

Key Community Benefits Highlights for FY 2020

Mission Aligned Community Benefit Advisory Council Membership

The MelroseWakefield Community Benefits Advisory Council added four new members in FY 2020 to meet current engagement standards set by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Attorney General's Office. New members represent Housing Families, Greater Boston Food Bank, Hallmark Health Visiting Nurse Association and MWHC Board of Trustees.

Medication Assisted Treatment

Employed physicians in Tufts Medical Center Community Care practices continue to offer a Medical Assisted Treatment program for substance use treatment and have finalized plans for the implementation of a pilot program for a more comprehensive Group OBAT (office-based addiction treatment) program. The program is multi-disciplinary including primary care physicians, a nurse, and a licensed clinical social worker and has support from an employed psychiatrist. MWHC was mentored in this work by providers at Boston Medical Center and Cambridge Health Alliance. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the Group OBAT component of the program was not able to start. We hope to offer the group option in the coming year.

Mystic Valley Regional Behavioral Health Coalition

The continuing need for coordinated services to address behavioral health needs in the community prompted the launch of a Regional Behavioral Health Coalition in December 2019. The Regional Behavioral Health Coalition convening partners include Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan, Melrose Wakefield Healthcare, the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Member agencies include local police, fire and municipal leaders, Eliot Community Human Services, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, Mystic Valley Elder Services, regional ambulance companies (Action, Armstrong and Cataldo), Riverside Community Care, AdCare Hospital, Respond, Portal to Hope, The Samaritans, Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, Malden Warming Center, the Everett, Malden and Medford YMCA, and the Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). The membership reflects the ongoing need for addressing behavioral health needs in our community. The goal of the Coalition is to offer community educational events and coordinate and disseminate behavioral health resources and support.

Community Health Initiative Behavioral Health Grants

In March 2020– Shields Surgery Center Medford in a joint venture with MelroseWakefield Healthcare announced that it would award \$120,000 in grants to eight Massachusetts-based programs as part of their Community Health Initiative. The eight recipients are non-profit organizations and municipalities with detailed approaches to improve the health of their communities through meaningful and sustainable change.

This is the first set of Community Health Initiative (CHI) awards that will be made under the Determination of Need Program from the state. The CHI Funds provide an opportunity for Massachusetts organizations to address the root causes of health inequities in communities across the state. The Funds are committed to disrupting and removing barriers to equity in healthcare such as racism, poverty, and power imbalances. Through community-centered policy, systems, and environmental change approaches, the grants help provide resources to engage residents and enhance the quality of access to health care in Massachusetts. Regional and local organizations applied for the grants and the funds awarded are connected to the development of the Shields Surgery Center.

“We are thrilled to be partnering with MelroseWakefield Healthcare and the physician community to provide these grants to the deserving recipients,” says Tom Shields, Chief Executive Officer of Shields Health Care Group, “Enhancing equity and access to quality healthcare is one of our goals so we are excited to help enable the initiatives put forth by the eight recipients.” (Community Content. “MelroseWakefield Healthcare Awards Grants.” Wicked Local, Observer Advocate, 31 Mar. 2021, www.wickedlocal.com/story/observer-advocate/2021/03/31/melrosewakefield-healthcare-awards-grants/7015673002/.)

The recipients include: the Medford Board of Health, the City of Melrose and Town of Wakefield Board of Health, the NAN Project, MetroNorth YMCA , the Joint Committee for Children’s Health Care in Everett, the City of Malden, the Boys & Girls Club of Wakefield/Stoneham, and Riverside Community Care.

Aging in Balance: Serving Older Adults

The Aging in Balance: Elder Outreach Program blends traditional efforts to monitor health in vulnerable elders through Blood Pressure/Ask-A-Nurse clinics at housing and Council on Aging sites with fresh, interactive approaches to learning that help older adults proactively address chronic disease, pain, and the progressive impacts of aging on the body and mind (i.e., loss of sleep, cognitive issues, risks of falls). Aging in Balance also takes a strength-based approach to health education. Lectures offered at elder housing sites and community centers include “Sunny Side Up”—a program to improve positive thinking to manage stress and improve relaxation; “Health and Wellness BINGO”—an interactive BINGO game to learn with peers about high blood pressure and stroke; and “Sleepless in New England”—offering helpful tips on improving sleep hygiene. Working with trained facilitators from other MWHC departments and partner agencies, the program offers six-session workshops on Chronic Disease and Chronic Pain Self-Management, using evidence-based curriculums developed by Stanford University Medical Center. These programs give those living with chronic conditions as well as their care givers knowledge and skills needed to take a more active role in their health. The Aging in Balance staff includes two compassionate and skilled older adult focused nurses and an experienced caring innovative leader who is an occupational therapist by profession. During the pandemic this team offered a variety of programs to support caregivers and older adults in the community. Each month they delivered hundreds of bags of food to those older adults in need.

Financial Navigators

Financial Counselors at Melrose Wakefield Healthcare recorded a total of 24,824 encounters with and for members of the communities we serve. The total number of encounters comprises a variety of services rendered such as: applications for MassHealth, the Health Connector, Health Safety Net, Long-Term Care Applications, Hardship, MWHC Financial Assistance; collections for billing issues; co-payment collections; advocacy with other providers for financial assistance; helping patients access medical care with other providers; counseling on benefits for Medicare, Disability, WIC and DTA services.

Free Pop-Up Clothing Closet

The North Suburban Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program has offered a lightly-used clothing and baby care closet for families in need. During the pandemic, the closet became a delivery service in collaboration with community partners to serve more than 50 families monthly.