Drug abuse clinic for women opens in Hub

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Public health officials were dismayed after learning the amount of women who died of drug abuse nearly doubled between 2005 and 2006, from 29 to 54.

But yesterday, they hope they've taken a big step to reverse that trend with the opening of the third city-run substance treatment program for women. The program will be run out of a Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) facility on Albany Street across from Boston Medical Center.

The "Moving On to Recovery and Empowerment" (MORE) effort is the city's first new substance abuse program in more than a decade.

Mayor Thomas Menino, who toured the new facility yesterday, called the rise in female deaths from drug abuse "unsettling.

"This program really couldn't be starting at a better time," he said. Officials secured $2.5 million, spread out over five years, from the federal government to launch the program, which also had $275,000 in city dollars to rent, furnish and renovate a portion of the building.

Rita Nieves, director of the BPHC's Substance Abuse Services Bureau, said this latest program for women will be the most intense yet, providing a minimum of 10 hours a week of services, including case management, counseling and HIV prevention. The program is expected to serve 350 women in its first five years.

"The fact that it is all women, I feel more of a connection and a sense of safety," said one woman, a mother named Tammy, who is seeking treatment through the MORE program.