

Hinds: Thriving in the
"new normal"

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September 2020

Advocates' jail diversion partnership with Mass. police departments marks 17th year *Program credited with changing outcomes of 26,000 police calls*

In recent months, there has been a new and important focus reforming police and justice systems to make them more equitable and safer for people of color.

Many reformers are now turning to a veteran for advice in this line of work: Dr. Sarah Abbott. The co-founder and longtime director of the Jail Diversion Program at Advocates, Inc., Abbott describes the program as one which has been "changing attitudes and outcomes of police calls for 26,000 people over 17 years."

She co-created the program with now-retired Chief Craig Davis of the Framingham Police Department, after Davis noticed pervasive patterns of repeat calls and his officer's frustrations that the court system was unable to connect citizens who had been arrested with needed mental health or substance abuse services or resources.

"Nothing was changing by shuffling a human being through a system not set up to do this work," she said. "Low-level offenses are often a symptom of a larger mental health crisis, and (Chief Davis) had the foresight to recognize that."

Back in 2002, the country was focused on the post-9/11 threats of ter-



Framingham Co-Response Program Supervisor, Bonnie Cuccaro with a Framingham Police Department officer on patrol.

rorism and "putting a social worker in a cruiser didn't seem like a priority," Abbott added. "But the Framingham police saw the potential and their inviting us became the cornerstone of our success, and we worked hard to demonstrate our worth and utility to officers."

The model has spread across Massachusetts and is now being used by 15 regional departments, under the Advocates umbrella. Some, like Framing-

ham, are staffed almost 24/7 with one of the four Advocates clinicians embedded full time in that department.

Now a trained social worker routinely responds to nearly all calls in that city, especially death notifications, where a social worker can stay for hours after the officer has left with a grieving next-of-kin to help them deal with arrangements.

JAIL DIVERSION, see page 7

Some caregivers must be COVID tested by Sept. 15

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services announced that organizations that operate residential congregate care programs in Massachusetts must have all staff members routinely tested for COVID-19, starting on or before Sept. 15.

Exempt from the new surveillance testing program are staffers who work entirely remotely or off-site, employees on leave or otherwise not working for the entirety of the relevant testing period or persons who have previously tested positive for COVID-19. Asymptomatic staff who are tested only for surveillance purposes should continue working until their results are returned.

Going forward, the routine testing period in high-risk regions is defined as a two-week time from Wednesday at 7 a.m. through the second subsequent Wednesday at 6:59 a.m., with the first bi-weekly Testing Period running from Sept. 16 through Sept. 30, 2020.

Providers are expected to independently coordinate their own testing of staff and residents through a qualified testing provider. Agency leaders should

TESTS, see page 6

Registration now open for virtual *SpeakUp4Equity* convention & expo

Registration is now open for the Providers' Council's upcoming virtual 45th Annual Convention & Expo: *SpeakUp4Equity*.

Act now for early-bird pricing, \$60 for members and \$110 for non-members, through Friday, Sept. 18. Regular registration, \$90 for members and \$160 for non-members, closes on Tuesday, October 20.

The conference offers four days of interactive 90-minute workshops and panels, awards, daily keynotes and events, and opportunities to connect with individuals across the industry.

Learning tracks such as executive leadership, human resources, personal growth and wellness, administration and finance, clinical and direct care, and others will be available.

This year, a special focus will be on issues of diversity and inclusion.

We are delighted to announce our 2020 Diamond-level sponsors are USI Insurance Services and Citizens Bank.

Details on registration, workshops, speakers, award nominations, sponsorship opportunities and more are posted on the Council's Convention & Expo page at www.providers.org.



We can't wait to see you
online Oct. 27-30, 2020

ABCD responds to needs ASAP



A federal CARES Act grant is making it possible for Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) to amplify its on-the-ground assistance to low-income and jobless Greater Boston residents struggling to survive following job loss and shrinking COVID-19 unemployment benefits. From left to right, ABCD staffers help load grocery bags at food pantries and fill gift bags for seniors in East Boston with supplies like PPE and educational materials.



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PROVIDERS' NEWS AND NOTES

Community Resources for Justice and Family ReEntry have merged

Boston-based **Community Resources for Justice** and Family ReEntry of Bridgeport, Conn. have finalized a merger. Both nonprofits are at the forefront of providing reentry and support services in the Northeast and have been discussing since last year how to combine their work providing community-based alternatives to incarceration and supporting individuals as they transition from incarceration back into the community.



John Larivee

"Family ReEntry has been a long-time ally of CRJ in working to support individuals who've come into contact with the criminal justice system and help them achieve better outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities," CRJ President and CEO John Larivee said.

Lifeworks Inc. and The Arc of South Norfolk combine to become Lifeworks Arc

The Arc of South Norfolk and **Lifeworks Inc.**, longtime affiliated nonprofit human services providers with shared missions of supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, will formally merge into one agency, Lifeworks Arc, effective Oct. 1, 2020.

Through a multiyear strategic planning process involving many stakeholders including families, staff and funders, each organization's board of directors determined that they would be better positioned to succeed in the rapidly



changing human services landscape by unifying their resources, programs and staff capabilities.

"After taking time to thoughtfully review our structures, we believe a combined Lifeworks Arc is stronger than the sum of its parts," said Daniel Burke, who serves as president and CEO of both organizations and will continue to lead Westwood-based Lifeworks Arc. "Through one united organization, mission and vision, I am confident in our resiliency and our strong position as a leader in human services in the Commonwealth."

Welcome new Council members: SAFE Coalition

We are pleased to welcome a new member to the Providers' Council! **SAFE Coalition** is a regional coalition of community partners in Western Norfolk County, serving Franklin, Foxboro, Mansfield, Medway, Millis, Norfolk, Plainville, Walpole, Wrentham and surrounding towns. The group has come together to provide a pathway for support, education, treatment options and coping mechanisms for those affected by substance use disorder. Learn more about them at www.safecoalitionma.org



Staff changes at the Providers' Council

Welcome to Patrick Daily, who joined the Council in July as an Education and Membership Associate. He will be helping coordinate the Council's trainings and events, including the organization's certificate program and academic scholarship opportunities. Patrick also



Patrick Daily

VOA Receives \$4M in federal housing grants



Volunteers of America of Massachusetts received a multi-year \$4M Pathway Home grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. This announcement was made by Labor Secretary Eugene Scalia who traveled to Boston to meet Volunteers of America of Massachusetts (VOAMASS) and its grant partner, Essex County Sheriff's Department. (Photo caption L-R: Charles Gagnon, Volunteers of America of Massachusetts CEO and President; United States Labor Secretary Eugene Scalia; Essex County Sheriff Kevin Coppinger; Edward Dolan, Massachusetts Commissioner of Probation).

provides support for Providers' eAcademy. He graduated from Sacred Heart University with a Bachelor's degree in social work, and worked in previous positions in residential care and campus ministry.

In other staff moves, Eliza Adams has been promoted to Education and Academic Partnerships Coordinator, and Tracy Jordan has been promoted to Director of Finance and Operations.

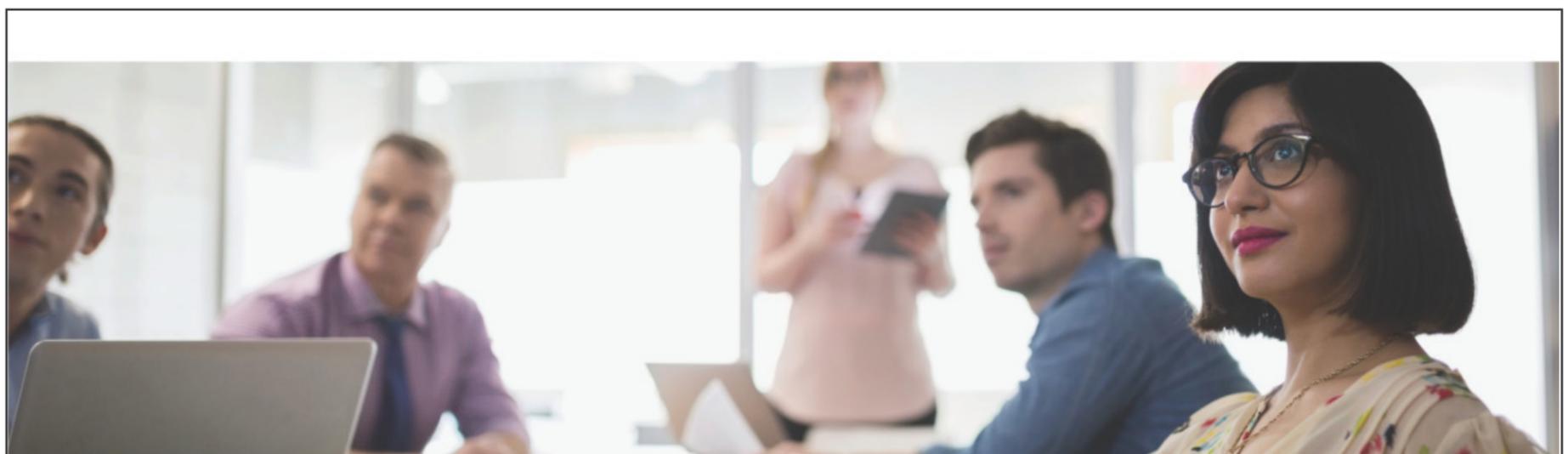
Council members receive COVID-19 grant funding

The SouthCoast Emergency Response Fund, which the foundation es-

tablished in March 2020 to support nonprofit organizations on the front lines of the COVID-19 outbreak, awarded grants to **Brockton Area Multi-Services (BAMSI)** and **Old Colony YMCA**.

A joint competition sponsored by United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and Aetna to address food insecurity, school readiness and juvenile justice awarded a \$75,000 grant to **More Than Words**.

Doc Wayne received a \$381,000 grant from the Charles Hayden Foundation to serve at-risk youth.



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PROVIDER PROFILES

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About the Agency

For over 70 years, United Cerebral Palsy of MetroBoston has provided programs and services to individuals with cerebral palsy and other physical, developmental and intellectual disabilities.

UCP is a local affiliate of the National organization, United Cerebral Palsy Association, a national leader in the advocacy and provision of services for people with disabilities that promotes their full inclusion in all aspects of society.

UCP of MetroBoston, located in Watertown, Mass., currently supports over 1,600 individuals annually throughout the MetroBoston region and beyond. Supports offered include: Day Habilitation, Residential, Individual Supports, Personal Care Attendant, Adult Family Care, Family Support, and Recreation Programs.

Current funding sources include the state Department of Developmental Disabilities, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and MassHealth, as well as private insurance companies.

We are committed to quality and excellence in the effectiveness, efficiency, individual progress, access and satisfaction of persons serviced. UCP has also been awarded the highest level of CARF accreditation (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) for all agency services.

During the COVID crisis, UCP moved to all-remote services for their day programs with check-ins and Zoom groups and activities. Residentially, our employees made the commitment to live in group homes to minimize the risk of exposure to the residents

UCP's commitment is to provide individualized supports that enable people to live...Life without limits for people with disabilities.

Mission is maximizing independence



Left: Anna enjoying a home visit by her Options for Community Living case manager.



Right: Phil loving his sailing lesson arranged by his OCL case manager.

The core of UCP of MetroBoston's mission is maximizing independence. This is particularly evident within the work of the In-Home Supports Department, composed of three diverse service models all with the same goal: to help individuals with disabilities live in the community as independently as possible.

Adult Family Care or "AFC" approved caregivers live fulltime at home with individuals providing daily hands-on direct care. In addition to receiving a stipend for this service, the caregivers receive support and training from a multi-disciplinary team of a nurse and care manager and the member receives monthly wellness checks. A personalized care plan is developed for each, with input from the member, the professional team, caregiver and guardian. Those served by UCP, mostly young adults, have consistently positive health and safety outcomes.

Options for Community Living provides supported living case management for individuals who need assistance or support in order to thrive in the community setting of their choice. Supports are personalized as each service plan is structured to the individual's personal needs, developed collectively with his or her case coordinator.

Assistance is provided in areas such as

finances, health management, household management, community access, self-advocacy, self-care and social/recreation. The case manager utilizes flexible supports that decrease as a person's skills increase and staff intervention is limited to the lowest degree of assistance necessary to enable a person to pursue independent living goals.

The Personal Care Attendant or PCA Program of UCP is the largest of In-Home Supports' models, serving over 1300 people in Massachusetts who require hands-on assistance with personal care. The consumers served are the employers, responsible for recruiting, hiring, training and supervising those who provide their direct care. The PCA program serves children as young as three years old to elderly adults in the community.

All services of In-Home Supports place control in the hands of the one served by it. Self-advocacy is built into the structure of each program-the participation of those served is required. Success of each consumer-focused program has been the result of a focus on freedom and responsibility.

Those served must actively exercise the freedom to have a voice in how their services are delivered and the responsibility to manage them in their own vision.

Executive Director

Todd Kates, Ph.D. has served as the Chief Executive Officer of United Cerebral Palsy of MetroBoston since 1997 having worked for UCP in a variety of roles since 1983.

Dr. Kates has spent his career working for people with disabilities and is committed to providing the highest quality of services and supports to individuals and families.



Todd Kates

Prior to his employment at UCP, he worked in an early intervention program and a school for children with multiple disabilities. In the early 1980s, he assisted in creating one of the first Day Habilitation programs in Massachusetts. Over his tenure, UCP has grown and increased services to seniors and people with acquired brain injury.

He received his master's degree from Tufts University and his doctorate from Northeastern University in counseling psychology. Over the year, Dr. Kates has served on a variety of committees and boards both locally and nationally including many years as a CARF Surveyor and strategic committees within UCP's national office. He has volunteered for several nonprofits and theater companies and served as a host family for a summer program for orphans from Russia.

Dr. Kates is a part-time faculty member at Northeastern University's Bouve College of Health Sciences and Boston University Medical School.

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

'A kind and compassionate ear'

Six years ago, Rowan DeAza, youth services manager, joined the team at the **Northeast Independent Living Program (NILP)**, an independent living center serving people in Lawrence and Lowell.

NILP is unique in the human services sector as more than half of its staff and board self-identify as a person with a disability.

DeAza spends her day helping students with disabilities grow their independent living skills and confidence. As she puts it, "We are helping youth meet goals, both big and small, but most of all, we help students succeed in their own way. We help them see all of the possibilities that lie on the other side of their fears."

DeAza certainly practices what she preaches. After graduating high school, she worked for many years as a direct care staffer in residential group homes for youth, while attending college and living independently. Today, she manages a growing team at NILP. Her staffers speak volumes about her leadership.

Rosy Gutierrez remembered her first day of work, and how DeAza immediately made her "feel connected" by introducing herself in American Sign Language.

Nathan Hughes shared that when

he has trouble understanding social situations because of his own disability, he knows he can count on Rowan to "always listen with a kind and compassionate ear."

June Sauvageau, CEO of NILP, credits DeAza for her ability to effectively manage relationships and juggle multiple perspectives from students, parents, school officials, and funders. "What I appreciate most is that she always puts the voice of the student first," Sauvageau said.

One parent recently said, "Our child faces many disability challenges and is also on the spectrum. We've watched our child make tremendous gains with Rowan's constant patience, support and guidance."

Supporting families is an important part of DeAza's day-to-day work. In fact, her family role model motivated her to choose this career path. "Growing up, I saw my mom helping people who wanted to better their quality of life, but faced barriers due to limitations of ability, language, literacy...I saw people's lives change because of her willingness to go the extra mile. I guess I am just doing what I've seen my hero do her whole life. Thanks for leading me here, Mom."



Rowan DeAza

Staff knew Stacy was "a keeper"

When community college student Celina Stacy came to work as a direct care staff member in May 2018, Transitions at Devens knew immediately she was a keeper.

A tireless worker, Stacy initially monitored 13 families in shelter, sorted and distributed donations and cleaned and painted as needed.

Promoted to assistant manager of the Fitchburg scattered sites this January, Stacy shows empathy in her professional interactions with clients.

Now supervising staff members, she took on a mountain of paperwork and administrative responsibilities. It has prompted residents respect her as a management-level staff member.

"Celina, a recent college graduate of social work, has demonstrated not only the willingness to sacrifice her time for others but a strong grasp of the principles to assist homeless families. Our Father's House is proud to have Celina as a staff person," said Judith Pasierb, the executive director of **Our Father's House**, the parent agency for Transitions.

Stacy completed her associate's degree in human service at Mount

Wachusett Community College in 2018 and earned a Bachelor of Science in social work with a minor in victimology at Anna Maria College, graduating summa cum laude and making the dean's list each semester.

This fall she begins work for a master's degree in social work, also at Anna Maria.

"Working for Our Father's House has provided me with an amazing opportunity to practice the social work skills and techniques I learned throughout my education," she said.

Stacy found her education and her work for Our Father's House nicely complements each other.

"I loved being able to go from classes during the day to my evening shifts and applying what I had learned that day in school to the job," she said.

She said she feels positive about the options her future holds in the human services sector, serving families in need of services.

"Additionally, this job has opened my eyes to the different paths I can take as a social worker and motivated me to continue my education so I can help families and individuals to my fullest potential."



Celina Stacy

EDITORIAL



Michael Weekes
President / Publisher

A most consequential election

By the time this communication reaches your mailbox, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has completed its state primary.

Your voting options are now decisively more focused and, hopefully, you are more engaged than ever before in the nation's General Election on Nov 3. It is a date with America's democracy that should shatter high turnout records as this will be one of the nation's most consequential elections of all time.

Will you, along with other many civic-minded citizens committed to the creed, "...with liberty and justice for all," be among the count that exercises our nation's most fundamental determinant of democracy: voting?

The late Congressman John Lewis frequently extolled that "*The right to vote is precious, almost sacred. It is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have in a democratic society.*" And in the upcoming election, the nation is quite divided about our course of action to preserve our democracy.

There are many assertions that past elections have been the "most consequential" in our history or in their time. Historians debate if it was George Washington's election in 1789 as the nation's first president. But just over a decade later, Thomas Jefferson coined his election as the "revolution of 1800" as power passed from the federalists to the Democratic-Republican party.

Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860 preceded the dawn of the Civil War and with his second election in 1865, the war ended and he was soon to be assassinated. Others might attest to Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, John F. Kennedy in 1960, Ronald Reagan in 1980, and one of the most notable, Barack Obama's first election in 2006. The first African American elected in a society that to this date, still struggles with racial justice and that creed, *liberty and justice for all*.

The Rev Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in 1965, "*Voting is the foundation stone for political action.*" As we all know, the struggle for people to get their right to vote wasn't easy. Many were harassed, taxed, terrorized and killed denying them that "foundation stone."

Here we are 55 years later honoring the legacy of John Lewis and Dr. King by fighting new methods of voting suppression. Actions like removing certain mailboxes, complicating voting by mail during this pandemic, purging voter rolls, cutting off funds for voting

engagement, changing voting locations and other not-so-subtle methods employed to block the vote and disenfranchise Black folks and other people of color or difference. This election has a significance of consequence that is unparalleled in recent history.

So what will the consequence be based on? Well, our nation is divided in too many ways to count. Let's look at the recent view of protest over the abject institutional racist actions we've witnessed.

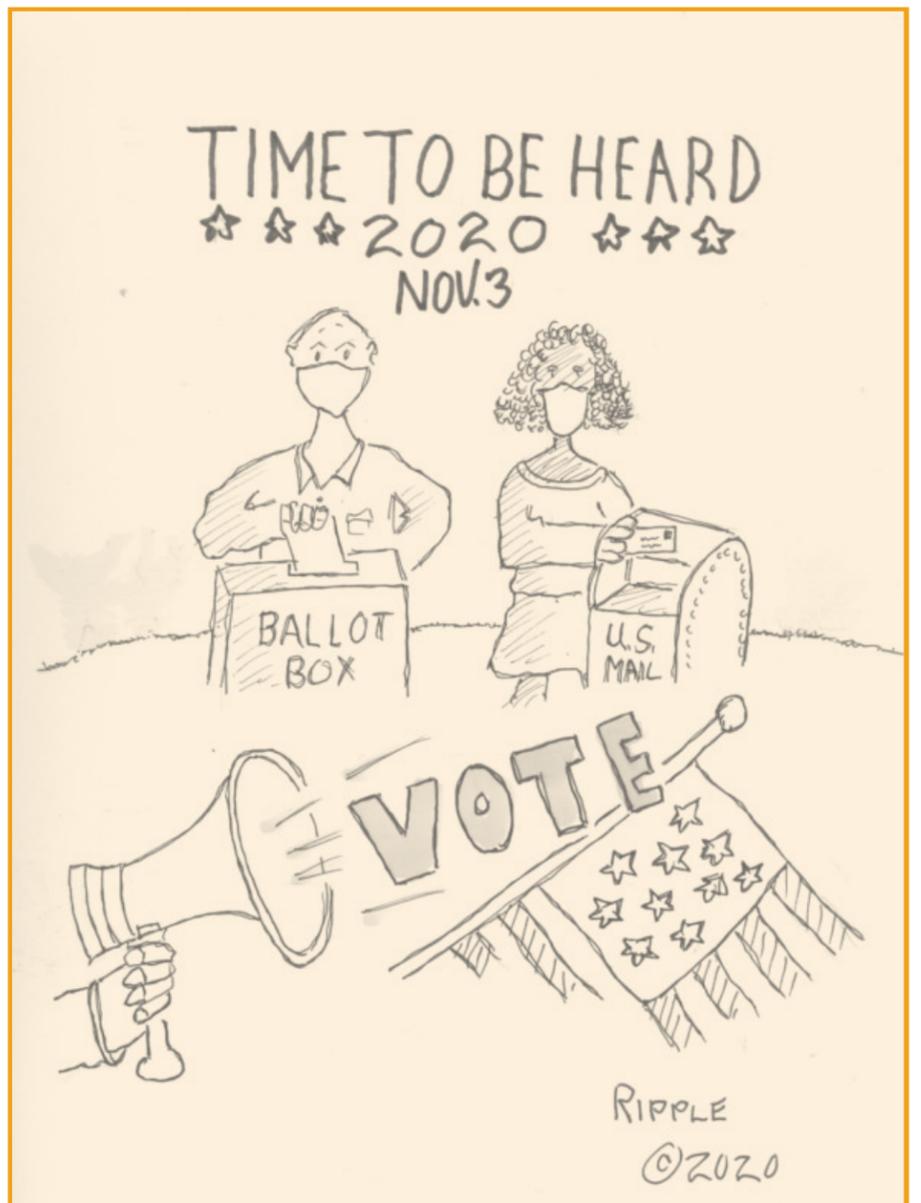
A Washington Post-Schar School poll results reveal deep divides over the recent protests that awoke those asleep with indifference, neglect or denial. Nearly 56 percent of Democrats believed the protests were mostly peaceful, while 65 percent of Republicans thought they were mostly violent.

In a recent nonpartisan PRRI poll, 78 percent of Republicans thought the killings of unarmed African-Americans were isolated incidents compared to 39 percent of voters who consider themselves independent and 17 percent of Democrats. But the polls won't matter unless people vote their conscience and their aspiration for America to live up to its ideals. Every member of the human services community must implore their friends, family, clients and consumers to vote for the values that support a fair and just human services community.

This election will be a test on how America sees itself and its future. Just look at the vision of Democratic Vice President nominee Kamala Harris who addressed the DNC last month with the following: "*A country where we may not agree on every detail but we are united by the fundamental belief that every human being is of infinite worth, deserving of compassion, dignity and respect.*" And then there is a different view extolled by GOP nominee for the same office, Mike Pence who recently said to voters: "*You won't be safe in Joe Bidens's America.*" That is a message of fear, division and distrust.

If you agree with us and John Lewis that there is a time for "good trouble," then whether you participate in early voting, vote by mail or run to the polls on November 3, let's have that "good trouble" and vote. We have to vote as if our lives depend on it, because for far too many of us, it does!

Now go make sure you and yours are registered to vote and then vote. Be woke!



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Changing ourselves for the better

By N. Paul TonThat

As I reflect on the invitation from Providers' Council President and CEO Michael Weekes to share my thoughts on our sector's responsibility to address systemic racism in our society and our organizations, I have listed below the arguments for change in reverse order of importance to me.

It is good for business. We need to resemble the ethnicity and culture of the folks we serve. This will demonstrate to our client base our cultural competency and position us as an enlightened vendor to governmental funders. It will help with staff morale and recruitment, as prospective employees view our organization as a safer bet to make with their careers.

We can even improve our scores when we apply for grants to socially conscientious foundations. Resembling the community we serve is both good for business and enhances our competitive advantage.

It is a good way of keeping staff. We could begin by carefully listening to the needs and concerns of current and former staff. As leaders, we must address key issues that make our organization less competitive.

Dissatisfaction from an increasingly woke workforce regarding lack of equity and fairness can contribute to losing young credentialed professionals, a vulnerability we can't afford to ignore. Embracing diversity and inclusion and integrating D&I into our human resources practices seems to be the wisest course of action.

The call for equity is inherent in what we do. The human services sector is charged to not only care for, but also to advocate for, those whose disability limits access to what we all have rights to.

This charge requires us to assist our clients in overcoming any barriers they might face. If this is true for our clients, how much truer it is for our neighbors and colleagues?

We, who work to create and sustain programs to bring care and dignity for those with a disability, must also strive for equity for ourselves. Without the dignity of racial justice, we are unable to properly return dignity to those we serve.

Accepting existing structural barriers (housing, job, personal safety, education, pay, and access) placed on those of us who are not white dimin-

ishes our common humanity.

It also constrains our ability to serve our disabled clients.

Then, there is the argument that is most personal for me. As a person of color, I can understand what it means to hold on to my dignity when my way of thinking or being is dismissed.

I can appreciate the feeling that more eyes are trained on me and I know what it feels like to not know whether it is my ideas or my being that is being rejected. I know what it feels like wondering if the reason I am not included is because of my difference or my personality.

Being an Asian immigrant in America, I have learned to adapt to the majority culture. I have learned to see it from the majority's perspective and learned to give credence to their arguments and rationale.

Then George Floyd lost his life in front of us and people took to the streets demanding justice. And their courage and anger provoked me to re-think my accommodation to the system that holds down and exploits people of color, particularly those whose ancestors came to American in chains.

What underlying values can justify the killing of millions of Iraqis in the name of security? Would the enormous loss of human lives in cause of western security be acceptable if they were Caucasian and Christian?

I am ashamed because I know better, the same values killed millions of Vietnamese in the country of my birth. What underlying values systematically deprive free people of color safety, access, and dignity? And mostly, why am I part of that?

If it is this generation that will stand up and alter the course of history, then we need to do it with the same patience, deliberation, and zeal that has characterized our life's work.

As for me, I am unable to not answer the call. Our culture and our collective dignity and life itself are at stake. We did not build our social service system overnight, but neither did we allow other priorities to get in the way.

The way forward is systems change for us. If you, too, are bothered by the culpability you bear, then join me as we seek to be on the right side of history for our children, for clients, and ourselves.

N. Paul TonThat is the chief executive officer of Kennedy-Donovan Center Inc.

Stop wasting sector's 'Untapped Talent'

By Emmanuel Owusu

With the rapidly changing racial composition in the workforce and an impending labor shortage in the human service industry, the strategic role of diverse leadership to navigate the new landscape can't be overstated.

Addressing workplace racial leadership disparity requires continuous engagement to understand the changing career needs of foreign-born and people of color and actively build an inclusive workplace. The Untapped Talent project provides agency leaders with a collaborative approach to address racial inequity in leadership.

The Untapped Talent project involves four human services agencies: Bay Cove Human Services, Horace Mann Educational Associates (HMEA), Venture Community Services and Thrive Support and Advocacy. They are collaborating with the African Bridge Network (ABN), a community-based organization focused on the professional development of skilled immigrants.

To the credit of the leaders, these four agencies voluntarily decided to work with ABN to address racial leadership disparity in their organizations before the national reckoning on racial inequities and injustice this summer.

Phase one of this project was a one-year study to examine foreign-born and people of color employee experiences and perspectives on racial leadership inequalities. The study was conducted by Simmons University and was completed in March 2020. Data was collected through six focus groups (41 participants) and 246 surveys. Salary was the most influential factor in the study findings. Those earning \$45,000 or less annually were least satisfied with their workplace experiences and career development opportunities. Of this group, 73 percent were African American/Black, and 82 percent earned their highest education outside the US.

The findings are presented in four main themes – leadership, workplace experience, commitment to clients and professional development. In terms of leadership, participants reported a disconnection between upper management and staff. Top management's limited knowledge of the work of direct care staff limits the agencies' ability to advocate for adequate resources during grant applications and contract negotiations. The lack of racial representation in leadership was cited as another

cause of the disconnection between upper management and staff.

Some participants expressed appreciation for their supportive supervisors, a critical factor for their positive workplace experiences. But many participants reported a lack of appreciation and felt pressured to perform by their supervisors. Others attributed their inability to move up into higher positions to lack of support from their supervisors.

As one participant said, "There are some things you don't know irrespective of your foreign credentials. When you don't get the appropriate training and support to fill gaps in your knowledge and skills, you don't feel confident to accept leadership roles." Participants reported several incidents where opportunities to select and train minorities for leadership roles were overlooked.

Racial disparities in the application of agency policies was an issue of concern. When an infraction of an agency's policy occurs, disciplinary measures are implemented swiftly when the offender is a minority. Sometimes, cases get dropped where the offender is a white staff member, participants said. This perception erodes the confidence of some staffers. As one study participant said, "It is better to stay at the direct care level and have a job than stepping into a leadership role and losing your job at one mistake."

While a significant number of participants expressed appreciation for various on-the-job trainings, they also reported that trainings do not always keep up with the changing needs of clients. Trainings tend to meet contractual requirements and are not designed to increase staff trajectory into leadership.

The researchers recommended stackable credentials of value, a mechanism to provide college credits for foreign credentials. Agencies can also support staff in obtaining the needed qualifications for leadership roles. Agency leaders will need to create career pathways and implement training modules to increase the leadership trajectory of foreign-born and people of color. Mentoring programs to help identify and train talents are needed. Agencies need to include foreign-born and minorities in implementing recommendations and developing evaluation strategies to monitor and report on their progress.

Emmanuel Owusu is the executive director of the African Bridge Network.

Elders need continued support during the COVID crisis

By Joan Hatem-Roy

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley and North Shore has not stopped.

During this crisis, the greatest challenges we have seen among seniors is having access to nutritious food and increased levels of loneliness and social isolation.

As a federally designated Area Agency on Aging and a state-designated Aging Service Access Point and Protective Service Agency, our employees see first-hand the effects the pandemic is having on older adults across the 28 communities we serve in northeastern Massachusetts.

This means we, along with our community partners, must make sure we give consumers and their families the support necessary to deal with the escalated mental health issues of fear and anxiety around these issues.

Since March, our agency has had a 30 percent increase in demand for home-delivered meals, along with greater needs for shopping and delivery services. We are proud to be able to continue doing meal delivery five days per week, which also helps elders keep social connections and provides a daily wellness check.

At our congregate meal centers, we transitioned to offering pre-packaged "grab and go" meals that seniors or

their caregivers can pick up and take home.

In the community, we worked with the councils on aging in our coverage area to develop a food resource guide. We recently expanded our Brown Bag food program with the Greater Boston Food Bank and community partners to get more than 2,500 bags of non-perishable distributed to seniors each month.

Since many senior centers are closed or offering alternative services, our employees conduct telephone wellness checks. We know many seniors may not have access to a computer, so that one-on-one phone call – in a variety of languages – remains an important lifeline. Additionally, we offer Tai Chi, nutrition, and other health classes via Zoom.

We also make sure families have the support and resources they need and offer ombudsman support for those in nursing facilities. For example, we recently received a call from the daughter of an 89-year-old woman who was in a skilled nursing facility and had been approved for long-term care before the pandemic.

The woman then tested positive and was asymptomatic, and her daughter wanted to bring her home. Our Options Counselor made a referral to our Home Care program and encouraged daughter to contact the mother's physician for a visiting nurse referral.

Once the consumer was evaluated by our case manager, we were able to arrange for a home health aide and made a referral to our family caregiver program to help provide supports to the consumer's daughter.

This example highlights some of the challenges we have related to the expedited discharges from nursing facilities, and the high level of support and care coordination our agency provides to consumers and the supports needed by their families and caregivers.

We share the concerns about the home-care industry raised in a recent *Next Avenue* article by Kevin Smith, president of the Home Care Aide Council in Massachusetts, a nonprofit trade association representing home care agencies and the aides that they employ.

He said there's still room for improvement in terms of caregiver recognition and funding for programs that deliver home care services even as demand for the service grows.

"Home care is sort of a forgotten child of the health care system, when in reality, it's just as critical as any other piece," wrote Smith in the article.

"People want to be at home, and home care aides need to be considered as professionals. It's my hope that all the work we've done to keep people out of hospitals and ERs during the pandemic will lend itself to some increased visibility, increased credibility and le-

gitimacy for the work that our aides do. And hopefully, the funding will follow so we can pay them more."

The pandemic has also laid bare the need many seniors have for better internet access, technology training and access to devices. Seniors who are economically disadvantaged often don't have the ability to fully participate in remote services, and that only enhances the health inequity issues in many communities.

The aging network has historically done amazing work in providing community programs and opportunities for social connection to seniors. These programs have improved health outcomes, keep people active and engaged and well.

We need support, including investing in technology and training, for more remote and virtual program options for all seniors.

It is important to remember we will continue to operate this way for some time. Life will not go back to normal for our seniors for a long while, so we need to take the steps now to keep them healthy and active.

Joan Hatem-Roy is the chief executive officer of Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley and North Shore, a private nonprofit serving more than 38,000 consumers in 28 cities and towns in northeastern Massachusetts.

A VIEW FROM THE HILL

A commentary from a
legislator on human services



Social services in the COVID-19 “new normal”

By Senator Adam G. Hinds

Eric Denette and his clinical team at Berkshire Family & Individual Resources (BFAIR) in North Adams, MA work with eleven children with autism and their families.

Drawing on the techniques of Applied Behavior Analysis, Denette’s day program team and the families work to increase the children’s language and communication skills and improve attention and social skills, among others.

When the COVID pandemic arrived in Massachusetts in March, BFAIR had to stop the in-person work with these children and many of the other 600 people they serve. Rising to the challenge, BFAIR set up remote learning platforms and its staff learned new skills within a few short weeks that have allowed the agency to continue its work.

Massachusetts is navigating COVID successfully in many ways, and the human services sector deserves thanks and continued financial support from the state, the feds, and from donors. I want to offer my deep gratitude to BFAIR and to other human services organizations and their employees across the state for adapting quickly and delivering during these troubling times when multiple crises are taking place.

Now we must work together to create a clear pathway to ensure our social services are bolstered in the short-term, and supported over the long-term, to sustain operations in the new normal. The new normal is a world with new state-mandated rules that will impact residential facilities, class sizes, expenditures on protective equipment and more. All of which provide challenges to the model of care providers are able to sustain.

The state’s Department of Developmental Services was able provide BFAIR and other agencies with additional money in May and June which was used to temporarily increase pay for direct care workers. The federal CARES Act provided Paycheck Protection Program loans that allowed

BFAIR to keep its 345 employees, says CEO Rich Weisenflue. That funding has allowed BFAIR to keep its place as one of the top five employers in Northern Berkshire County.

Investing in staff and their salaries will remain a priority. Human services leaders and workers will continue to act with courage and they’ll need the state and federal government to do its best work to support them.

I’ll continue to fight for cost of living raises for direct care workers, which have been delayed, and adequate funding for these important services and courageous human service employees.

Keeping the workplace safe for front-line workers and the families they are working with is also critical. I filed legislation this term to create a bulk purchasing program for PPE to ensure costs are as low as possible as we work to keep everyone safe.

In our next legislative session, I will continue to fight for new ways to increase revenues to keep the social safety net strong, to come through on our pledge to adequately fund public education, and to improve the state’s transportation system.

My last job, before joining the Massachusetts Senate, was leading the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, where we worked in the areas of addiction, healthcare, and employment. My experiences in human services were among my most satisfying and most challenging. As we head into the new year together, arm-in-arm in this fight to confront a pandemic, I am committed as ever to work alongside human services leaders in western Massachusetts and across the state.

Sen. Adam G. Hinds (D-Pittsfield) represents 52 communities in the Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin & Hampden District.



Sen. Adam
Hinds

TESTS: Biweekly tests mandated

Continued from Page 1

strive to use testing providers who can guarantee a turnaround time of no more than 72 hours.

Organizations are expected to organize and pay for staff testing and will receive a per test payment from the state (at-cost for baseline testing, and at \$120.81 for ongoing testing). Organizations must facilitate and pay for testing to be eligible for reimbursement. EOHHS officials said they would re-evaluate this guidance by Sept. 30.

Unemployment Insurance update

The state Department of Unemployment Assistance began issuing bills to providers in August that self-insure for unemployment.

Providers will have 120 days to pay the bills. This delay was allowed in part due to advocacy from the Providers’ Council and other Massachusetts associations.

Additionally, the bills included a 50 percent credit that was originally passed in the CARES Act and further clarified in the Protecting Nonprofits from Catastrophic Cash Flow Strain Act. The clarifying law noted that providers could simply receive a 50 percent credit up front and wouldn’t need to pay 100 percent initially and then wait for a 50 percent reimbursement from the state.

A proposal in the HEALS Act would cover up to 75 percent of payments; in Massachusetts, House Bill 4743, filed by Reps. Paul McMurry and Nika Eluardo, would cover the additional 50 percent of payments that the federal government assistance does not cover.

The Providers’ Council will continue advocating on this issue on behalf of our members.

Questions can be directed to Bill Yelenak at bill@providers.org.

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JAIL DIVERSION: New training center aims to scale project statewide

Continued from Page 1

“Most people are unaware of the wide swath and scope of the calls police are responding to. In my experience on a busy summer Saturday night, (clinicians) might respond to a fight at a cookout where people are intoxicated, a distressed citizen may report a missing dog, then respond to very serious calls like drownings, heart attacks, or an overdose where Narcan is needed. All in the space of a few hours.”

Clinicians focus first on providing a calming influence, Abbott said, working in concert with police officers whose focus is more on problem-solving and resolving the call. As the program became established, police officers began to see the benefits and improved outcomes on calls and adopted some social work-style approaches. Situations that would have historically required force, an involuntary trip to the hospital or jail, were getting peacefully resolved and the citizen involved was getting mental health or substance use services.



Dr. Sarah Abbott

The officer and social worker complement each other well. “Police offices have an emphasis on safety and security, our emphasis is on building relationship and communication.” Abbott said. The program estimates, on average, 75% of individuals presenting with criminal behavior are diverted from arrest and into appropriate treatment. Individuals who are not able to be diverted (more serious crimes/mandatory arrests) also receive support, resources and referrals from the clinician while in police custody.

Abbott and the Framingham PD have pioneered a model that can be replicated across Massachusetts using DMH funding, and larger communities such as Lowell are currently developing the Advocates model in cooperation with the Lahey Health. In 2018, Advo-

ates received Department of Mental Health funding to launch the country’s first Co-Response Training and Technical Assistance Center, based in Boxborough.

The key to success, Abbott explained, is the clinician’s connection and access to the local and regional health system resources that are so often needed in most low-level police calls. The police, court and town officials rarely have the connections or expertise to quickly get citizens into recovery beds or connected to other mental health services.

Jail diversion and citizen re-entry work continues to be fairly specialized in Massachusetts, with two other Providers’ Council members also working in the sphere.

Boston-based Community Resources for Justice supports agencies and jurisdictions around the country to develop, implement and strengthen local jail diversion programs, especially educating public safety agencies to recognize and respond to individuals experiencing behavioral health or mental health crises and divert them to treatment rather than arresting them. Justice Resource Institute operates a five-week, full-time workshop for returning citizens in preparation for their return to a full-time job.

Abbott said she and other advocates of the program are well aware that jail diversion has important social justice implications, as people of color are far more likely to be involved in the police and court systems. Her hope is that this can be better quantified in the near future.

“Some of the outcomes we are most proud of are the least tangible. We have prevented countless tragedies and view every interaction as an opportunity to change someone’s life for the better,” Abbott said.

Nominations now open for Council's annual Peer Provider Awards!

We are now accepting nominations for this year's Peer Provider Awards, which will be presented during our Annual Convention & Expo, *SpeakUp4Equity*.

Please consider honoring a Providers' Council member's exemplary achievements by nominating them for a Peer Provider Award. This prestigious award, given to a Council member who is nominated by a different Council member, recognizes human service organizations that have gone above and beyond in the last year.

This year, in 2020, we ask that you consider organizations who engaged in incredible efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and/or have demonstrated action for racial justice.

While we typically only accept nominations from organizations that haven't been honored in the past 10 years, we want to accept nominations of all organizations this year.

See our website at www.providers.com for more details.

Questions? Please contact Eliza Adams at eadams@providers.org

Have you registered to vote?

Massachusetts voters now have until 10 days before an election to register to vote. Make sure you, your staff, your colleagues and clients all have your voices heard!

Important upcoming dates for elections are:



Saturday, Oct. 25: Deadline to register to vote in the Nov. 3 general election

Tuesday, Nov. 3: General election

Early voting is now open in Massachusetts!

In-person early voting for the **Nov. 3** election will be held **October 17-30**. Early voting by mail is also open as soon as ballots are ready.

Check your voting status and/or register here:
www.sec.state.ma.us

ABCD IS HIRING!

WHO IS ABCD?

ABCD, New England's largest private non-profit human services agency, is the officially-designated antipoverty agency for the City of Boston, Mystic Valley, and several surrounding cities and towns. We serve more than 100,000 residents each year through more than 50 programs including Head Start, heating assistance, youth services, and education & training.

CURRENT JOB OPENINGS

Head Start

\$1,000 SIGNING BONUS for credentialed Head Start teaching positions
(*\$500 when hired and \$500 after completion of 6-month introductory period*)

- Preschool Teachers
- Teacher Assistants
- Infant / Toddler Teachers
- Education Supervisor
- Intake (ERSEA) Specialists
- Family Advocates
- Family and Community Engagement Supervisors

Other Agency Positions Include:

- Case Managers
- Neighborhood Client Services Coordinators
- Youth Worker - Ostiguy Prevention Program
- Rental Assistance Program Manager
- Housing Counselors
- Senior General Ledger Accountant
- HR Generalist
- Recruitment Manager
- Accounting Supervisor

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS • FALL 2020

What: Certificate in Supervision Series Fall 2020
When: Tuesdays, September 22; October 6 & 20; November 10 & 24; December 8
Time: 9 a.m. -12:30 p.m.
Where: via Zoom
Trainers: Ginny Maglio, Optimum Development (Sessions I & VI)
 Jim Ognibene, Visioneer Consulting (Sessions II & V)
 Comma Williams, Comma Williams Enterprises (Sessions III & IV)
Cost: \$600 members, \$900, non-members,

What: Success as a New Supervisor
When: Tuesdays, November 17 and December 1
Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Where: via Zoom
Trainer: Jim Ognibene, Visioneer Consulting
Cost: \$140 members, \$200 non-members

SAVE THE DATES

What: 45th Annual Convention & Expo: *SpeakUp4Equity*
When: Oct. 27-30, 2020
Where: Virtual
Panelists: Dozens of breakout sessions, along with keynote speakers and networking opportunities. **Details and registration information coming soon.**

Pre-registration for these events required unless otherwise noted.

Visit www.provider.org/events to learn more and register. Questions?

Contact Eliza Adams at 508.598.9700 or eadams@providers.org



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