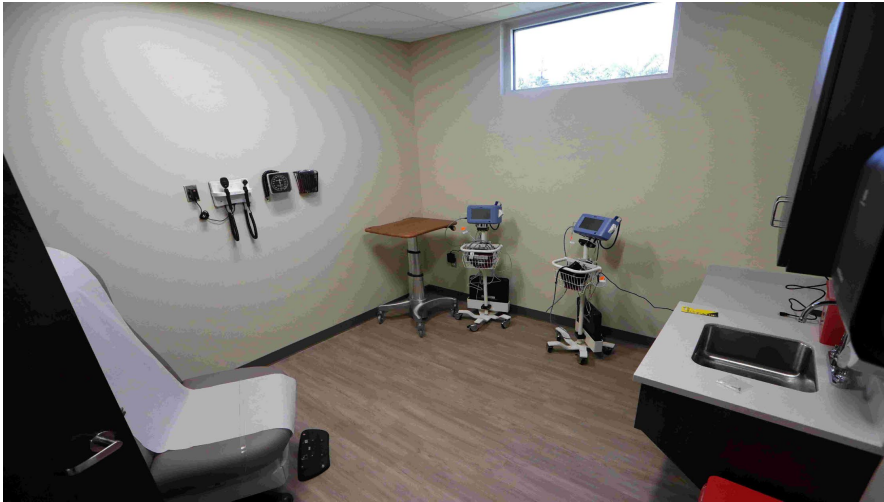


FSU PrimaryHealth center set to open Monday in southwest Tallahassee location

Byron Dobson, Tallahassee Democrat

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A behind the scenes look at the new FSU PrimaryHealth exam rooms. Alicia Devine, Tallahassee Democrat

FSU PrimaryHealth – a public primary health center operated by Florida State's College of Medicine – opens its doors Monday with a focus not only on the patient's health, but the wellness of the southwest community where it is located.

The 10,000 square foot center is opening on schedule, a year after the college broke ground on the property at Roberts Avenue and Eisenhower Street, just up the street from Sabal Palm Elementary.

The patient-focused center will be staffed by physicians from the College of Medicine, along with physician assistants, nurse practitioners and staff. Dr. Tracey E. Hellgren, who has practiced family medicine for more than 25 years, is coming on board in June.



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Dr. Daniel Van Durme sits in an exam to show how he would interact with patients at the new FSU PrimaryHealth center on the southwest side of Tallahassee Wednesday, May 8, 2019. (Photo: Alicia Devine/Tallahassee Democrat)

Mental and behavioral health specialists also will practice there, addressing concerns in stress management, anxiety and depression and health issues related to drug, alcohol and other factors.

Dr. Daniel Van Durme, senior associate dean for clinical community affairs, said the center is designed to meet the growing demand for accessible primary care, while also addressing health concerns for families in the southwest section of the city and beyond.



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The 10,000 square foot center is opening on schedule, a year after the college broke ground on the property at Roberts Avenue and Eisenhower Street, just up the street from Sabal Palm Elementary. (Photo: Alicia Devine/Tallahassee Democrat)

“This is really a major step forward for the College of Medicine in practicing what we have been teaching for the past 15 years,” said Van Durme, the college’s point person on the project. “We’ve been teaching about addressing the needs of under-served communities, we’ve been teaching about patient-centered care and we’ve been teaching students about dealing with the community’s health.”

While certified physicians treat patients, medical students also will rotate throughout “seeing how that’s really done, not just what the professor says in the classroom, but what really happens when the rubber meets the road.”

Van Durme said the college has conducted extensive outreach in the community, including Sabal Palm faculty and parents. An advisory committee comprised of residents from Seminole Manor, The Meadows, Mabry Manor and Providence neighborhoods, also have been involved and will continue to meet and provide input.

Graduate social work students from Florida State and Florida A&M also will be rotating through the operation.

“We are extremely pleased to have a very visible and tangible presence showing the FSU College of Medicine’s commitment to our local area,” FSU College of Medicine Dean Dr. John P. Fogarty said. “We look forward to this new partnership in southwest Tallahassee to bring quality primary care to this community.”

Not an emergency room

Initially, the center will be open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Monday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Friday.

Under primary care, doctors will cover health issues such as chronic disease management for diabetes, high-blood pressure, asthma, flu shots and immunizations, work, school or sports physicals, stomach viruses and more.

It is not equipped for emergency services, Van Durme said.



Dr. Daniel Van Durme walks into the new FSU PrimaryHealth center on the southwest side of Tallahassee Wednesday, May 8, 2019. (Photo: Alicia Devine/Tallahassee Democrat)

While the center’s location was chosen to address residents in southwest Tallahassee, care is available to anyone. Already calls have come in from residents living in Jefferson and Wakulla counties who are in search of a primary physician.

“West of here, out Highway 20, it’s 35 miles before you find the next physician,” Van Durme said. “So, for anybody that lives out past Fort Braden, we are the closest doc, so they are thrilled.

“We’re confident we are going to be filling this before long.”

A multi-dimensional approach

An important component will be the ability to address not only primary care issues but incorporating immediate mental and behavioral health counseling.

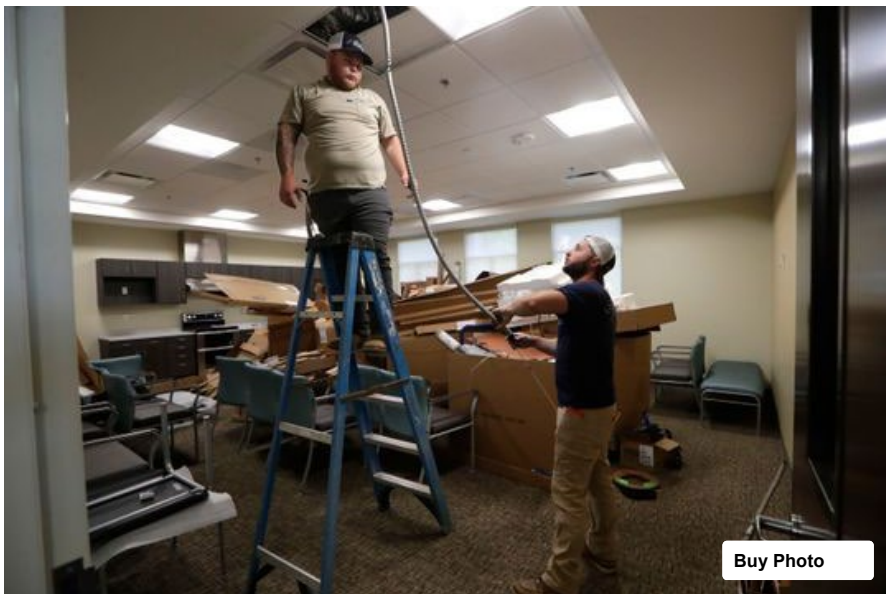
For example, Van Durme said, while treating a patient with an asthmatic condition, the physician might discover the patient is facing other pressures, such as losing a job, having a spouse diagnosed with cancer or “a teenage daughter is pregnant, and their life is falling apart.”

“I would be able to say, “Would you like to talk to one of my colleagues right now?””

Van Durme said. “And, I can bring in that person, who provides them with stress management, coping skills.”

Those specialists will work directly with primary physicians, “rather than (us) saying ‘we can refer you to someone else.’”

“People don’t go to those referrals, they don’t like the labeling,” he said.



Two men work to put some of the finishing touches on the community room in the new FSU PrimaryHealth center on the southwest side of Tallahassee Wednesday, May 8, 2019. (Photo: Alicia Devine/Tallahassee Democrat)

During a tour of the building, Van Durme pointed out several features that are key to the center’s mission.

It features 17 examination rooms, two “procedure” rooms, a conference room and a community room.

The 640-square-foot conference room includes a kitchen area, stove and refrigerator and plenty of room for group sessions. It is where community health sessions will be held, ranging from smoking cessation classes to healthy cooking and eating classes for people being treated for diabetes.

“We really teach our students about how the health of people is driven more by what happens in between your doctor visits than what happens at a doctor’s visit,” Van Durme said.



The "island" in the new FSU PrimaryHealth center on the southwest side of Tallahassee Wednesday, May 8, 2019. The area is used similar to a nurses station but will also be a workspace for doctors, medical assistants and students. (Photo: Alicia Devine/Tallahassee Democrat)

Another feature is the large open work space in the center of the building. Rather than doctors having separate offices tucked away, all members of the health team on duty will share the open setting.

"This is our collective shared office," Van Durme said. "By doing it that way, you can deliver much higher quality, much-more efficient, truly team-based health care.

"It's designed to bring all members of the medical team to be working closely together, physically side by side, sharing information, answering questions in a much more efficient manner. Everyone who is involved in the care of the patient will work out of this one central island."

More: [FSU College of Medicine moves with plans for southwest medical center](#)

More: [FSU breaks ground on medical clinic in southwest Tallahassee](#)

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Contact senior writer Byron Dobson at bdobson@tallahassee.com or on Twitter [@byrondobson](https://twitter.com/byrondobson).

Ribbon cutting Friday; Public tours held Saturday

A ceremonial ribbon cutting featuring administrators from Florida State University, Leon County Schools and elected officials will be held at 12:30 p.m. Friday outside the center, 2911 Roberts Ave., in southwest Tallahassee.

On Saturday, tours for the public will be held inside from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Visitors will be able to get free health screenings, staff introductions and instructions on how to make appointments.

For more information on FSU PrimaryHealth, visit:
<https://med.fsu.edu/fsuprimaryhealth/home>

To make an appointment, call 850-644-1543, select option 2.