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Care builds communities

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THE PROVIDER

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Summer 2026

Governor Healey signs a \$63.4 billion FY '27 budget

On July 9, Governor Maura Healey signed off on a \$63.4 billion annual budget, an increase of \$2.5 billion over fiscal 2026.

The final budget includes \$175 million for the Chapter 257 Reserve. The Administration has noted that it will need \$260 million to fully fund the Chapter 257 Reserve account, and it expects \$85 million in funding to be left in the FY '26 Chapter 257 Reserve — which it will then request to move to the FY '27 budget during its closeout supplemental budget.

For the final budget, Gov. Healey made no vetoes to the Conference Committee's proposal. "This budget is about lowering people's costs, driving economic growth and supporting our kids, all without raising any taxes or fees," said Governor Healey. "We're helping families afford child care, health care and higher education, increasing support for our cities, towns and schools that we know are facing financial challenges, speeding up housing production to lower costs, and making health insurance more affordable. We're also taking important steps to protect survivors of sexual assault and make sure anyone who commits these heinous crimes is held accountable. I'm grateful for the partnership of the Legislature, and we'll continue working together to deliver results for the people of Massachusetts through a balanced, fiscally responsible budget with no new taxes or fees."

The final budget included language preserving Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) funding at no less than FY '26 levels, ensuring funding for the next fiscal year.

The CIES program recognizes that job readiness involves more than just education and work history; it includes addressing issues that can significantly impact an individual's ability to maintain employment such as health, housing stability and family life. In its FY '25 Employment Services Report, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) noted a 29 percent increase in clients engaging and par-

FY '27 BUDGET, see page 7

Council opens early-bird registration for 51st Annual Convention & Expo

After celebrating a milestone golden anniversary convention, the Council is looking ahead with renewed energy to its 51st Annual Convention & Expo: *Unshaken in Purpose*.

The 51st Annual Convention & Expo will take place on Monday, October 26, at the Marriott Copley Place Hotel in Boston. Building on the tremendous success of its 50th anniversary celebration, the Council is excited to once again bring members together to learn, grow and connect — strengthening their work and advancing their missions.

This year, the Council will offer 39 workshops across three workshop sessions. Each session will have 13 hour-long experiences, including traditional workshops, chat panels and networking sessions.

Early-bird registration is now open! Ticket prices are \$150 for members and \$250 for not-yet members. Early-bird agencies that register groups of 10 or more at the same time receive an additional 10 percent discount.

Early-bird registration is open through September 4. Those who take advantage of



Registration for the Council's 51st Annual Convention & Expo: *Unshaken in Purpose* is now open at providersconvention.org.

early-bird registration will have a chance to win a free Council training or overnight hotel stay in the early-bird raffle.

For more information on the Council's 51st Annual Convention & Expo, please visit www.providersconvention.org.

The Council empowers voters through CareVote

With election season fast approaching, the Providers' Council wants to help members and their communities register to vote through its nonpartisan voter engagement initiative, CareVote.

CareVote was created to empower human services workers and the people they serve by making voter registration more accessible. It provides organizations with resources to set up voter registration tables, promote civic engagement and help individuals register or update their information — right at their workplace or program site.

In addition to offering Council members supports for tabling, the Council is partnering with Nonprofit VOTE to create a specialized toolkit that encourages providers to promote voter registration efforts at their own agencies. The toolkit will include state-specific voting rules and

information on ballot questions. It will be released and shared online in mid-September.

Massachusetts offers online voter registration through the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website, which needs to be completed 10 days before the election. Employees can speak with their supervisor about their agencies voting policy, as they may be able to take time off to make sure they cast their ballot. If employees' schedules conflict with that of polling centers, voters have the additional option of voting by mail.

The primary election for several key state and federal positions will take place on Tuesday, September 1. To vote in the primary election, voters must register or update their home address by August 22. Your mail-in application must reach

CAREVOTE, see page 7

Council launches "Human Services Providers Get It Done" campaign

The Providers' Council is excited to announce that it has joined with the National Council of Nonprofits (NCN) and other state associations across the country on a creative new ad campaign: "Nonprofits Get it Done." The campaign aims to reach people across the country to highlight how nonprofits show up for those in need, solve problems and serve local communities and neighbors every single day.

"At a time when the role and rights of local community organizations and charitable nonprofits are being called into question, 'Nonprofits Get It Done' offers a celebration of the everyday impact nonprofits make, uplifting the people, places, and possibilities they help bring to life across the country," said Diane Yentel,

president and CEO of NCN, in a press release regarding the campaign. "Using real stories of actual nonprofits, we are able to remind the public, and our elected leaders, that nonprofits are essential partners in creating stronger communities."

Through its partnership with NCN, the Council is taking its own approach to "Nonprofits Get It Done" by focusing on the unique responsibility of community-based human services providers to care for the most vulnerable populations. Through the Council's spinoff campaign, "Human Services Providers Get It Done," the organization will highlight how human services providers support the most vulnerable populations across the

GET IT DONE, see page 7



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Regina Marshall assumes role of president & CEO at Advocates

Regina Marshall has officially taken over the role of president & CEO at **Advocates** after the departure of longtime leader Diane Gould.

Marshall, formerly chief operating officer and a member of the executive leadership team for more than a decade, helped lead Advocates' growth, strategic planning and agency integrations while strengthening operational performance.

As CEO, she plans to expand access to behavioral health services, strengthen workforce recruitment and retention, deepen partnerships with healthcare providers and community organizations, and leverage innovation to improve care and outcomes.



Regina Marshall

House of Possibilities announces President & CEO Katie Terino to step down

House of Possibilities (HOPE)

announced that Katie Terino will be stepping down as president & CEO effective September 1. Kevin Salera will take over the role effective on the same date.

Terino joined the board in 2016, became executive director in 2019, and has served as president & CEO since 2022. She will remain on HOPE's Board of Directors in an ex officio role following her leadership of the organization's growth and expansion.

Salera joins HOPE from the Charles River Center, where he serves as chief operating officer. He brings decades of leadership experience, including executive roles at The Arc of North Central Massachusetts, The Arc of Bristol County, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and HMEA, Inc.



Katie Terino

FamilyAid announces new president & CEO

FamilyAid has announced Luciano Ramos as its next president and CEO. He will assume the role on August 10, succeeding Larry Seamans, who is retiring after a 42-year career dedicated to strengthening families.

Ramos brings more than 25 years of experience building cross-sector partnerships and advancing systems that help families move from crisis to stability. He currently serves as assistant dean for partnerships, engagement and advancement at Boston University's School of Public Health. Previously, he was executive director of the Center for Economic and Social Justice at Roxbury Community College, where he led initiatives focused on expanding opportunity and improving outcomes for families and communities.



Luciano Ramos

Catholic Charities Boston expands leadership with three board appointments

Catholic Charities Boston announced the appointment of three new members to its board: Most Reverend Cristiano Barbosa, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Boston; Peter Gibson, former co-CEO of Knowledge Group, advisor and investor; and Linda Hooley, humanitarian and advisory council member of the Saint Rock Haiti Foundation.

Barbosa, ordained a priest in 2007 and a bishop in 2024, has served in several Massachusetts parishes and previously taught theology and pastoral counseling at Saint John Seminary and Pope Saint John XXIII National Seminary.

Gibson is a former co-CEO of Knowledge Group, a data intelligence firm acquired by Accenture, and co-founder of BusinessEdge Solutions, a technology consulting firm ac-

quired by EMC Corporation.

Hooley serves on the Saint Rock Haiti Foundation's Advisory Council and previously served on its board and Education Committee, where she helped expand the organization's student sponsorship program.

Northeast Arc welcomes new board chair, four new board members

Northeast Arc announced the election of a new board chair, David Wootton, and the appointment of four new members to its board: John Bogosian, Lucy MacCallum, Mike Murray and Winnie Swan.

Wootton, a retired Century Bank executive, has served on the Northeast Arc board for 10 years. Bogosian is a principal, board advisor, and co-owner of King & Bishop Companies with more than 30 years of experience in growth strategy, talent, and operations.

MacCallum is area president at Gallagher, while Murray is president and CEO of Peabody Wealth Advisors with more than 25 years of experience in financial planning and wealth management.

Swan is general counsel and chief legal officer at Foundation Medicine, a precision medicine company focused on developing diagnostic solutions for cancer and other diseases.

The Guild for Human Services adds Danielle Stanton to its board

The Guild for Human Services has elected Danielle Stanton to its board of trustees.

Stanton currently serves as executive vice president and chief operating officer at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU), where she has been a member of the executive team during a period of rapid, unprecedented growth. Prior to SNHU, Stanton served as chief human resources officer at USI Insurance Services, with earlier HR leadership roles across various industries.



Danielle Stanton

RFK Community Alliance's Center for Behavioral Health receives \$50,000 gift, expands capacity through new licensure

RFK Community Alliance (RFKCA) announced two significant milestones for its Center for Behavioral Health: a \$50,000 gift from an anonymous donor through the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, and the Center's successful transition to a licensed clinic under the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH).

The \$50,000 contribution directly supports RFKCA's Center for Behavioral Health, enabling clinicians to extend care well beyond the therapy session. Additionally, its newly obtained license as a clinic through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health will expand the Center's capacity.

Bridgewell earns national accreditation for program quality

Bridgewell has earned a three-year CARF accreditation for 10 person-centered programs, recognizing its commitment to internationally recognized standards of care, quality services and continuous improvement.

CARF accreditation, a recognized benchmark of quality in health and human services for more than 50 years, demonstrates a provider's commitment to continuous improvement, accountability and responsive, high-quality care.

VOAMASS's Hanna Hondzinski and Shawna Upton receive national leadership award

Volunteers of America of Massachusetts (VOAMASS)'s communications and engagement manager Hanna Hondzinski

Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries hosts annual Good Party



PHOTO BY GEOFFREY BASSETT

Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries recently held *The Good Party*, its annual signature event celebrating the achievements of individuals participating in their job training programs and career services. A highlight of the evening was hearing from Megdalie Desir, who shared her inspiring journey from Haiti to Boston and how Goodwill's retail training program helped her secure employment and support her two young children. UMass Boston Chancellor Emeritus Keith Motley served as emcee. The event was held at the new Jazz Urbane Cafe in Roxbury, near Goodwill's headquarters.

and people and culture manager Shawna Upton received the 2026 Agency and Culture Innovator Award for leadership from the organization's national office, Volunteers of America.

The award recognizes individuals or teams who foster a positive workplace culture that improves employee satisfaction and retention. It was presented June 8 at the Volunteers of America National Conference in Denver, Colorado.

Hondzinski and Upton have developed several employee engagement initiatives, including a recognition program that helped strengthen workplace culture, with 97 percent of staff reporting satisfaction and vacancy rates significantly reduced.

Cardinal Cushing Centers names new chief development officer

Cardinal Cushing Centers

has promoted Laurie Maranian to chief development officer after 16 years with the organization in a variety of development roles.

In her new position, Maranian will oversee fundraising for the \$40 million nonprofit, which has raised more than \$2 million so far in 2026. She is also co-founder of Urban PowerHouse, a Hyde Park nonprofit gym focused on expanding access to strength training, and previously served on the board of Women in Development and chaired the South Shore Chamber of Commerce's Non-Profit Affinity Group.



Laurie Maranian

Gregg Ellenberg announces departure from Hildebrand

Hildebrand announced that Gregg Ellenberg will be leaving Hildebrand after nearly six years at the organization. Ellenberg served as the organization's chief program officer.

During his time at Hildebrand, Ellenberg built and guided a program team that navigated COVID, expanded youth services and launched economic



Gregg Ellenberg

mobility and diversion initiatives. Before his time with Hildebrand, Ellenberg worked for the Malden YMCA as the senior director of community programs where he was responsible for five youth community centers, an ESOL program for newcomers, large-scale community events and building community partnerships with service providers, local businesses, and colleges. He will be leaving Hildebrand to go back to his roots as a leader in youth services.

Council welcomes Dave Cerrone as new eAcademy® LMS Manager

The **Providers' Council** welcomed Dave Cerrone as its eAcademy® LMS Manager.

In his new role, Cerrone oversees the day-to-day operations of the Council's eAcademy® program, leads support and eAcademy® training initiatives and guides program workflows and support functions. Cerrone will also play an integral role in shaping and expanding the Council's online learning and credentialing programs, contributing to its continued growth and impact.

To connect with Dave Cerrone, email him at dcerrone@providers.org.



Dave Cerrone

Council welcomes Dan Curley as new technology associate

The **Providers' Council** welcomed Dan Curley as its technology associate.

In his new role, Curley provides front-line technology support for the Providers' eAcademy® program, along with assisting both internal staff and member organizations by assisting with day-to-day technology operations, troubleshooting issues, maintaining systems and databases, and ensuring the smooth delivery of member services and educational programming.

To connect with Dan Curley, email him at dcurley@providers.org.



Dan Curley

Western MA Rally

SEPTEMBER 18, 2026

PROVIDER PROFILES

OPEN SKY COMMUNITY SERVICES

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About the Agency

While the name Open Sky Community Services is relatively new, the agency has served Central Massachusetts for over half a century.

Open Sky formed in 2018 when The Bridge of Central Massachusetts and Alternatives Unlimited affiliated. These two human service agencies had served the region since the 1970s, each with unique approaches, but aligned missions of supporting individuals to live fulfilling, meaningful lives.

The Bridge originated in Westborough in 1973 and used evidence-based practices to support young adults who were marginalized by society following the closure of the Lyman School for Boys and other state institutions. Alternatives Unlimited, founded in Whitinsville in 1976, provided community-based services and supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), with the goal of not just acceptance, but true community membership. These values still guide Open Sky.

Today, Open Sky is based in Worcester with 1,300 employees, more than 140 programs throughout Central Massachusetts and a budget of over \$130 million. Funding is primarily from state agencies, with additional support from foundations, private donors and corporate sponsors.

The agency is dedicated to prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, while growing and adapting to the changing needs of the community.

Open Sky provides a holistic approach to helping people thrive

Open Sky has more than 140 programs and services to support the needs of over 8,000 individuals. The agency prioritizes whole-person health while serving individuals with behavioral health diagnoses, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and autism, those facing homelessness and individuals with justice involvement.

Open Sky's wide range of behavioral health programs include outpatient services, two internationally accredited Clubhouses and residential programs. Individuals with IDD can access a variety of supports depending on their needs, from day programs and a Shared Living and residential programs.

The Safe Homes Drop-In Center for LGBTQIA+ Youth and The PLACE for Empowerment Young Adult Access Center provide young adults with the resources, peer support and mentorship they need to build a strong foundation. Additionally, there has been a critical need in recent years for programs supporting individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as those with justice involvement.

Open Sky staff understand each person's situation is unique, and many staff members bring lived experience to their work. They collaborate internally, as well as externally with community partners to ensure individuals receive the services they need.

A great example of the benefits of collaborative, whole-person health is Frank, an individual served by Open Sky's Adult Community Clinical Services. His challenges were multifaceted, including employment, housing, substance use and mental health needs. Frank worked with a recovery coach, a housing coordinator, a family partner and outreach counselor. This wraparound approach addressed his needs at



Open Sky's programs have allowed Frank to create a full and meaningful life for himself and his loved ones.

their core and today he has housing, a stable job, community connections, a better relationship with his children and is on the path to recovery. Whole-person health is key to ensuring that individuals receive the wraparound support they need to live fulfilling lives.

Open Sky also offers unique programs to serve the broader community. ValleyCAST, the arts and culture arm of the agency, offers inclusive exhibits, classes and concerts. The Bridge Training Institute offers evidence-based trainings for human service professionals and educators. These programs strive to make the community safer and more inclusive, improving the lives of the individuals served by the agency and all who live in the region.

Executive Leadership

Ken Bates has been with Open Sky Community Services since 2016 as president and CEO. He has extensive leadership experience in the nonprofit industry and has guided the agency through extraordinary growth in the last decade.



Ken Bates

Prior to his position at Open Sky, Bates served as CEO of The Bridge of Central Massachusetts and executive director of new business and financial growth for ForHealth Consulting (formerly Commonwealth Medicine) at UMass Chan Medical School. He also served as vice president of behavioral health at Advocates and as director of outpatient services at Spectrum Health Systems.

Bates earned his bachelor's degree in urban studies from Worcester State University and his master's degree in counseling psychology from Assumption University, where he was also awarded an honorary Ph.D.

He currently serves on the boards of the Association for Behavioral Healthcare (ABH), the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP), the Parent Professional Advocacy League (PPAL) and Providers' Council. He is a former board member of the New England Association of Drug Court Professionals. In 2019, Bates was named Nonprofit Business Leader of the Year by the Worcester Business Journal and in 2026, he was named to the Worcester Business Journal's Power 100 List.

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

Ginny Connolly: A lifetime of leadership and advocacy

For more than 50 years, Virginia A. "Ginny" Connolly has dedicated her career to advancing dignity, inclusion and opportunity for people with disabilities. As executive director of **Beaverbrook STEP**, Ginny has provided visionary leadership that has transformed both the organization and the lives of countless individuals.

Connolly's commitment to social justice began early in her career on the front lines of the civil rights movement. She went door-to-door in underserved communities helping people register to vote and worked alongside advocates dedicated to equality and human rights. During this period, she assisted Reverend James Reeb, the Unitarian minister whose death following the 1965 Selma voting rights marches became a defining moment in the civil rights movement.

Building on this foundation of advocacy, Connolly became a pioneer in Massachusetts' movement to transition adults with disabilities from institutional settings into community-based homes and supports. Working closely with families and fellow advocates, she helped develop some of the Commonwealth's earliest residential programs designed to promote independence, inclusion and self-determination.

Under Connolly's leadership, Beaverbrook STEP grew from a small, two-program start-up into a multi-faceted organization employing approximately 400 highly trained staff members. Today, the agency supports more than 250 individuals with disabilities as they pursue meaningful lives within their communities. Her steadfast commitment to person-centered services has fostered an organizational culture grounded in respect and empathy. Coordinating director Olatunde



Ginny Connolly has dedicated over 50 years to advocating for persons with disabilities.

Ojuolape mentioned that "the heart of Beaverbrook STEP is built on empathy, and Ginny is the one who has made sure that principle is front and center in all her interactions with staff, families and individuals in our care."

Throughout her tenure, Connolly has been known not only as an exceptional leader but also as a mentor, collaborator and advocate for human dignity. She cultivated strong relationships with staff, families and the individuals served by Beaverbrook STEP, ensuring that every person's voice was valued.

As she enters retirement, Connolly leaves behind a remarkable legacy of courage, leadership and service. Her lifelong dedication to social justice and disability rights has helped shape a more inclusive Commonwealth and improved the lives of generations of individuals and families.

Monica Diaz: From Care Center student to student advocate

At **The Care Center** in Holyoke, young mothers and women of all ages continue their education wherever they left off. With rigorous academics and wrap-around supports like onsite childcare, transportation, meals, counseling and health care, students have what they need to complete degrees and move toward meaningful careers.

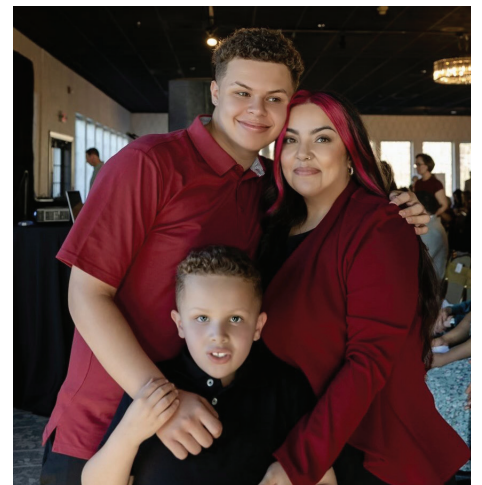
Few people understand that journey better than Monica Diaz, who has worked at The Care Center for five years as manager of college support services.

Before joining the staff, Diaz was a student at The Care Center. She was one of the first four graduates of Bard Microcollege Holyoke, a partnership between Bard College and The Care Center that offers a tuition-free associate degree in a close-knit community of women. Returning to school while raising her children shaped how she connects with students today.

"Diaz's work with students draws from her lived experience," said Jenna Sellers, director of student support. "She knows firsthand what it means to balance parenting, college and employment."

Diaz elaborated, "Today, at The Care Center, my job is to help students keep going. I help women navigate housing insecurity, financial pressures, caregiving responsibilities — and sometimes I simply help them see themselves as scholars. We all need someone to believe in us."

In her work with students, Diaz is the steady force helping clear whatever stands in the way of college. Whether it's an unexpected financial emergency or moment of self-doubt, she helps women stay grounded



As a young mother who received services from The Care Center, Monica Diaz understands the journey her clients go through every day.

in their studies and keep moving forward.

"If it were not for Monica, I would not be holding my high school diploma, nor my associate degree," said Destiny Bermudez, who earned her high school equivalency at The Care Center in 2023, completed her associate degree through Bard Microcollege Holyoke, and is now pursuing a bachelor's degree at Elms College. "I owe her my gratitude for all that I have achieved. Because of Monica's persistent encouragement, my children are witnessing me break generational barriers through educational ambition."

Today, Diaz's work comes full circle — supporting students in the same community that once supported her and helping women change the trajectory for their families.



William Yelenak
President / Publisher

A workforce we can't afford to lose

Walk into almost any group home, day program or residential setting in Massachusetts, and you'll find the same story repeating itself in community-based human services programs: Our workforce is held together in no small part by immigrants who answered the call.

That should make us proud of a sector that employs 150,000 individuals across the Commonwealth and cares for hundreds of thousands of our friends and neighbors every day. Our sector has always found a way to show up for the people who need essential services, and new arrivals to this country have been an immense part of building stronger, more caring communities across Massachusetts.

And as proud as that makes us, we should be equally infuriated about what's happening at the federal level with repeated attacks on immigrants who have helped strengthen America throughout our country's 250-year history.

Another cause for frustration and anger took place last month when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the Trump administration can proceed with terminating Temporary Protected Status for Haitians and Syrians — stripping legal protections from an estimated 350,000 Haitian nationals and more than 6,000 Syrians across the country. An estimated 45,000 TPS holders live right here in Massachusetts, the vast majority of them Haitian, and many have been working in our community-based human services sector.

But unless something changes urgently, those protections are set to expire in July — perhaps while you're reading this very issue of *The Provider*. Justice Elena Kagan wrote a dissenting opinion and didn't mince words about what she saw driving the decision to single out Haiti.

"The evidence they have offered includes statements by the President so repellent and racially inflected that the majority declines to put them in print," Kagan wrote. Reviewing those same statements, she added, "The statements fairly shout, in their racial undertones and overtones alike, that race entered into the President's resolve to remove Haitians from this country."

The reality of who these workers are stands in stark contrast to the hateful rhetoric used by President Trump.

Take Road to Responsibility — a Providers' Council member based in Marshfield — that runs 52 group homes and 10 day programs, serving 1,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across Southeastern Massachusetts. The organization's President and CEO Chris White (also the chair of the Council's board of directors) told *The Boston Globe* last month that he expected to lose another 28 employees after the Supreme Court's ruling, bringing the total of RTR employees who lost employment due to federal immigration policies to 130 — or more than one-eighth of the organization's workforce. "It's not like these folks were taking jobs that Americans would be doing," White said. "The

reality is we don't have enough people to do the work."

A similar situation played out at Amego, another Council member serving individuals with autism and other disabilities. Before a court order temporarily paused TPS termination in February, Amego had to tell two dozen Haitian employees they'd lost their jobs, only to call them back to work the next morning after the pause went into effect. Even before that, more than a dozen other workers had quit with the TPS expiration looming on the horizon. "This is just a write-off of an entire section of our workforce," Amego President and CEO John Randall told *The Boston Globe*. Randall told *The Provider* in mid-July he expects Amego will lose 14 people when TPS termination officially takes place.

These aren't isolated stories. The report we released earlier this year with the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute, *Stretched to Capacity*, found vacancy rates of 15 to 16 percent across client-facing roles in human services, with nearly one in five direct care positions sitting empty statewide. That crisis existed long before this ruling. What's happening now doesn't create the workforce crisis — it accelerates it at the exact moment our sector can least afford the loss.

The Providers' Council supports the Haitian, Syrian and other immigrant workers who have built careers caring for the people our sector serves, and we believe stripping their legal status is wrong — not only because of what it will do to an already-strained workforce, but because it is wrong on its own terms. For more than half a century, the Providers' Council has represented a sector built on the belief that every person deserves dignity, stability and care, regardless of where they came from or how they arrived here.

We know that outrage alone doesn't keep a group home staffed, nor does it provide essential supports to Commonwealth residents who rely on this critical sector every day. That's why we wanted to provide a few steps you can take to help.

Start by making sure your staff and colleagues know their rights and have access to accurate legal information from the National Immigration Law Center (nilc.org) or the state's Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI), which has been a valued partner in holding webinars and keeping employers informed. Reach out to your elected officials and ask them to speak out against TPS terminations — and implore your friends in "red" states to do the same. And perhaps most of all, support immigrants working in your own workplace — quietly, practically, and in whatever ways you can.

Road to Responsibility, Amego and providers like them across our state have spent years fighting to keep this sector staffed, and the Haitian and Syrian workers have been an essential part of those efforts. We refuse to stand idly by while Washington undoes that work, and we encourage you to share your stories as loudly and as widely as possible.



During a recent drop-in workshop at **Centerboard's We Rise Program** in Haverhill, participants came together for a hands-on tie-dye activity that encouraged creativity, self-expression and community building. Participants designed and created their own unique tie-dye t-shirts, using color and artistic expression to showcase their individuality. While the activity was fun and engaging, it also provided meaningful opportunities to build confidence, strengthen social connections, and practice decision-making and creative problem-solving skills.

Want to highlight the artwork of your program participants? Contact Maureen at mlynch@providers.org for more information.



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More than an acronym: DEIB and the mission of human services

By Eric Mitchell

There is no denying that conversations about race, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging have become increasingly difficult. While these discussions have never been free from tension, today's climate has amplified uncertainty and fear around topics often grouped under the acronym DEIB, or something similar. For many organizations, including those in human services, the challenge is not whether these concepts matter but whether we can have thoughtful conversations about what they actually mean, and continue to deliver mission-aligned, DEIB-sensitive services.

Too often, DEIB is discussed in broad political terms that obscure its real purpose. In human services, DEIB is not a slogan, a mandate or a special program designed to benefit one group over another. At its core, it reflects principles that have long guided effective service delivery and community engagement.

Diversity means recognizing and valuing the varied backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and identities that people bring to our workplaces and communities. Equity means ensuring that individuals have access to the opportunities, resources and support they need to succeed, while acknowledging that barriers are not the same for everyone. Inclusion means creating environments where people feel welcomed, respected and empowered to participate fully. Belonging means cultivating a culture where individuals feel accepted, valued and connected without needing to change who they are.

These are not radical concepts. They are human concepts.

One of the most common misconceptions surrounding DEIB is that it is primarily focused on dividing people into groups or elevating one group over another. In reality, DEIB efforts ask organizations to examine whether everyone has a fair opportunity to access services, contribute their talents and feel respected. The focus is not exclusion. The focus is making sure no one is excluded.

This is particularly important in human services. By definition, human service agencies exist to support people. We work with children, families, older adults, individuals with disabilities, people experiencing poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, substance use disorders and countless other challenges. Every day, our staff meet people during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

Success in this work depends on trust.

People are more likely to seek help, remain engaged in services and experience positive outcomes when they feel respected and understood. They want to know they will be treated with dignity rather than judgment. They want to know their experiences will be heard rather than dismissed. Whether someone is enrolling a child in an early education program, seeking food assistance, accessing behavioral health support or navigating a personal crisis, relationships matter.

People respond to people.

That reality should not be controversial. Compassion, empathy and understanding have always been central to effective human services. DEIB simply provides a framework that helps organizations ensure those values are consistently reflected in how they serve their communities and support their workforce.

The current debate surrounding DEIB also reveals that many people define these terms differently. While there may be disagreement about language, there is often far more agreement about values. Optimistically, most people believe individuals should be treated fairly, should be treated with respect and believe communities are stronger when people feel welcomed and able to contribute.

Common ground becomes easier to find when we move beyond labels and focus on mission and goals.

Human services organizations have a responsibility to create environments where staff and community members feel valued and supported. This is not only the right thing to do; it also strengthens organizations. Employees who feel respected are more likely to remain engaged in their work. Clients who feel welcomed are more likely to seek assistance when needed. Communities that foster belonging create stronger connections and better outcomes for everyone.

At a time when these conversations feel increasingly divisive, we should not lose sight of what brought many of us to this work in the first place. Human services are rooted in dignity, respect, compassion and the belief that every person has value. Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging are not separate from those principles. They are an expression of them. And in a field dedicated to helping people thrive, that commitment has never been more important.

Eric Mitchell is the president and CEO of Pathways for Children, Inc.

The silent crisis: Why summer is the sleeper threat to individuals experiencing homelessness

By Albert Hanscom

For many, the arrival of summer is a time of joy. During the winter, the holiday season, and freezing temperatures often spark a giving spirit that moves communities to compassionate action — through blanket drives, seasonal warming centers and an increase in emergency shelter beds. Yet a silent and often underestimated crisis unfolds every year when temperatures spike: extreme summer heat. Statistically, heat is the deadliest form of extreme weather, accounting for more than twice as many deaths as almost any other weather event and nearly five times as many as extreme cold. We can no longer remain silent; for our most vulnerable neighbors, this is a matter of life or death.

This problem poses a direct threat to public health. Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can cause heat exhaustion and deadly heat stroke. Without regular access to clean drinking water, people are particularly vulnerable to severe dehydration, which can cause delirium, seizures and brain damage. Employees at Emmaus have personally seen the physical toll these illnesses take on our visitors and the challenging road to recovery they must travel.

Compounding variables profoundly threaten our most vulnerable, unsheltered neighbors. Severe health issues often worsen their financial struggles, leav-

ing them devoid of basic defenses against the intense heat — no reliable shelter, no air conditioning and no consistent shade. The demand for vital services always surpasses capacity; our triage unit at Mitch's Place handles an average of 249 calls each month from people desperate for help. Every individual seeking refuge at Emmaus lives in extreme poverty — 57 percent arrive with no income at all.

This financial instability is deeply intertwined with devastating health challenges. Between 80 and 84 percent of Emmaus visitors suffer from at least one debilitating illness. Seniors, who constitute 18 percent of our shelter population in FY '24 and endure 25 percent more severe conditions than others, are especially at risk. Moreover, some essential medications, such as certain antidepressants and antipsychotics, can interfere with the body's natural cooling abilities, a danger intensified by the urban heat island effect.

In addition to heatstroke, there are other serious concerns associated with the summer. Intense UV radiation raises the long-term risk of skin cancer and can cause sun poisoning. Sweat and bacteria can cause serious skin illnesses like staph, a secondary crisis brought on by a lack of hygienic facilities. Furthermore, excessive heat negatively affects mental health, interfering with sleep and increasing hospital admissions for mood disorders.

Despite persistent community efforts to overcome these obstacles, a sizable

public awareness gap remains. While wintertime imagery dominates media coverage, deadly summer hazards are frequently overlooked. To address this, we collaborate with local authorities and partners who operate cooling centers, including our individual shelter, which is open around the clock during periods of excessive heat. Many people continue to be outside despite these measures, underscoring the critical need for increased community outreach and services.

The importance of providing instant shelter cannot be overstated. Former guest Joanna eloquently stated, "Emmaus saved my life," after being offered shelter on the day she fled a violent situation. Since finding refuge, Joanna has been protected from the intense heat and its associated health risks. Offering safe, immediate shelter is fundamental to our mission.

Community generosity during winter must also extend into the summer, particularly July and August. A proactive measure could involve distributing cooling kits containing bottled water, sunscreen, sun hats and portable fans. We must do everything possible to alleviate the summer crisis, just as we do during winter, to fulfill our mission of protecting those experiencing homelessness and saving lives.

Albert Hanscom is the chief executive officer at Emmaus, Inc.

Stronger together: Celebrating Disability Pride and community in Massachusetts

By Jennifer Cordaro

Here in Massachusetts, where a long history of advocacy, healthcare innovation and civil rights leadership continues to shape our communities, Disability Pride Month is both a celebration and a call to action. It is a time not only to raise awareness, but to affirm identity, challenge assumptions and recommit to building communities where everyone can thrive.

Disability is a natural and important part of human diversity. Across Massachusetts and the nation, millions of individuals live with disabilities, contributing to our workforce, schools, families and civic life. Yet despite this, many continue to encounter barriers whether that be physical, social and attitudinal that limit opportunity and participation. Disability Pride Month asks us to shift our perspective: from viewing disability as something to be "fixed" to recognizing it as an essential aspect of identity that deserves respect, representation, and inclusion.

At its core, Disability Pride is about visibility and voice. For too long, individuals with disabilities have been spoken about rather than truly listened to. Their experiences have often been filtered through outdated stereotypes or simplified narratives. Pride challenges these limitations by centering authentic stories of resilience, creativity, and everyday life. In Massachusetts, where community-based services and advocacy organizations play a critical role, elevating these voices is essential to creating meaningful and lasting change.

The importance of Disability Pride also extends beyond recognition — it calls for action. True inclusion requires more than intention; it demands systemic and sustained effort. Accessible transportation, inclusive education, equitable employment opportunities and responsive healthcare systems. Massachusetts has made



(Left to right): Jennifer Cordaro, a Life Connections' client, and his shared living DSP and her child stand together.

meaningful strides in advancing accessibility and disability rights and continued progress depends on embedding accessibility into the design of our systems. When we build with accessibility in mind, we create stronger, more inclusive communities for everyone.

Organizations across Massachusetts, especially those in human services, healthcare, and community-based supports have a critical role to play. At Life Connections, this work comes to life every day through strong partnerships with shared living providers and Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), who play an essential role in supporting individuals to live meaningful, self-directed lives in their communities. By collaborating closely with these caregivers and professionals, Life Connections helps ensure that support is not only individualized and responsive, but also grounded in dignity, choice and genuine connection. Alongside these efforts, prioritizing inclusive hiring practices, ensuring accessibility in programs and

communications and elevating the leadership of people with disabilities allows organizations to move beyond awareness toward measurable impact. Leadership matters. When leaders actively champion inclusion, they help create cultures that value diversity in all its forms and set a standard for others to follow.

For those of us working in human services and community organizations, Disability Pride Month is both a celebration and a moment of reflection. It challenges us to ask: Are we truly listening to the individuals and families we serve? Are we creating environments that promote independence, dignity and self-determination? Are we advocating for the policy and system-level changes our communities need?

Celebrating Disability Pride also means recognizing the progress that has been made. Advocacy efforts, many of which have strong roots in Massachusetts have led to significant

DISABILITY PRIDE, see page 7

THE PROVIDER

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convention & GoFundMe
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THE PROVIDER

Volume 46 — No. 10 The Newspaper of the Providers' Council November 2025

50 Years Together: Celebrating Today, Shaping Tomorrow a huge success

The Providers' Council's 50th Annual Convention & Expo, *50 Years Together: Celebrating Today, Shaping Tomorrow*, brought together a solid-out crowd of nearly 1,200 attendees connected to Massachusetts' community-based human services sector. Held on October 6 at the Marriott Copley Place Hotel in Boston, the event marked the Council's golden anniversary with a day of celebration, reflection and forward-looking conversations about the future of the sector.

"Today is not just about our past — it's about shaping our future as well," said Providers' Council President/CEO Bill Yelenak when kicking off the event in the morning. "The challenges we face today are among the greatest the Council and human services organizations have seen since our founding in 1975. But with challenges come opportunities, and whatever challenges the sector may face, the Council will be right there with our members every step of the way."

The event provided space for professionals from across the sector to connect with other organizations and community members. This year, the convention hosted a robust exhibitor showcase, highlighting time and cost-saving solutions for attendees.

"To me the greatest importance is connecting with fellow organizations that allow you to not only talk about what we do but to learn about what others do in the industry," said Richard Chulman, assistant director of

This is refreshing to get a little bit out of the office and have that opportunity."

In response to evaluations submitted in prior years, the Council added a third workshop block, allowing attendees an opportunity for additional learning across 39 workshops — a record number for the event. This updated schedule gave attendees more opportunities to engage with a wide range of topics relevant to the human services sector. Each block featured 13, hour-long experiences, including traditional workshops, panels, networking rounds and wellness sessions.

To honor the dedication of individuals and organizations across the Commonwealth, the Council honored 12 awardees, including 10 Awards of Excellence and 2 Peer Provider Award ceremonies to create one segment dedicated to celebrating those individuals and organizations' contributions to the human services sector in Massachusetts. Combined, this ceremony allowed the audience to take a moment to honor the awardees and to enjoy the personalized videos and caricatures handcrafted by local companies and artists.

Nine future leaders of the community-based human services sector were also honored at the event, receiving education

The Providers' Council's 50th Annual Convention & Expo, 50 Years Together: Celebrating Today, Shaping Tomorrow gathered together human services professionals, exhibitors, presenters, awardees and friends to celebrate the sector.

nity not to recruit but to know what's going on in the sector."

other leaders in the space. We really operate alone in so many ways, and we work only within our bubble," said Alexia Steel, presi-



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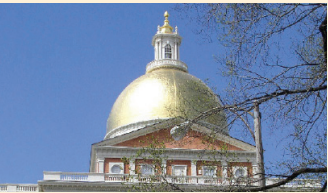
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A VIEW FROM THE HILL

A commentary from a legislator on human services



Strengthening the workforce that strengthens Massachusetts

By Representative Tram Nguyen

When I attended the Merrimack Valley Caring Force Rally this spring, I was reminded of something I learned long before serving in the legislature: some of the most important work in our communities happens quietly, unseen by the public eye.

Before becoming a state representative, I worked as a legal aid attorney representing low-income families, immigrants, survivors of domestic violence and workers navigating difficult circumstances. Time and again, I witnessed the indispensable role that community-based organizations and human services professionals play in helping people find stability amid hardship. Long before someone speaks with a lawyer or turns to a government agency, they rely on a case manager, direct support professional, counselor or other trusted service providers.

These professionals help families remain housed, connect individuals to healthcare and essential services, support people with disabilities in living independently and guide communities through periods of crisis and uncertainty. Their contributions touch nearly every aspect of life in Massachusetts, yet they rarely receive the recognition they deserve.

That is one reason events like the Merrimack Valley Caring Force Rally matter so deeply. As legislators, we spend much of our time reviewing policy proposals, debating legislation and making budget decisions. While these responsibilities are important, they can sometimes feel disconnected from the realities people experience every day. Advocacy events create an opportunity to hear lived experiences of frontline workers directly correlated with the policymaking process.

What stayed with me most after the rally were the stories. I listened to workers who are committed to serving others but struggle to afford housing, childcare and other necessities for their own families. I heard from providers working tirelessly to fill vacancies amid persistent workforce shortages. And I learned more about the difficult balancing act organizations face as demand for services continues to grow while resources remain constrained.

Those stories serve as a powerful reminder that public policy is never merely about budgets or programs. At its core, it is about people.

Human services are rooted in compassion, but compassion alone cannot sustain a workforce. Dedication does not pay rent or cover the cost of groceries. When workers are asked to give endlessly while receiving too little in return, the effects

ripple outward. Organizations face staffing shortages, services become harder to access and families encounter longer waits for the support they need.

In the Merrimack Valley, I see the impact of this sector every day. Families depend on human service organizations for housing assistance, disability supports, youth programs, elder care and countless other resources. These organizations help people navigate life's most difficult moments, while also creating pathways to opportunity, independence and longterm stability. In doing so, they strengthen the fabric of our communities.

Investing in this workforce is therefore a matter of building stronger communities. The individuals who do this work bring extraordinary skill, patience and resilience to roles that are often emotionally and physically demanding. A strong human services sector benefits everyone. It allows people to access support earlier, helps families remain stable and reduces the need for more costly interventions down the road.

The rally also served as a reminder of the power of advocacy. Progress rarely happens on its own. It happens because people organize, share their experiences, and make their voices heard. The Caring Force has built a remarkable network of advocates who continue to elevate the voices of workers, providers, and the individuals they serve.

At a time when many communities are facing uncertainty and growing needs, the role of human services organizations has never been more essential. The individuals who dedicate their careers to caring for others help hold our communities together. They deserve not only our gratitude, but our sustained support.

I left The Caring Force Rally grateful for the opportunity to listen and learn from those at the heart of this work. Their dedication, compassion and advocacy strengthen Massachusetts every day.

As legislators, we have a responsibility to ensure that our policies reflect the value of their contributions. I remain committed to working alongside human services workers, providers, advocates, and families to build a Commonwealth where those who care for our communities receive the support and recognition they deserve.

Representative Tram Nguyen represents the 18th Essex district in the MA House of Representatives.



Rep. Tram Nguyen

These opinions expressed in a View from the Hill and Viewpoints from Across the State are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Providers' Council or its members.

HUMAN SERVICES PROVIDERS GET IT DONE



✱ FOR MASSACHUSETTS

DISABILITY PRIDE: MA can lead the way on disability inclusion

Continued from page 5

advancements in civil rights, education, employment and community living. These achievements remind us that change is possible when voices are heard and equity is prioritized. At the same time, there is more work ahead, and pride fuels the momentum to continue that progress.

Ultimately, Disability Pride Month is about belonging. It is about creating communities where disability is not a barrier to opportunity, where differences are em-

braced rather than minimized, and where every person is valued for who they are. It is a call to move beyond awareness into action, beyond intention into impact.

As we recognize this month, may we celebrate the strengths within our Massachusetts communities, challenge ourselves to grow and commit to building a more inclusive future.

Jennifer Cordaro, M.Ed is the executive director of Life Connections Specialized Support Services, Inc.

CAREVOTE: Prepare to vote with CareVote

Continued from page 1

your local election officials by 5 p.m. on the 5th business day before the election. To ensure that you receive your ballot with enough time to mail it back, you should apply 2-3 weeks before Election Day. Early voting will be open from Saturday, August 22 to Friday, August 28. You can vote at any early voting location in the city or town where you are registered to vote. At least one early voting site will be provided in your community.

The general election will take place on Tuesday, November 3. Voters must register by Saturday, October 24 for the general election. Those choosing to vote by mail-

in-ballot must submit their application by Tuesday, October 27. Early voting will run from Saturday, October 17 to Friday, October 30.

For more information about what positions are up for election and further voting deadlines, please visit www.sec.state.ma.us. For additional resources on what voters need to bring with them on election day, and other voting details, please visit www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state/massachusetts.

For more information on the CareVote initiative, please visit carevote.org. If organizations want to host their own voter registration tables or have any questions, please reach out to carevote@providers.org.

FY '27 BUDGET: New state budget signed into law

Continued from page 1

ticipating in the program. The program saw significant improvements compared to FY '22, with a 60 percent increase in clients maintaining employment for at least 90 days and an 83 percent rise in those staying employed for 180 days.

In early June, the Governor signed a

\$1.56 billion supplemental budget bill for FY '26. The supplemental budget directed surplus revenue generated by the surtax on wealthier households toward major investments in the MBTA, special education reimbursements, child care and relief from the costs of clearing municipal roads this winter. Healey also approved a separate bill replacing hundreds of out-

GET IT DONE: Council launches new campaign

Continued from page 1

Commonwealth.

The goal of the campaign is to build public support to showcase the valuable work Council members provide to their communities with the intent to inspire lawmakers to champion policies that protect and strengthen the nonprofit, community-based human services sector. The Council hopes to remind residents and decision makers that human services and nonprofits embody the “neighbors helping neighbors” ethos that is a central part not just of the Commonwealth, but the country as well.

Over the next few months, the Council will collect stories from its members to highlight the essential work of human services

providers and share the impact their work has on communities across Massachusetts. Through the Council’s campaign website, members are encouraged to submit stories, testimonials, videos, images, etc. that encapsulate the spirit of their missions, which will then be shared widely across all Council platforms and on the campaign website. There are also several resources available, including data from the Council’s latest research report, *Stretched to Capacity*, that highlights key issues that the human services sector faces when providing essential services.

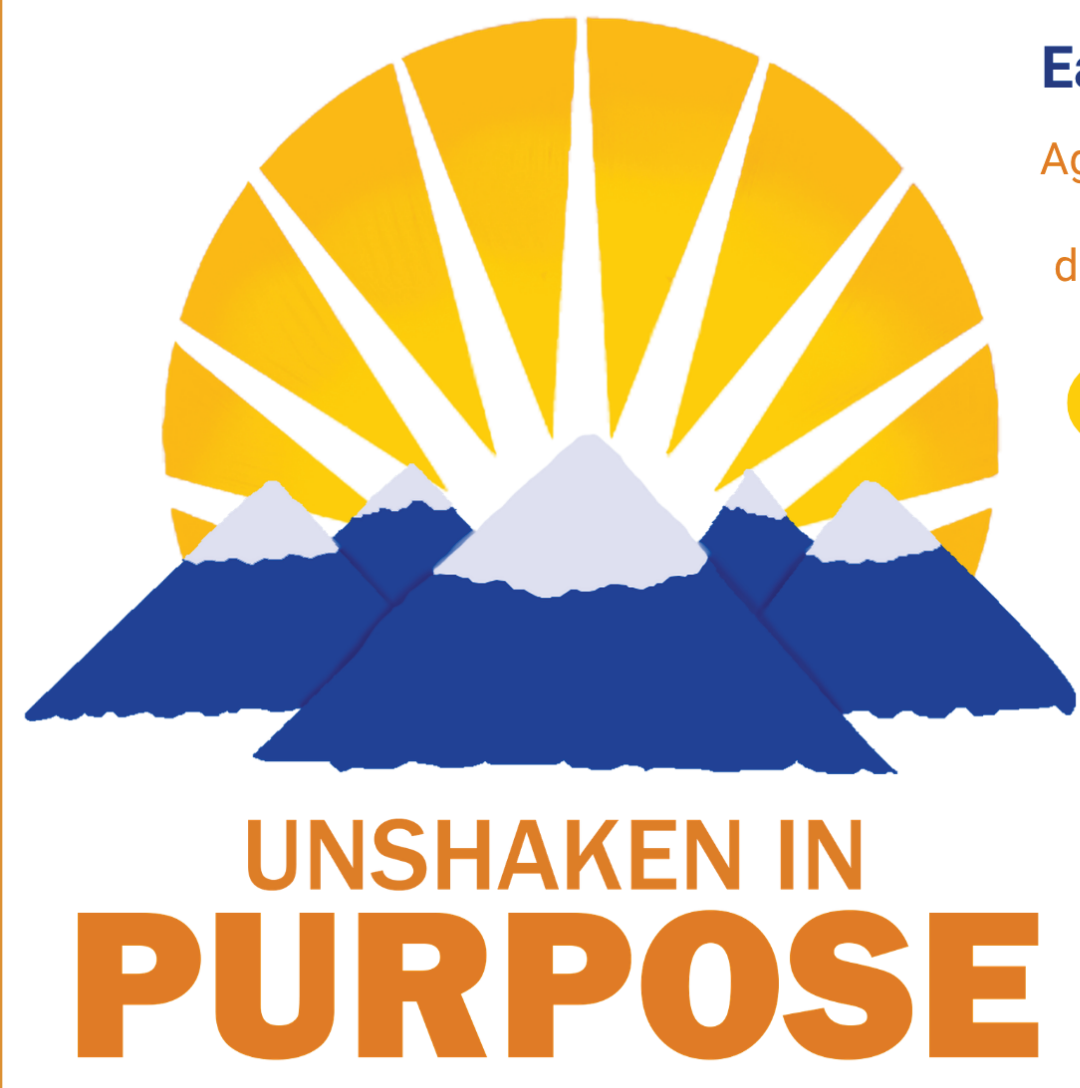
The campaign website can be found at www.humanservicesgetitdone.org. For more information, or for any additional questions, please contact Maureen Lynch at mlynch@providers.org.



Post 22 submitted this photo from Ben’s Beans, their program-led coffee shop, as part of the “Human Services Providers Get It Done” campaign, showcasing how meaningful employment opportunities for people with IDD help build stronger communities.

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ALEX

Academy for Learning and Exchange

CALENDAR OF EVENTS • SUMMER 2026

What:	Community Training: Case Management in Shelter – Building the Foundation Before Move Out	What:	Provider Member Webinar: Safety and Medication Concerns Facing Older Drivers Today
When:	Wednesday, August 5	When:	Tuesday, August 25
Time:	9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Time:	1:00 to 2:30 p.m.
Presenters:	Housing Bridge	Presenters:	Abby Winter, Associate Teaching Professor of Pharmacy at University of Washington; and Michele Ellicks, Outreach Coordinator at Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles
Where:	Online via Zoom	Where:	Online via Zoom
Cost:	\$125; Event for Council Provider Members Only	Cost:	Free; Event for Council Provider Members Only
What:	Free, Members-Only Webinar: Unemployment 101 – What Every Nonprofit Needs to Know!	What:	Associate Member Webinar: From Data to Decisions — Gaining Insight from Financials
When:	Thursday, August 6	When:	Tuesday, September 1
Time:	1:00 to 2:00 p.m.	Time:	2:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Presenters:	Paul Scott, Vice President, Unemployment Tax Management Corporation (UTMC)	Presenters:	Andre Creighton, CAAS Chief Financial Officer, CLA
Where:	Online via Zoom	Where:	Online via Zoom
Cost:	Free; Event for Council Provider Members Only	Cost:	Free; Event for Council Provider Members Only
What:	Mastering Residential Program Management (RPM): Building Strong, Compliant, and Person-Centered Programs	What:	From Avoidance to Action: Tools for More Effective Workplace Conversations
When:	Thursday, August 20 and 27	When:	Tuesday, September 15
Time:	9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Time:	9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Presenters:	Stephen Osei-Bonsu, MBA, MA, BSc, Lead Consultant & Trainer, Scensob Consulting	Presenters:	Stacie Watson, Owner/Partner, Transformative Leadership Strategies
Where:	In-person at the Providers' Council Learning Center	Where:	In-Person at the Providers' Council Learning Center
Cost:	\$200 for Council Members; \$400 for Non-Members	Cost:	\$100 for Council Members; \$200 for Non-Members

Pre-registration for these events is required unless otherwise noted.
Please visit providers.org/events to learn more and register for the event you wish to attend.
Questions? Call 508.598.9800 or email Nina Lamarre at nlamarre@providers.org

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