



Boston Children's
Collaboration for
Community Health



❖ About the Collaboration for Community Health

Boston Children's Collaboration for Community Health (the "Collaboration") was launched in 2018 with the goal of improving the health and well-being of children and families in communities disproportionately impacted by systemic injustices and inequities in health and social determinants of health. The Collaboration achieves this overarching goal by increasing community capacity and advancing child-centered methods, ideas, and investment strategies.

The Collaboration has [eight equity-focused strategic initiatives](#) designed to address disparities in the social determinants of children's health. Within each initiative, the Collaboration partners with "funded partners": community-based organizations, public agencies, academic institutions, and others.

❖ Focus of this report

This annual report shares highlights from the first year of the [new cycle](#) of Birth to Five, Healthy Living, and Family Housing Stability and Economic Opportunity funded partners (2021-2024). It also shares accomplishments from the first year and a half of the Children's Health Equity (CHEQ) initiative.

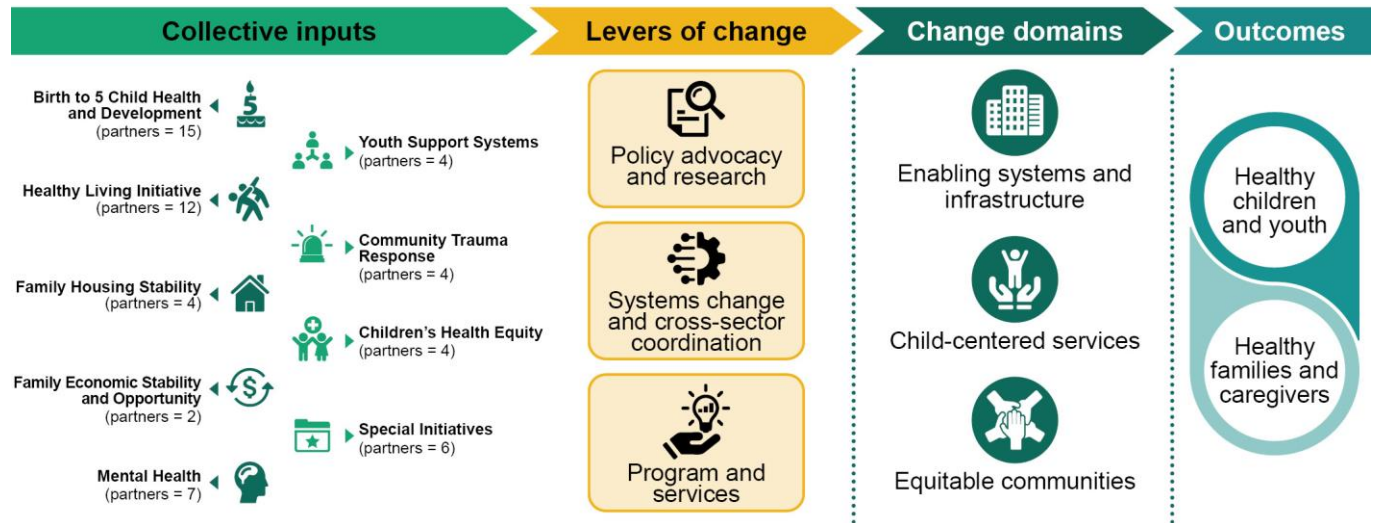
2022 also marked the end of the first funding cycle for the Mental Health, Youth Support Systems, and Community Trauma Response initiatives (2019-2022). This report highlights their combined accomplishments over the three-year period. A [new cycle](#) of initiatives was funded in 2022.

See how we are driving
child health



Progress along pathways to change

The Collaboration's Theory of Change demonstrates the pathways through which our strategic initiatives drive change. Funded partners work through three **levers** to bring about change, which lead to improvements across three broad **domains**. Ultimately, these short- and mid-term changes contribute to longer-term goals of **healthy children, youth, families, and caregivers**. The initiative-level spotlights that follow highlight areas of progress along this pathway.



Elevating work through partnerships

The Collaboration has fostered connections across organizations with shared goals. New and deepened partnerships have resulted in the following:

- ❖ Reaching more people by partnering with organizations already trusted by the community.
- ❖ Identifying new referral opportunities, aligning referral mechanisms, and coordinating service delivery.
- ❖ Improving quality of services by bringing together partners with technical knowledge and those with cultural and linguistic expertise.
- ❖ Sharing knowledge between partners, such as inviting partner staff to participate in or deliver trainings.

Setting the stage in Boston: 2022



The Great Resignation impacted program implementation, with most funded partners reporting staffing and retention challenges



Inflation and rising rents created a challenging environment both for securing affordable housing for families and sustainability of nonprofit operations



Childcare shortages exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic pose significant barriers to connecting families with early childhood programs

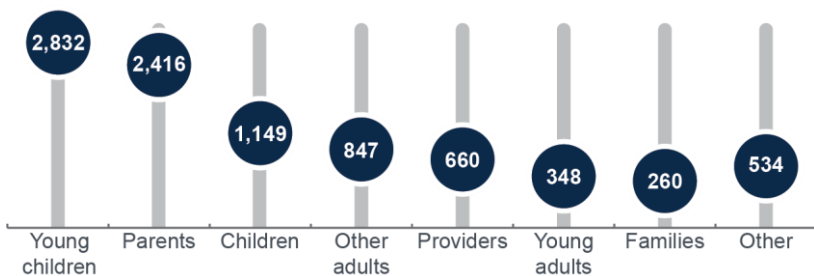


Who we are reaching

The Collaboration has engaged more than 9,000 children, parents, families, residents, and providers across 22 Boston neighborhoods and more than 50 other cities and towns across the state.

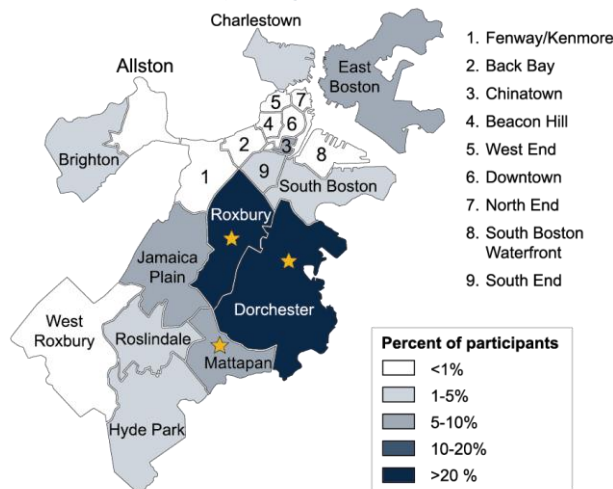
More than half of the participants with Boston zip codes live in Roxbury or Dorchester. Key communities include neighborhoods with the highest childhood poverty rates.

Participants by type



Includes 2021-2022 data from Birth to Five, Healthy Living, Family Housing Stability and Economic Opportunity, and Children's Health Equity funded partners only.

Participants by neighborhood (2021-2022)



Includes participants with Boston zip codes only. ★ Indicates Boston neighborhoods with largest concentration of children in poverty. Source: [The Boston Indicators Project](#).

Spotlight on Special Initiatives

Over the last year, the Collaboration extended flexible funding opportunities to respond to emerging needs and support organizations with innovative approaches to improving child health. Below, we describe progress made possible by this funding.

Advocacy

Health Care For All led advocacy efforts to promote policies that are responsive to the health care needs of children and families, including the MassHealth 1115 Waiver and "Cover All Kids" bill.

Urban College Boston enrolled its sixth cohort of 15 fellows in the [Certificate in Advocacy and Leadership Program](#) in partnership with Vital Villages.

Funding for Emergent Needs

Local Initiatives Support Corporation Boston launched a [small business growth capital fund](#) and secured additional funding.

Heading Home made progress toward developing [permanent housing](#) for 20 families in Dorchester and secured additional funding.

Massachusetts Housing Investment Cooperation is providing a loan to [City Fresh Foods](#) to scale their employee-owned business model.

Centering equity from grants to outcomes

In its effort to address historic and systematic racial inequities in the City of Boston, the Collaboration seeks to lift up organizations led by individuals of color and dedicated to supporting communities of color. Investing in organizations committed to addressing racial inequities is the first step of centering equity in the Collaboration's work.

❖ **82%** of funding is going toward **communities of color and other underserved communities****

❖ **45%** of funding is supporting **organizations led by people of color****

**Data are from grant applications and include Cycle 2 funded partners only. People of color-led is defined as ≥75% of the highest-paid staff members identify as people of color and ≥50% of the Board are people of color. Five organizations are excluded from calculations due to incomplete data.

Funded Partners utilize socio-demographic data collected for grant reporting to:

- ❖ Determine whether services reach intended populations, including communities historically denied equitable access to resources
- ❖ Understand differences in outcomes by sociodemographic group
- ❖ Apply for additional funding opportunities

Equity Impact

Funded Partners are supporting **people of color's mental wellness**, increasing **cultural capacity**, and **creating nourishing spaces** in communities of color.

Funded Partners are increasing **people of color's ownership of the built environment**, increasing **educational opportunities**, and **supporting youth to lead community programming**.



Collective inputs

\$1.45m in Year 1 funding
(6.73m in total funding since 2018)

15 [funded partners](#)

>5,000 community members engaged

Common programmatic approaches

- Train early childhood educators and providers in evidence-based practices
- Build caregivers' parenting skills and confidence
- Screen for concerns with children's social-emotional development

Funded partners built on work from Cycle 1 (2018-2021) in several ways: **formalizing established partnerships**; integrating the **endorsement system** statewide and expanding to Spanish-speaking professionals; and increasing enrollment through **new partner sites**.

Levers of change

22 events led by advocacy leads

Advocacy leads are reaching others in the community by teaching them the principles of advocacy work.

229 educators trained in early education concepts, such as social emotional learning and The Basics Principles

1,499 opportunities for family learning

Funded partners offered workshops, coaching sessions, home visits, and playdates for families to engage, learn and connect.



Partnerships

- Funded partners attributed more than 72 new or deepened partnerships to their participation in the Collaboration.
- The Collaboration has supported advocacy efforts for improved infant and child mental health services, and facilitated statewide cross-sector coordination with the Boston Office of Early Childhood, the Massachusetts Departments of Early Education and Care, Public Health, Mental Health and Children and Families.

"Being able to reconnect with these partners has been essential [...] to our Family Engagement team."

"There are specific taboos that certain cultures have around seeking help, and having [the new staff member] dismantle some of those beliefs through proper education empowers our families to advocate for themselves."

Change domains

Enabling systems and infrastructure: creating infrastructure for widespread developmental screening

59 programs using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire for developmental screening

Funded partners are standardizing screening and referral process across the city, which helps connect families with early intervention and other supports.

Child-centered services: better access to supports grounded in parent experience

2,482 parents, children, or families engaged in opportunities for learning

Engagement in wellness workshops, reading programs, and other parenting support programs not only helps parents support their children's development, but also provides opportunities for parents to connect and prioritize their own wellbeing.

"The parents we engage with often become parent leaders in the community. [...] The peer model leads to the exponential growth of parents as engaged community members."

Outcomes

Child outcomes

574 referrals to services resulting from developmental screenings

578 children achieving developmental milestones

Caregivers reported that their children are displaying new skills in the domain of kindergarten readiness.

Caregiver outcomes

555 caregivers increased parenting capabilities

Caregivers reported increased self-efficacy, knowledge, confidence, and awareness of resources.

25 caregivers improved reading quality (such as using dialogic reading with children) or frequency of reading with children

543 caregivers increased connections with other parents or community supports

"[I have learned] how to start healing, how to let go, coping skills for stress, how to manage not yelling, how can we help ourselves with perfectionism.."



Health equity spotlight

Funded partners are increasing the cultural and linguistic capacity of their projects by:

- Addressing cultural and linguistic barriers to developmental screenings and services
- Engaging staff that represent diverse languages, geographic locations, cultures and racial/ethnic identities
- Working with families to address barriers to the social determinants of health



Birth to Five

Set children ages birth to five years on a high trajectory for success in school and life
September 2021 – August 2022

Collective inputs

\$583,692 in Year 1 funding
(\$2.93m in total funding since 2018)

12 [funded partners](#)

>950 community members engaged

Common programmatic approaches

- Engage children and families in physical activity
- Engage youth in urban farming and support local food systems
- Educate caregivers about healthy eating and active lifestyles
- Distribute free meals and produce to families

Funded partners continuing from Cycle 1 (2018-2021) are **scaling up pilot programs**, incorporating **lessons learned** and community members' feedback, and increasing **youth and resident leadership** components of their work.

Health equity spotlight

Funded partners geared nutrition education to be culturally appropriate:

- Partnered with Boston Organization of Nutritionists and Dieticians of Color to design and implement nutrition education;
- Trained youth peer health educators to guide and deliver health education; and
- Modified healthy living curriculum during Ramadan to offer advice relevant to this period.

Levers of change

17 nutrition and healthy eating events and **170** urban farming sessions to increase families' knowledge and skills

178 youth leading healthy living programming

Youth leaders are supported in conducting biking workshops, leading tours of urban farms, and educating peers on improving their healthy behaviors.



Partnerships

- Funded partners leveraged 68 relationships in the first year.
- Partnerships took the shape of co-sponsored community events, in-school programming, referrals, trainings for partner organization staff, and sharing expertise.

"The Collaboration has supported us in continuing our work with hyper-local schools... students and staff are enjoying a longer-term relationship with the farm."

"We have seen our youth and families go unnoticed [by health educators] due to their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and English language proficiency. Our programming is led by Latine youth and youth of color who [...] support the direction of the programming."

Change domains

Child-centered services: increased engagement in physical activity programs

3,798 youth and adults participating in physical activity

Funded partners focused on meeting youth where they are: improving the quality of recess programming and providing "outdoor adventure" programs at housing developments.

Equitable communities: better access to healthy, local food

29,267 servings of produce distributed and purchased

289 raised beds and grow boxes created for growing local produce

Beyond opportunities for residents to grow their own produce, funded partners expanded access to healthy foods through extended farmers market days, subsidized CSA boxes, and offering low-cost shares in the Dorchester Food Co-op.

Outcomes

Child outcomes

Funded partners share how leadership roles have improved the **social-emotional health, skills, and confidence** of the 178 youth leaders

"Youth Apprentices who helped teach the [Bike School] program consistently demonstrated positive shifts in their capacity to communicate, lead, socialize, and feel confident in their work."

Family outcomes

122 Somali-American mothers participating in healthy living conversations changed their attitudes around nutrition, physical activity, and/or mental health

"Women walk in the park and do not just sit. They play with their children in activities. Women know about iron and vitamins and how important they are."



Healthy Living

Improve resources and opportunities for the adoption of healthy living in communities experiencing inequities in health

September 2021 – August 2022

Collective inputs

\$2.89m in Year 1 funding
(\$3.54m in total funding since 2018)

6 [funded partners](#)

>2900 residents engaged

Common programmatic approaches

- Engage residents in advocacy efforts to improve availability of affordable housing and protect tenants' rights
- Build strategic partnerships to improve policymaker knowledge of tenant-driven housing policy
- Provide individual counseling, rental assistance, and/or financial savings programs

Funded Partners built on work from Cycle 1 (2018-2021) to **secure policy wins** to **increase affordable housing**, **improve tenancy retention** and credit scores, and **build deeper** and more cross-sector partnerships.

Levers of change

941 articles and posts about housing organizing and policy

1,365 units covered by tenant associations that collaborate and collectively organize for maintaining fair and affordable housing practices

Funded partners engage in activities to implement critical policy, partnerships, and organizational changes to improve economic and housing security for low-income, predominantly racial/ethnic minority families.



Partnerships

- Funded partners collaborated with community-based organizations to host organizing events and provide public testimony.
- They also partnered with schools and lawyers to build awareness of discriminatory housing practices used against communities of colors.

“At a [Care that Works] gathering [...] organizations agreed to testify at a Boston City Council hearing. After a series of meetings with City Councilors and CTW testimony, Mayor Wu signed ARPA spending plan, which includes \$1M for grants to nonprofits to expand childcare access and availability to essential workers [including workers with non-standard schedules].”

Change domains

Enabling systems and infrastructure: increased affordable homeownership opportunities in Boston

\$229 million secured for new affordable homeownership units through the state's American Rescue Plan Act funding and the city's Acquisition Opportunity Program

Child-centered services: improved housing security through family support services

716 households participated in individual support services

Support services include tenants' rights counseling, rental assistance, and MAHA's home-buying program.

Equitable communities: residents advocate for fair housing practices and increased affordable housing

125 residents engaged in local housing advocacy

Advocacy efforts include public actions, testimonials, meeting with policymakers, and leadership and organizing meetings.

Outcomes

Family outcomes

36 participants in a home-buying program reported improvement in stress, psychological, well-being, and/or family well being

156 families secured stable housing

Among these families, **48** families have children in the Boston Public School system and were previously unhoused

8 parents secured additional child-care hours, enabling them to continue working jobs with non-standard schedules

“Parents that are stably housed with their children do often share with us anecdotally...that children sleep better, are happier and less anxious, smile and laugh more, and show improvement in how they interact with siblings and parents.”

Health equity spotlight

Funded partners strive to address health and racial inequities through new projects focused on improving communities of color's access to health resources and community ownership.



Family Housing Stability and Economic Opportunity

September 2021 – August 2022 – Promote affordable, safe, and quality housing for children and families in priority neighborhoods and foster improved family economic stability and opportunity

Collective inputs

\$2.84m in Year 1-2 funding
(\$3.59m in total funding since 2019)

4 [funded collaboratives](#) made up of **53** organizations, schools, agencies, and other groups
>950 community members engaged

Common programmatic approaches

- Center leadership and power in communities to address the social determinants of child health
- Increase coordination among service providers and address service gaps

Leveraging CHEq funding, collaboratives have invested in infrastructure to advance their desired systems change. Two collaboratives have hired project managers at the backbone organization to coordinate CHEq work across partners.

Levers of change

335 referrals facilitated access to community programs for youth and parents

145 outreach and recruitment events increased residents' awareness of services

19 workforce development opportunities for parents to improve household income



Partnerships

Organizations within CHEq collaboratives work together to achieve the **conditions of collective impact**: a common **agenda**, shared **measurement**, mutually reinforcing **activities**, continuous **communication**, and a dedicated organizational **"backbone."**

"Solutions to challenges are not only better when developed together, but more likely to succeed because of the contributions and investment of each member in the solution."

Change domains

Enabling systems and infrastructure: streamlined access to services

Collaboratives are building shared infrastructure between community organizations to improve residents' experience with services – for example, using common intake forms.

Family-centered services: new opportunities for generational wealth-building

161 parents in workforce training or career coaching

Through parent workforce training and youth-focused STEM activities, Nubian Neighborhood Network improves access to STEM careers that provide family-sustaining wages for Roxbury residents.

Equitable communities: residents taking ownership

151 youth and residents taking on leadership roles

Fields Corner Crossroads Collaborative launched a Youth Advisory board with a participatory budget of \$100,000 to address youth needs in Fields Corner.

Outcomes

Youth outcomes

84 youth report greater access and awareness of youth programming & services

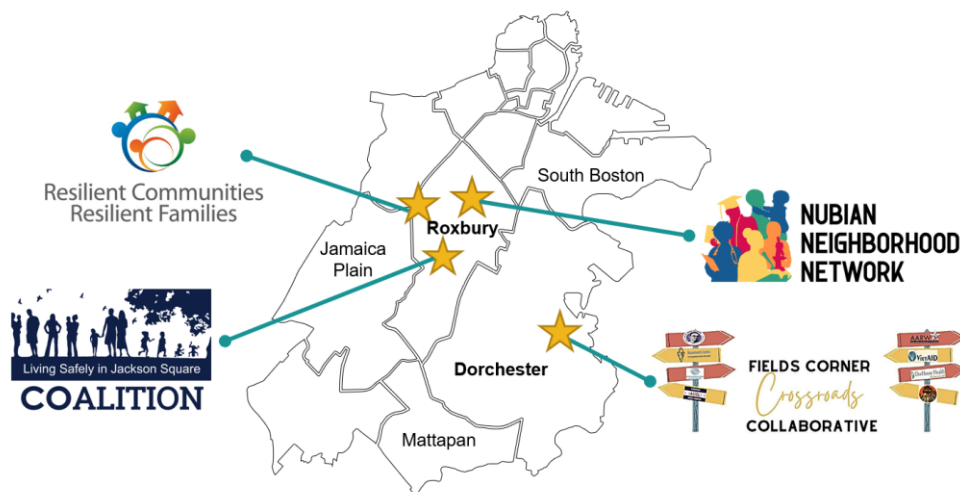
Living Safely in Jackson Square created a [Youth Programs Ecosystem directory](#) of 35 organizations that support youth and families in Jackson Square.

Family outcomes

161 parents engaged in shaping their children's education

The Surround Care Coalition increases parental leadership in four hub schools through a Parent Teacher Advisory Group, Parent Leadership Fellows, and Network Nights, which gather parents, educators, and partner organizations.

"The Parent Teacher Advisory Group has become a safe space for parents and educators to voice their frustrations and to engender peer support as they discovered common ground."



Children's Health Equity

The Children's Health Equity (CHEq) Initiative advances child health through a place-based, [collective impact approach](#). Four collaboratives, based in Boston neighborhoods, received three-year grants to foster collaboration and cohesion in communities disproportionately impacted by inequities in health.

January 2021 – July 2022

Collective inputs

\$2.98m funded to date

(May 2019-April 2022)

7 funded partners*

>1800 youth, adults, parents, and providers engaged

Common programmatic approaches

- Supporting racial/ethnic and linguistically diverse students to enter the mental health (MH) provider workforce
- Coordinating referrals between schools and MH service organizations
- Providing accessible educational opportunities for clinical graduate students and MH providers to deliver trauma-informed care

Levers of change

>300 parents engaged in conversations about their children's mental health needs

> 2x the number of MH bills advocated for during 2021-2022 compared to the previous legislative session

14 School districts implemented universal behavioral health screening

Funded partners engaged in activities to implement critical policy, partnerships, and organizational changes to improve access and quality of MH services for children and racial/ethnic minorities.



Partnerships

- Funded partners engaged in 56 cross-sector partnerships with schools and school agencies, housing organizations, and primary care clinics.

"We worked with 10 community health centers and assisted each in strengthening [capabilities] associated with integrated behavioral health care. The pandemic highlighted the profound demand for mental health services, particularly among communities of color and those with worse access to health care."

Change domains

Enabling systems and infrastructure: more diverse MH workforce provides services in underserved areas

57 diverse MH clinicians and clinical supervisors trained

Clinicians are committed to working in trauma-focused mental health settings for racial/ethnic minority children and families in the Boston-area.

"Our Bridge Coordinator participated in over 1,000 meetings to educate schools on mental health services and resources available for students and families and gently helped schools develop systems that increase their attention to the trauma and mental health needs of students of color."

Child-centered services

538 students connected with community MH services

Clinicians are working with schools, places where youth spend most of their time, to improve awareness and access to MH resources in the community.

Outcomes

Youth outcomes

76 youth already accessing BAGLY's drop in therapy strongly agreed or agree that programming met their needs

EBNHC Bridge Program students' clinical functioning assessment scores improved by **1.4** and **2.6** on average for mood and emotions and self-harm, respectively

Provider outcomes

86% of providers who completed UMB BIRCh's online training module were highly likely or likely to implement **trauma-focused and culturally attuned strategies** learned in school settings to improve accessibility and quality of services for racially/ethnically diverse student populations



Health equity spotlight

Funded partners advanced health equity by increasing access to affordable and culturally attuned MH services:

- Expanded access to MH services to over 1,000 BPS students with little to no access; and
- Advocated over \$1 million in American Rescue Plan Act resources to launch technical assistance centers for schools to implement MH services.

"Our work in identifying high needs districts in the state will help decision makers identify where to allocate resources, build workforce capacity, and where more targeted support is needed."



Mental Health

Improve accessible, culturally responsive systems of mental and behavioral health care

May 2019 – April 2022

Collective inputs

\$450k funded to date

(May 2019-April 2022)

4 funded partners*

>1,900 youth engaged

Common programmatic approaches

- Develop or expand programming that supports youth college readiness and employment
- Promote youth leadership and development
- Connect youth with resources for their physical and mental health

Funded partners supported high school students and young adults during pivotal transitions. This work was especially critical as **youth faced additional trauma, stress, isolation, and technology challenges** during the pandemic. Funded partners pivoted to supporting youth in the virtual environment, including providing personal technology to youth.

Health equity spotlight

Funded partners removed obstacles to employment and higher education for youth of color; for example, programs offered internships with fair wages, which reduce disparities in access to these opportunities.

Funded partners also engaged in internal reflection and training to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts in their organizations and programs.

Levers of change

75 referrals to connect youth to employment or job training

138 workshops to promote youth physical and mental health

Advocacy for policies that support youth in foster care

Hopewell successfully advocated for a moratorium of MA Department of Children & Families case closures for youth over 18 during the pandemic. This ensured continuity of services for these individuals.



Partnerships

- Funded partners partnered with high schools, universities, support services (such as Crisis Text Line), employers, national affiliates, and state agencies to provide comprehensive supports to youth.

“Our students have juggled multiple priorities – including work and family obligations – while continuing to pursue their degrees. It is through our partnerships that we are best able to serve our young people.”

“Our focus on DEI internally has allowed us to develop curricula and a program implementation model that is inclusive and designed with Black, Latinx, low-income, and LGBTQ+ young people at the forefront.”

Change domains

Enabling systems and infrastructure: more successful referrals and progress toward sustainability

Hopewell improved the success of placements into their My First Place™ program by educating DCF case workers on appropriate referrals for youth transitioning out of foster care.

Funded partners ensured sustainability of their programs by identifying new funding sources and better defining program models.

Youth-centered services: increased engagement in education and career programs

82 youth connected to a career or training opportunity

Funded partners completed intakes with youth to learn about their goals and connected youth to programs and employers to boost their careers.

403 youth participated in college readiness programming

Funded partners assisted youth in applying to college, including financial support and mentoring.

Outcomes

Youth outcomes

Youth achieved **career and educational milestones** that will promote future financial stability

61 youth gained employment

18 youth increased wages

133 youth enrolled in college

76 youth graduated with college degrees

“Many of our students persisted to earn their degrees under the most difficult conditions – through the trauma of the pandemic, which disproportionately affected BIPOC students and their families.”

Funded partners **helped youth feel supported** by the community during a period of uncertainty and isolation

“This video gave me a feeling of hopefulness...seeing someone like me and with my situation was very encouraging for me.”



Youth Support Systems

May 2019 – April 2022

Support youth-centered and engaged programming and services to promote healthy youth development

Collective inputs

\$898k funded to date

(May 2019-April 2022)

4 funded partners*

>1,600 community members engaged

Common programmatic approaches

- Train community-based organizations in trauma-informed practices
- Create youth-led opportunities for community voice, empowerment, and healing

Funded partners took a multi-level approach to addressing trauma – including at the **policy level** (such as trauma-informed housing policies), at the **program level** (such as training program staff that work with individuals impacted by trauma) and at the **individual level** (such as providing direct supports to families after incidents of violence).



Health equity spotlight

Funded partners expanded access to trauma supports for children and families, particularly in Boston's Cape Verdean community.

They provided opportunities for parents to be more deeply involved in their children's lives, particularly for families that have historically been overlooked by the welfare system.

Levers of change

17 opportunities for youth to discuss experiences of trauma, such as through group healing sessions

89 youth-facing program staff trained in trauma-informed best practices

737 coaching sessions to provide coaching to residents experiencing housing instability

Advocacy for equitable community resources, such as a community center

Education of public officials and agencies about the impacts of trauma



Partnerships

- Partnerships promoted access to healthy foods, supportive housing developments, institutionalization of new programs, data sharing, training on best practices, and reaching additional community members.

“Our partnerships have allowed us to increase our understanding of best practices.”

“We have been able to better understand the implications related to the community-level and systemic trauma of racial injustice and disparities that exist in our communities.”

Change domains

Enabling systems and infrastructure: systems to support those impacted by trauma

Funded partners took steps to become a more trauma-informed organization, such as establishing a trauma-informed design workgroup and training all staff in psychological first aid.

Youth-centered services: improved access to higher quality programs

Funded partners hired or trained staff to provide trauma support and mental health services, thus better supporting the youth in their programs

699 youth accessed supportive services

Youth attended sessions focused on life skills and financial literacy. They received counseling after incidents of trauma.

Equitable communities: stronger community connections

Funded partners organized events to promote a stronger sense of community, such as workshops hosted by health champions and service events in areas affected by gun violence.

Outcomes

Youth outcomes

51 youth increased knowledge about the impact of trauma and available resources

Youth reported feeling **connected to peers** and **connected to the community** after participating in a youth-led summit about trauma and trauma supports

“This safe space will allow us to address the impact of trauma caused by violence... in the past, we were unable to convene gatherings of young people when their friends or relatives were impacted by violence.”

111 youth discharged from foster programming with at least one safe, emotionally secure parenting relationship

“To achieve optimal child health, we engage as many community members in that child's life as possible.”



Community Trauma Response

May 2019 – April 2022

Promote healing and resilience in youth, families, and communities who have experienced trauma