerns or compliments?**

Please contact Christine Palmieri at 413-233-5326 or cpalmieri@mhainc.org.