



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Middlesex County Restoration Center Pilot Advances with Selection of Clinical Provider

Vinfen to provide behavioral health, substance use disorder services for pilot program

BOSTON – Today, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission, announced the Commission has selected [Vinfen](#) as its clinical partner as it works towards establishing the first law enforcement focused crisis diversion facility in the Commonwealth. With an aim of diverting individuals away from criminal justice involvement and into treatment, the state's first Restoration Center will have a "no wrong door" policy, providing walk-in and police drop-off opportunities to serve those in need of behavioral health care in the community.

The Center will serve as an alternative to arrest or emergency room transport for individuals in need of behavioral health care including substance use disorder (SUD) treatment by providing a full behavioral health continuum of services under one provider. Vinfen is a leading nonprofit provider of community-based services for adults and youth with behavioral health conditions and adults with developmental disabilities.

Vinfen also operates the Greater Lowell Community Behavioral Health Center ([CBHC](#)), and provides 24/7 mobile crisis intervention, urgent outpatient behavioral health treatment, and community crisis stabilization. The Restoration Center complements the CBHC service components by providing additional capacity and capabilities to ensure true diversion and access for individuals.

The selection marks a major milestone for the Restoration Center following several [sizeable funding awards](#) late last year and collaborative planning since 2018 by the Middlesex County Restoration Center [Commission](#), the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, elected leaders and EOHHS.

"This announcement is an exciting moment and the culmination of years of planning and implementation. As we prepare to launch services through the Restoration Center, we know that this model has been both tested and proven in states across the country. Our goal is not only to create a pathway away from incarceration here in the Commonwealth, but to build a lasting program that can inspire other alternatives across the nation," said Commission Co-Chairs Dr. Danna Mauch, president and CEO of the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health and Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian. "We look forward to working with a trusted and local partner, Vinfen, which has the leadership and expertise to support individuals in crisis by knocking down traditional barriers to access and helping connect them with effective support and care."

Sheriff Koutoujian and Dr. Mauch have long advocated the ongoing need for a 24/7 crisis diversion facility in Middlesex County. More than half of individuals incarcerated at the Middlesex Jail and House of Correction have a diagnosed mental illness, and 80% of individuals diagnosed with mental health conditions in this population also have a diagnosed substance use disorder. Diversionary models like the Restoration Center have proven effective in other states at increasing quality of life for people living with behavioral health or substance use challenges and reducing cost across the criminal legal and health care spectrum – from city and county jails to acute care emergency departments.

Services will include triage and assessment, crisis stabilization beds for up to 24 hours, sober support beds, crisis respite beds for up to two weeks, and case management and aftercare planning. Once implemented, the pilot will serve as a model for other crisis centers in the state and fold into an already strong network of community behavioral health centers offering immediate, confidential care and wrap-around support to divert people from unnecessary hospitalization.

"We're working with Vinfen because we know they're the right choice to get the Middlesex County Restoration Center off the ground," said Secretary of Health and Human Services Kate Walsh. "It's our responsibility to find innovative ways to support residents with behavioral health challenges - not criminalize them. Properly addressing the intersection between behavioral health and criminal justice can change lives, and this partnership is a major step in the right direction."

"Our local community's behavioral health and substance use crisis has only been exacerbated by the pandemic and it's mirrored nationwide," said Jean Yang, President and CEO of Vinfen. "We see firsthand the devastating impact on our patients, their loved ones and our broader community. We look forward to opening the Restoration Center and working with many like-minded, dedicated individuals as we provide high-quality care to those most in need."

"It's no secret that our current response system lacks the resources necessary to treat every individual suffering from substance use and mental health disorders in our community. The Middlesex County Restoration Center has the potential to break this cycle of incarceration and unnecessary emergency department use," said Congresswoman Lori Trahan. "I couldn't be more pleased to see that Vinfen will be able to leverage their expertise and experience in compassionate care in the Merrimack Valley to further support this program. I look forward to continuing to partner with Sheriff Koutoujian, Dr. Mauch, and everyone else who has worked so hard to bring this center to fruition."

State Senator Cindy Friedman, who serves on the Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission and helped steward the Commission's creation in statute, echoed Congresswoman Trahan's enthusiasm, "Today's announcement is yet another exciting progression in the development of what will become a beacon of hope for so many in need and I'm beyond grateful for the support and partnership from the team who is making this possible," she said. "It is because of Congresswoman Trahan's dogged advocacy at the federal level and our work to garner essential funding through the state budget that we will soon have additional high-quality, accessible care options for vulnerable community members – and an important new resource for our first responders and emergency room professionals."

The Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission and its strategic partners will share updates in the coming months as additional progress is made. For more information, visit the Commission [online](#).

About the Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission

The Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission was established through state law in 2018 "to plan and implement a county restoration center and program to divert persons suffering from mental illness or substance

use disorder who interact with law enforcement or the court system during a pre-arrest investigation or the pre-adjudication process from lock-up facilities and hospital emergency departments to appropriate treatment.”

The Commission is co-chaired by Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian and Dr. Danna Mauch, President, and CEO of the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health. The Commission is comprised of representatives of the state legislature, the behavioral health provider community, advocates, criminal legal system, and state health care agencies. Over five years, the Commission has reviewed the gaps and needs in behavioral health and diversionary services in Middlesex County; identified a need for a restoration center pilot program; and researched and defined a target population and service model. <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/middlesex-county-restoration-center-commission>

About Vinfen

Established in 1977, Vinfen is one of the largest community mental health and disability providers in Massachusetts. With over 455 locations in Massachusetts and Connecticut, Vinfen provides a wide range of evidence-based programs in recovery, supported living, habilitation, education, employment, clinical and peer support for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities or brain injuries or people with behavioral health conditions For more information, please visit, www.vinfen.org.

About the Middlesex Sheriff's Office

Established in 1692, the Middlesex Sheriff’s Office (MSO) is one of the oldest law enforcement agencies in the United States. Entrusted with full law enforcement capabilities, the MSO provides care and custody of both pre-trial and sentenced men, as well as women classified to the office's pre-release center. These functions are carried out at the Middlesex Jail & House of Correction in Billerica and available to the 54 cities and towns of Middlesex County. The MSO has forged partnerships with local, state and federal authorities to organize and ensure resources are available whenever and wherever needed. Additionally, the MSO operates a Training Academy and Civil Process Division office in Chelmsford and administrative offices in Woburn. <https://www.middlesexsheriff.org/>

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