

Local

D.C.'s only Planned Parenthood facility is open and ready to see patients



By **Perry Stein** September 27

The only Planned Parenthood location in the nation's capital marked its grand opening this week in a booming, semi-industrial area of Northeast Washington — an area in the center of the city that the health-care provider hopes will be accessible to people from all corners of the District.

The nearly \$20 million, 27,000-square-foot health facility will also serve as the administrative headquarters for Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington. The location, the Carol Whitehill Moses Center, is expected to serve more than 12,000 people in its first year.

“There was a tremendous unmet need,” said Laura Meyers, president of Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington. “With almost no advertising, patients are finding us.”

The facility replaces an outdated office in downtown Washington that closed in June 2015 after more than 40 years. Another location, in Southeast Washington, was shuttered in 2014.

While without a permanent presence in the city, Planned Parenthood hosted weekly clinics at Bread for the City, a nonprofit organization in Shaw.

The new facility's opening was marked by a gala and benefit with Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D), Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), actress Kathleen Turner and others. About two dozen abortion protesters gathered in front of the headquarters before the event.

This Planned Parenthood location, however, was the target of regular protests long before it opened.

The building replaces an abandoned warehouse next to Two Rivers Public Charter School. Last year, the school filed a lawsuit against abortion protesters, saying they harassed children and displayed gruesome images of aborted fetuses to children as young as 3. In July, the protesters agreed to limit protest activity outside the school.

The school hired an extra security guard for this week's grand opening as a precaution, said Tomeika Bowden, a spokeswoman for the D.C. Charter School Board.

Meyers said the facility, which will serve as the workplace for about 40 regional administrative staff members, was designed with safety in

mind.

Security guards check guests in at the entrance, and Meyers added that other safety measures are in place throughout the complex.

Employees have an outdoor courtyard so they don't have to leave through the main entrance and interact with possible protesters if they want to go outside.

"The building is very deliberately designed," Meyers said. "There isn't anything in the building we didn't think through — security, of course, being one of the main concerns."

The new headquarters and clinic are a significant expansion over the previous downtown space. It has six nonsurgical exam rooms and four procedure rooms. The old facility had a total of five rooms.

The center offers an array of services for women and men, including HPV vaccines, breast and pelvic exams, same-day birth control, emergency contraception, abortion services, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. It will soon offer PrEP, preventive medication for those at high risk for HIV infection.

The new D.C. location, on Fourth Street near Florida Avenue, joins three other Planned Parenthood facilities in the Washington region, which are in Suitland, Gaithersburg and Silver Spring.

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A location in Falls Church closed in December 2015 after its lease expired. Meyers said there are plans to open another facility in the region.

Planned Parenthood says the region's facilities served more than 20,000 people in fiscal year 2015. It gave birth control to nearly 12,000 women and ran more than 19,000 tests for sexually transmitted diseases. Forty-two percent of its patients were 25 and younger, and 54 percent were women of color.

The new facility is the most modern of the region's Planned Parenthood locations. It has space available for community meetings and education outreach, as well as lounges for patients to use before and after their appointments.

"Our job is to provide high-quality health care and unbiased medical information," Meyers said.

"We wanted a space that really spoke to those values."

Perry Stein covers D.C., Maryland and Virginia. [Follow @perrystein](#)

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