

The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts  
**Health Care & Health Promotion Synergy Initiative**  
**Project Impact Summaries** (as of April 1, 2019)

**Oral Health**

- ❖ Central Massachusetts Oral Health Initiative (CMOHI) *Nov. 2000 – June 2011*
- ❖ Oral Health Initiative of North Central Massachusetts (OHINCM) *Jan. 2001 – June 2008*

The Health Foundation focused nearly \$6 million on the introduction and expansion of dental services for vulnerable populations in the Worcester area and North Central Massachusetts via the Central Massachusetts Oral Health Initiative (CMOHI) and the Oral Health Initiative of North Central Massachusetts (OHINCM).

- A partnership with Health Care For All’s statewide Oral Health Advocacy Task Force advocated for public policies which removed barriers that had prevented dentists in private practice from accepting MassHealth (the Massachusetts Medicaid program). At the outset of the projects, fewer than ten dentists in Central Massachusetts accepted MassHealth; by the conclusion of the projects in 2011, nearly 200 dentists accepted MassHealth, boosting participation rates to 50%. For reference, in 2014, according to federal data, only 20% of dentists nationally accepted Medicaid patients. That same year, MassHealth reported that 95% of their members throughout the state had access to at least two dental providers within five miles of their homes.
- Three regional community health centers (Edward M. Kennedy, Community Health Connections in Fitchburg, and Family Health Center of Worcester) implemented an Advanced Education program in General Dentistry through Lutheran Medical Center (Brooklyn, NY) in conjunction with the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers to increase the number of individuals trained in dentistry.
- Dental care capacity at the community health centers in Worcester was nearly doubled as a result of CMOHI. Over the years CMOHI was funded, the health centers provided more than 335,000 dental visits.
- A community health center opened dental clinics at three locations in North Central Massachusetts which provide over 25,000 visits per year and provide preventive dental care at 55 public schools.

A fully accredited dental hygiene program was established at Mount Wachusett Community College, providing skills necessary to become a registered dental hygienist/certified dental assistant. Community Health Connections in Fitchburg serves as a practicum site for the dental assisting students and, since 2005, students have provided dental hygiene treatment to thousands of patients.

**Behavioral Health in Preschools**

- ❖ Together For Kids (TFK) *May 2001 – June 2009*

The Health Foundation’s funding of Together For Kids (TFK) totaled \$1.8 million for the development of a mental health consultation model to aid the social-emotional development of preschoolers who presented with challenging behaviors in child care settings.

- The TFK model demonstrated that with an average of 24 hours of direct service, children’s behavior and developmental skills were improved; preschool expulsions were reduced to near zero; and parents reported greater satisfaction with their preschools.
- The United Way provided \$401,000 and The Daniels Foundation \$24,000 for TFK.
- TFK was one of six early childhood mental health programs chosen from around the country to be studied by Georgetown University’s Center for Child and Human Development.
- Since FY’08, state funding for mental health consultation in preschool settings has totaled more than \$13 million.
- Under the CMS Section 1115 waiver that was approved for Massachusetts in November 2016, the Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative Community Service Agencies have been approved as community partners for the Accountable Care Organizations that are being established. This means that services will continue to be provided as they have been under the Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative.

**Child Abuse**

- ❖ Child Abuse Prevention and Protection Collaborative *Jan. 2001 – Nov. 2007*

The Health Foundation provided nearly \$2 million in funding for this collaborative effort to develop a coordinated, community-based effort to prevent child abuse and neglect, establish a continuum of care for victims and their families, and advocate for legislation to address shaken baby syndrome and provide for sexual assault nurse examiners.

- The Collaborative expanded the Family Outreach Network’s home visiting services; implemented the Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Campaign at two hospitals and expanded the Campaign to four additional birthing hospitals; explored best practices for child sexual assault prevention; continued community-based child abuse prevention education; and advocated for the establishment of regional diagnostic and treatment centers in Massachusetts for child victims of maltreatment.
- Massachusetts law now requires that all birthing parents receive education about shaken baby syndrome at the hospital.
- The state continues to fund sexual assault nurse examiners at child advocacy centers throughout the state, funding \$3.1 million per year from FY’11 to FY’14. Funding averaged about \$4.4 million from FY’15 to FY’18, totaling over \$30 million to date.

### **Adult Chronic Homelessness**

#### ❖ Home Again *Jan. 2007 – June 2013*

Home Again received over \$2.2 million from The Health Foundation to end adult chronic homelessness in Worcester using the “housing first” approach.

- Home Again housed 108 individuals in scattered and clustered sites around Worcester.
- Central MA Housing Alliance/Continuum of Care prioritized and secured housing subsidies for the adult chronic homeless population in Worcester.
- Home Again documented the efficacy of the “housing first” approach and the state transitioned its housing supports from sheltering to “housing first.”
- In January 2011, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness recognized Worcester as the first city of its size to effectively end chronic adult homelessness.
- Ongoing funding for case management/community supports has been provided statewide by all Medicaid behavioral health providers since 2011.
- Massachusetts received a CMS Innovations planning grant in 2011 to address serving “dual eligibles” with Medicaid and Medicare funds for vulnerable populations, including 18 of the adult chronic homeless who were housed by Home Again. This implementation began October 1, 2013.
- Funding for occupancy costs through HUD has totaled over \$3.5 million, since FY’08.
- Under the CMS Section 1115 waiver that was approved for Massachusetts in November 2016, case management services will continue to be available to “dual eligibles” and all MassHealth recipients will be eligible for the services from July 1, 2017-June 30, 2022.

### **Hunger**

#### ❖ Hunger-Free & Healthy *Jan. 2007 – Dec. 2012*

Hunger-Free & Healthy received \$1.5 million in funding from The Health Foundation for a variety of approaches to improve local access to healthy food and to reduce hunger in Worcester.

- A partnership with the Worcester Public Schools improved the quality of meals offered to 25,000 students. Building on this partnership, in 2018, 21 schools in the district now provide free breakfast after the bell which is remarkable given that only 100 schools across the state do so.
- Hunger-Free & Healthy participants worked for the passage of the School Nutrition Bill that initiated the creation of a statewide Food Policy Council, which still exists today.
- Project partner Project Bread hired a community outreach worker to visit various food pantries across Worcester, improving access to SNAP (food stamps) by enabling eligible individuals to enroll in the program. Between May 2009 and December 2011, the outreach worker conducted outreach at 38 different sites and submitted 552 SNAP applications on behalf of the clients.
- Through a partnership with the Regional Environmental Council, 22 community and school gardens were developed, bringing the total number of gardens in Worcester to 60.

### **Children’s Mental Health**

#### ❖ Choices *Jan. 2007 – Dec. 2011*

#### ❖ The Winchendon Project *Jan. 2007 – Dec. 2012*

The Health Foundation provided \$2.2 million in funding for Choices and The Winchendon Project. These projects focused on access to mental health services and the prevention of substance abuse among adolescents and joined the statewide Children’s Mental Health Campaign (CMHC) to advocate for issues pertinent to children’s mental health.

- In 2008, CMHC was successful in advocating for the passing of Chapter 321 – An Act Relative to Children’s Mental Health. Major provisions of this legislation included early identification for children with mental health needs, the creation of a task force to assess the capacity of schools to deliver behavioral health services and make recommendations to promote effective delivery; improved insurance coverage for children with mental health needs; and the restructuring of the Commonwealth’s provision, coordination, and oversight of children’s behavioral health services.
- “An Act Relative to Safe and Supportive Schools” legislation was passed in July 2014. The law requires that schools develop action plans to create safe and supportive environments. The Winchendon Project staff participated in the Safe and Supportive Schools Coalition which played an important role in developing this legislation.
- The Winchendon Project integrated behavioral health services at Murdock Middle High School through the school-based health center administered by Heywood Hospital.
- Under the CMS Section 1115 waiver that was approved for Massachusetts in November 2016, case management services will continue to be provided for MassHealth recipients which will mean additional support for many of these children from July 1, 2017-June 30, 2022.

## Economic Self-Sufficiency

### ❖ A Better Life (ABL) Jan. 2011 – Dec. 2017

The Health Foundation provided over \$3 million to the Worcester Housing Authority (WHA) to enable families to achieve economic self-sufficiency and transition out of public housing. WHA aimed to break the persistent cycle of poverty and public housing reliance and transform the lives of its residents with comprehensive wrap-around services that promote a strong and self-sufficient family unit.

#### Recent findings:

- The employment rate at Great Brook Valley and Curtis Apartments jumped by 24% (from 39% in 2014 to 62% in 2019).
- At Curtis, 348 of 497 adults (70%) are working, up from 181 of 489 adults (37%) in 2014, before ABL was made mandatory.
- 78 families have used their escrow, averaging nearly \$10,000 per family, to move out of public housing since ABL began.
- In 2018, 11 families successfully transitioned out of State Public Housing - 9 into private market housing / 2 purchased homes).
- Current participants have increased their credit score average by over 100 points during their time with ABL (478 v 593).
- Household income for participants enrolled in ABL for more than six months increased by 36.8%. The average household income at entry was \$19,000 vs. \$26,000 year-end 2018. Current participants have escrowed over \$400,000.
- 32% of households have an adult member enrolled in an education program with 40% attending a higher education institution compared to just 11% in 2012. Over 150 academic / training programs have been completed by ABL participants since 2016.

#### Advocacy efforts at the state level have led to system changes to sustain and replicate ABL:

- In May 2015, ABL was selected by DHCD as an innovative model program to replicate at other Housing Authorities. In March 2019, nearly \$1 million was awarded by DHCD over 18 months, with the opportunity for renewal for another 18 months, to enable the Gloucester, New Bedford, and Taunton Housing Authorities to implement ABL.
- From 2016-2024, the state is providing \$150,000 a year for 2 Family Life Coaches (FLC). As part of this deal, WHA was approved to retain 50% of solar energy savings for the FLCs, a savings of \$150,000 a year. WHA also received funding from the United Way of Central MA for two years to support a half-time FLC.
- In July 2014, “An Act to Foster Economic Independence” was approved. It included a provision that required the MA DHCD to allow WHA to operate ABL in its state-subsidized housing properties, which represent about 20% (493) of its units. In April 2015, DHCD approved the administrative details to implement the work/education requirement.
- Under the CMS Section 1115 waiver that was approved for Massachusetts in November 2016, case management services will continue to be provided for MassHealth recipients, which will mean additional support for ABL participants.

#### Advocacy efforts continue at the federal level to gain authorization for ABL to operate in its Massachusetts’ federal public housing units:

- On March 14, 2019, HUD announced that it is accepting applications for the Moving to Work Program. WHA will apply and if selected, WHA would be allowed to implement ABL in their Federal subsidized housing, including their voucher program which is almost 4000 families.
- Advocacy efforts in 2016 resulted in support from Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) for legislation that would allow states that operate self-sufficiency programs in their state properties to operate these programs in their federal properties as well. Efforts to obtain congressional authorization continue.

## Prisoner Reentry

### ❖ Worcester Initiative for Supported Reentry (WISR); Wiser Men; Wiser Women Jan. 2011 – Aug. 2017

The Health Foundation provided over \$2.3 million to Advocates, Inc. for WISR, Wiser Men and Wiser Women to reduce recidivism among men and women who were formerly incarcerated, thereby improving public safety and public health. Key elements in achieving this goal included access to social and health services, housing placement and employment readiness and job placement.

#### Findings from a November 2016 Three-Year Post-Release Evaluation Report from Brandeis University indicate:

- The recidivism rate among WISR participants three-years post-release was 20.8%, a reduction of 47% relative to a historical comparison group; a savings of more than \$375,000 for a 59% return on investment based on one-year incarceration costs.
- 96% of participants were housed immediately upon release, and the remaining 4% were housed within one day of release.
- 97% of participants in need of MassHealth insurance were enrolled. 93% of participants referred to substance abuse treatment services accessed them and 75% of participants referred to mental health services accessed those services.
- Among the 152 participants, 62% were employed post-release and 71% were continuously employed for one year or longer.

#### WISR advocacy efforts continue with state officials to ensure the sustainability of reentry programming.

- Reentry services are included in the state’s 2018 Criminal Justice Reform legislation for Worcester and Middlesex County, totaling \$7 million from FY’19 to FY’21.
- Wiser supported legislation which passed in April 2018 to include enhanced community supervision for reentry.
- WISR provided information for the Senate’s criminal justice reform agenda and worked with the Office of Probation to replicate the WISR model in select Community Corrections Centers.
- Middlesex Sheriff’s Office received a Bureau of Justice Assistance \$244,000 grant in July 2018 to implement the WISR model.
- In July 2016, Advocates, Inc. secured a commitment from MassHealth / Mass Behavioral Health Partnership to provide healthcare and community support services (i.e., case management) as post-release reentry services. Approximately 97% of those incarcerated are eligible for MassHealth.

- Senate Bill #2021, “An Act relative to motor vehicle license suspension” was signed into law in March 2016, thereby repealing the automatic suspension of drivers licenses and accompanying fine for people convicted of a drug crime.

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office received \$750,000 from the Bureau of Justice Assistance in 2014, one of only seven awarded nationally, to implement Wisser Men, a region-wide reentry program modeled after WISR. The Health Foundation provided a \$375,000 cash match for this project. Under this grant, 79 participants were recruited and consented into the program from the Worcester County House of Correction. A region wide reentry strategic plan was created and supports opportunities for resource sharing and local-level systems change initiatives that can be leveraged to reduce recidivism. At one-year post-release, the re-incarceration rate for Wisser Men was 10.7% less than for the comparison group. Recommendations included building a greater alliance with community supervision.

### Healthcare Access

#### ❖ Improving Access to Health *Jan. 2011 – Dec. 2015*

The Health Foundation provided over \$900,000 to the Improving Access to Health project. Milford Regional Medical Center (MRMC) identified concerns about access to primary care in its service area and the impact it was having on the emergency department. MRMC brought together a group of community organizations that determined that a community health center would improve local access. The Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center, which was already seeing several hundred patients from the Milford area at its Worcester and Framingham sites, agreed to construct a satellite in Milford.

- Funding from The Health Foundation, together with \$400,000 from the MetroWest Health Foundation, enabled the construction of a satellite health center in Milford, which opened in March 2014.
- As of December 2015, more than 3,800 patients (over 13,000 visits) had been seen for primary care services. Of these, approximately 500 patients transferred from the health centers in either Framingham or Worcester, freeing up access at those sites.
- As of September 2017, nearly 6,000 patients are being seen at the Milford site.

### Transition-Age Homelessness

#### ❖ The Compass Project *Jan. 2011 – Dec. 2013*

#### ❖ Unaccompanied Homeless Transition Age Youth (TAY) Pilot Project in Worcester *Sept. 2014 – Dec. 2017*

The Health Foundation provided approximately \$1 million to fund The Compass Project to prevent youth and young adult homelessness. A network of providers in Worcester who serve youth and young people at risk of homelessness was created and continues to this day.

- Under the CMS Section 1115 waiver that was approved for Massachusetts in November 2016, case management services will continue to be provided for MassHealth recipients, which will mean additional support for many of these young people from July 1, 2017-June 30, 2022.

The Foundation also provided \$30,000 in seed funding to the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) to partner with the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP) and the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) to pilot a project for 40 youth focused on housing, employment, primary care, behavioral health care, and case management services.

- Support services from SMOC and MBHP are estimated at \$300,000 per year, including \$187,000 for 40 project-based Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) housing vouchers.
- MHSA committed \$54,125 in 2014 to be used to support this pilot, including the evaluation component by Brandeis University.
- MassHealth reimburses MBHP for providing primary care, behavioral health care, and case management services.
- In May 2016, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development approved the release of 40 MRVPs.
- SMOC began intake of TAY in July 2016 at the Triage Center and rapidly houses and assists them in gaining employment through SMOC's Ready, Willing & Able employment arm.
- Since July 2016, 28 homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 24 were housed and received intensive Community Support Service care management from two case managers. Seven youth have started school; nine are employed (four are doing both); and eight have reunited with family.

## Childhood Adversity

### ❖ Worcester HEARS (Worcester's Healthy Environments and Resilience in Schools Initiative) *Jan. 2015 – Present*

The Health Foundation has provided over \$1.7 million to the Worcester Public Schools (WPS) for the Worcester HEARS (HEARS) project to implement evidence-based Flexible Framework to integrate trauma-sensitive routines and individual supports into the school day at four elementary schools and one middle school in Worcester. HEARS brings together advances in brain science, child development, and best practices to address childhood adversity in our complex society to create school environments that support children's health, social and emotional development, and academic success. The project includes a parent engagement component.

Worcester HEARS has achieved the following impact:

- 53 teachers and staff took part in trainings on trauma sensitive schools through Lesley University to become school leaders.
- Approximately 50 parents have graduated from the Worcester Institute for Parent Leadership and Education (WIPLE) course offered in both Spanish and English. WIPLE seeks to bring best practices in family engagement and education.
- HEARS received \$75,000 from the Fred Harris Daniels Foundation to provide training in mindfulness education using the MindUp program. All HEARS teachers have been trained in the evidence-based MindUP curriculum. When surveyed, 93% of teachers reported using MindUP one or more times a week.
- Three clinicians provide half day clinical coverage daily at each of the 4 elementary schools and intensive care coordination at the middle school. Staff at these schools has received training on the effects of trauma on learning.
- A school-based health center at Worcester East Middle School operated by Family Health Center Worcester was renovated and opened in April 2018. The center provides access to health care and behavioral health services to more than 800 students.
- HEARS is also creating a system of care with community-based mental health agencies and providers who provide group counseling to students after school.

## Healthy Eating

### ❖ Worcester Regional Food Hub *Jan. 2015 – Present*

The Health Foundation has provided over \$1.8 million for the development of the Worcester Regional Food Hub (Food Hub). The Food Hub is designed to improve the regional food system by strengthening sustainable agriculture, promoting healthy eating, and fueling economic development.

The Food Hub aims to increase access to fresh local food by providing aggregation and distribution services to farms and institutions and to incubate local food entrepreneurs through a commercial kitchen and business consulting services.

The Food Hub is an approved Sodexo vendor, which allows for distributing produce to institutions such as AbbVie, UMass Medical School, and UMass Memorial. In addition, the Food Hub also distributes produce to public school systems including the Worcester Public Schools and farmers markets and mobile markets in Worcester, Fitchburg, and Leominster.

In January 2019, the Food Hub was awarded a \$65,000 Urban Agenda Grant from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development for "Launching Diverse Food Entrepreneurs" (one of nine grant awards across the state).

Aggregation sales grew substantially in 2018, reaching over \$269,000 to date, exceeding the annual target of approximately \$198,000.

## Community Development

### ❖ ReImagine North of Main *Jan. 2015 – Present*

The ReImagine North of Main project has received \$1.9 million to transform the North of Main neighborhood in Fitchburg into a vibrant community where people want to live, work, play and invest. The overall theme is to brand the neighborhood as the "Gateway to Arts and Culture." To do this, the project is focusing on three key areas: Neighborhood Development to increase the quality of neighborhood life; Economic Development to increase the number of viable main street businesses; and Community Engagement.

- MassDevelopment designated the Downtown Fitchburg district under its Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) program. The 3-year program includes a TDI Fellow, a real estate professional who will work on achieving the vision for the district. It also includes opportunities for real estate TA, capital investment, and grant programs. Of the 26 Gateway Cities eligible, Fitchburg was one of two selected. The goal is to concentrate revitalization efforts, resources and investments in a compact downtown area, creating a critical mass of activity.
- In April 2018, the Fitchburg City Council approved the sale of the B.F. Brown Building, which was damaged by a fire, to NewVue Communities. NewVue will use the insurance settlement of \$1.6 million to renovate the building to be used as artist living and work space. Renovation is critical to the branding of the neighborhood as the "Gateway to Arts and Culture."

ReImagine North of Main is led by Fitchburg State University and includes the Montachusett Opportunity Council, The City of Fitchburg, The Fitchburg Art Museum, NewVue Communities, and Three Pyramids as partners. This project has also received over \$600,000 in funding from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.