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Planned Parenthood opens new clinic Wednesday in San Rafael

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By Megan Hansen
Marin Independent Journal

Posted: 06/18/2013 06:16:12 PM PDT

The new Planned Parenthood building stands at the corner of Fourth and H Streets on Tuesday, June 18, 2013, in San Rafael, Calif. (Frankie Frost/Marin Independent Journal) Frankie Frost
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Administrators Rachelle Rohrer and Colleen Ciucci talk in the conference room of the new Planned...

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Planned Parenthood, which has been operating in Mill Valley for nearly three years after an organizational shake-up, will reopen a newly remodeled San Rafael office Wednesday and shutter its

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Mill Valley site.

The reproductive health organization used to operate from a building at 2 H St. in San Rafael through its affiliate, Golden Gate Community Health, until the affiliate organization lost the right to use the Planned Parenthood moniker in September 2010. It had been experiencing significant financial problems and eventually closed in February 2011.

Planned Parenthood will reopen the former affiliate site on the corner of Fourth and H streets Wednesday and also will close its Mill Valley clinic. Heather

Estes, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Shasta Pacific, said the move will allow the clinic to be more centrally located in the county.

"Our space in Mill Valley is small and we also had a number of clients coming from the northern part of the county," Estes said.

Planned Parenthood estimates the new health center will provide services to 8,000 to 12,000 people a year. Estes said the San Rafael office will employ about 12 people, but that staffing will likely grow to 15 during the next six months.

She said the newly renovated clinic has a full-service reproductive health center, administrative offices and both training and educational workshop spaces. Much of the building has been restructured to create a larger

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laboratory and more examination space.

"There used to be space there used for charts, but we don't need that anymore with electronic health records. We were able to re-purpose it into another exam room," Estes said.

The clinic will provide birth control, breast and cervical cancer screening, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, HIV testing, emergency contraception and abortion care, among other health services — including services for men.

Estes said only 3 percent of Planned Parenthood's services are focused on surgical abortion, which was not performed at its

Mill Valley site. It will be offered in San Rafael.

"We're pretty much the only provider of abortion services for low-income women in San Rafael and Marin County," she said.

Estes said Planned Parenthood has spent a lot of time raising money to move back to San Rafael. She noted the Marin County Board of Supervisors recently approved \$250,000 for the organization to help pay for its building remodel, which cost \$900,000 in addition to the \$2.3 million spent to purchase the building after Golden Gate Community Health went bankrupt.

"We're so happy to be there," Estes said.

Contact Megan Hansen via email at mhansen@marinij.com or via Twitter at <http://twitter.com/hansenmegan>

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