

2024 Report

Boston Children's Collaboration for Community Health



Boston Children's
Where the world comes for answers

About the Collaboration for Community Health

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

Our Initiatives

The Collaboration has eight equity-focused strategic initiatives that are the focus of this report. Within these initiatives, the Collaboration partners with "funded partners"—community-based organizations, public agencies, academic institutions, and others—to implement activities. Below are the initiatives and timeframes included in this report:



The Family Economic Stability and Opportunity, Family Housing Stability, and Healthy Living initiatives sunset in Fall 2024, and the Mental Health Systems and Healthy Youth Development initiatives sunset in Summer 2025. The CHEq initiative concludes in 2027 and the Birth to Five initiative in 2028.

Important Highlights in Boston: 2024



While inflation decreased, rising food costs in Boston contributed to an **increase in food insecurity** for families.¹ The Massachusetts legislature passed permanent funding for **universal free school meals** across the state.²



Massachusetts's Emergency Assistance shelter system imposed increasingly restrictive **time limits for families staying in shelters** as the system hit capacity.⁵ Organizations rallied to support immigrant arrivals in securing shelter.



Boston Public Schools released a long-term facilities plan that proposed **school mergers or closures** in response to decreased enrollment.³ The Massachusetts legislature passed **free community college** for all students, regardless of age or income.⁴

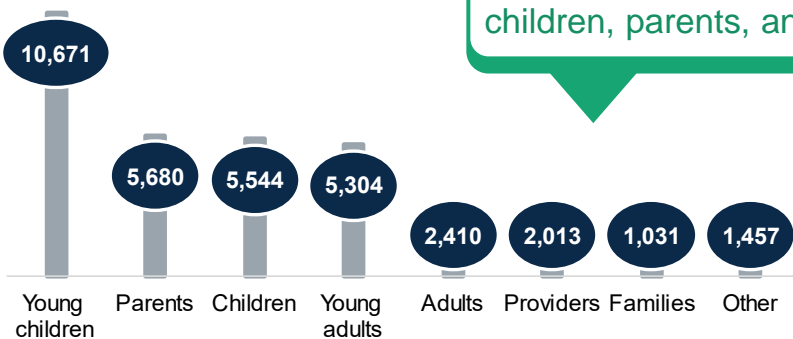


The City of Boston allotted \$21 million in funding to an **initiative to increase mental and behavioral health services** to Boston youth. Funding will expand school-based supports and train additional mental and behavioral health providers.⁶

Who We Reached

AGE GROUPS

(n=34,110)



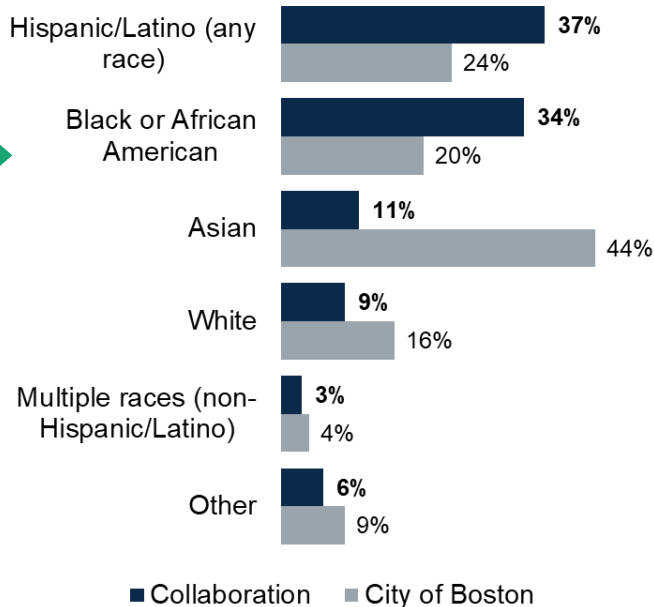
The Collaboration primarily engaged children, parents, and young adults.

71%

of program participants are Black or Hispanic/Latino, compared to 44% of Boston residents.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

(n=26,562)



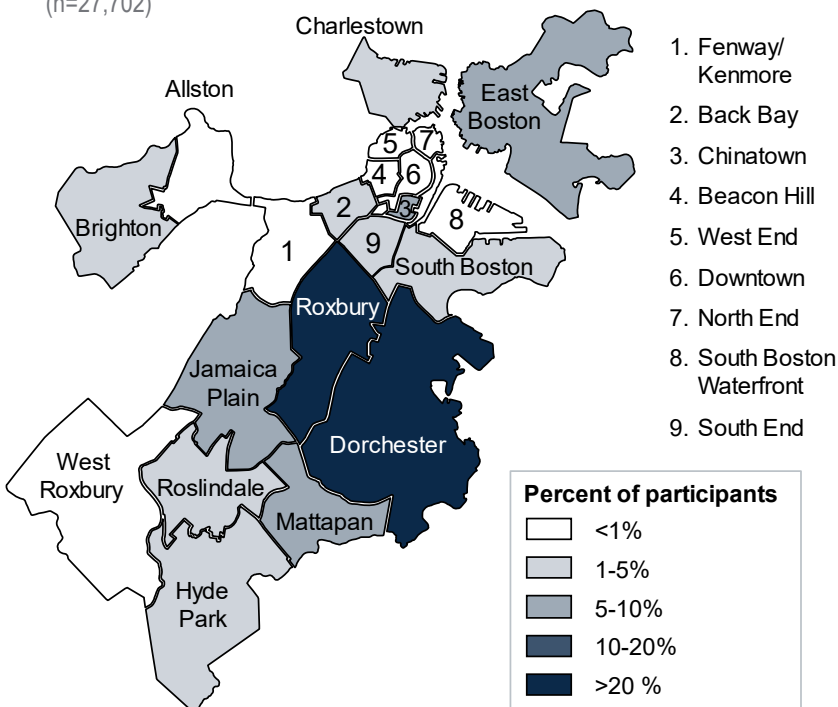
■ Collaboration ■ City of Boston

60%

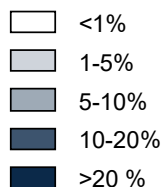
of Boston program participants live in neighborhoods with the highest childhood poverty rates.

BOSTON NEIGHBORHOODS

(n=27,702)

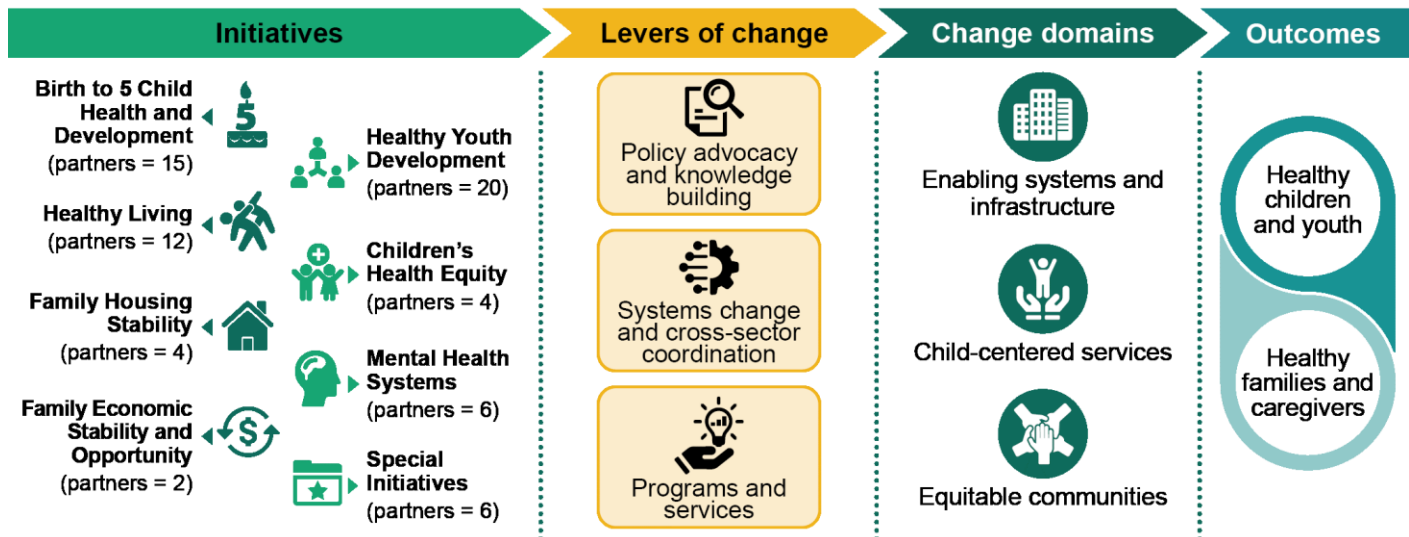


Percent of participants



Progress along pathways to change

The Collaboration's Theory of Change demonstrates the pathways through which strategic initiatives advance our goals. Funded partners work through three **levers** to catalyze changes in the root causes of children's health inequities, which lead to improvements across three broad **domains** that influence child health and wellbeing. Ultimately, these short- and mid-term changes contribute to longer-term goals of **healthy children, youth, families, and caregivers**.



The following pages highlight initiative-level progress in line with the Theory of Change. Read on for more details.

Spotlight on Special Initiatives

The Collaboration funded several Special Initiatives over the last year in addition to the core initiatives included in the Theory of Change. These flexible funding opportunities responded to emerging needs and supported organizations with innovative approaches to improving child health. Below, we describe highlights of achievements made possible by this funding in the past year.

Supporting positive parenting through technology

The Basics demonstrated the impact of their text messaging service, Basic Insights, in increasing awareness of effective parenting to foster children's cognitive skill development. The service has enrolled **16,000 subscribers** as of January 2024.

Permanent supportive housing for families

Heading Home secured a certificate of occupancy on their **Permanent Supportive Family Housing project**. The building will begin housing 20 homeless families in the winter of 2025 in Dorchester.

Increasing early education capacity

NorthStar Early Education Academy broke ground on a new **early education and community center** in New Bedford. This center will have capacity to enroll 135 children from birth to five years old.





Birth to Five Child Health & Development

Progress from September 2021 – August 2024

Goal: Set children ages birth to five years on a high trajectory for success in school and life.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

866 caregivers increased capabilities for healthy early childhood development

Parents increased confidence, knowledge of child development, and knowledge of self-care strategies.

"I was able to gain more knowledge about my child's development, I learned more about the public-school registration and was able to access local groups."

– Parent participant

Parents and caregivers received 1,955 referrals to additional supports following their child's developmental screening, supporting kindergarten readiness

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

29 grass-roots events led by early childhood advocates

Parent leaders from Strategies for Children hosted roundtable discussions with local leaders to push for reform in early childhood education locally and statewide.

4,488 parents and children engaged in programming to build parent-child relationships and parenting capabilities

Chinese-speaking parents in Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center's Positive Solutions for Families workshops learned practical skills to better interact and communicate with their children.

8,175 children screened for developmental concerns at 173 center-based and family childcare programs

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

90 parents, caregivers, and providers active as community leaders and ambassadors

Families First engaged parent leaders to organize outreach in schools, support marketing, and take part in leadership trainings through the Ripple program.

"This Advocacy Network allows for [a] fresh perspective – it allows for individuals, educators who wouldn't typically think they have a space in the advocacy world that they actually do."

– Parent advocate

5,013 family-focused workshops, home visits, and coaching sessions

East Boston Social Centers hired a bilingual social worker to support work with families with more intensive needs, including those involved with the Department of Children and Families or those facing homelessness.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$4.30m in funding to 15 funded partners over 3 years

Over 19,000 community members engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Dorchester, Roxbury, and East Boston.

Common approaches

- Build early childhood providers' capacity to address social determinants of health and social, emotional, and behavioral health
- Develop parent and provider capacity to advocate for increased investments in early childhood and family-centered services
- Connect families with free culturally and linguistically appropriate community resources



Healthy Living

Progress from September 2021 – August 2024

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

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

290 youth increased their sport-specific skills or improved their biking competencies

Youth in Youth Enrichment Services' skiing or outdoor adventure programming built confidence in their physical abilities as they received coaching from staff that reflect their identities.

512 parents changed their attitudes around health after participating in culturally-tailored programming on health topics

"We have observed a positive shift in our community's perception of disability. There has been a noticeable decrease in isolation and an increase in overall wellness and confidence among children and parents."

-Partner organization

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

126,900 servings of fresh, locally-grown produce distributed and purchased

Youth at Haley House distributed produce from Thornton Street Farm to neighborhood elders and provided them with ideas on how to cook the produce.

"The overall involvement of scholars [BPS students] working together and problem solving is amazing. Playworks really motivates the children to want to play together."

-School leader, on recess programming

5,267 youth and adults engaged in new or expanded physical activity programs

Playworks programming improved levels of physical activity at recess and decreased disciplinary incidents in five Boston schools. Junior coaches led peers in active games and positive social activities.

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

534 youth led Healthy Living activities

Youth Apprentices at Bikes not Bombs taught Bike School programming to peers, learned advanced mechanic skills, and engaged in advocacy.

"My child would never eat greens. I was surprised and happy to see her trying things at the farm."

-Parent of program participant

514 sessions of culturally and linguistically relevant healthy eating and farming education to improve healthy behaviors

Urban Farming Institute used classroom education sessions and farm visits to provide nutrition education, nature play, and exposure to fruits and vegetables.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$1.75m in funding to 12 funded partners over 3 years

Over 4,114 community members engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester.

Common approaches

- Engage children and families in physical activity
- Engage youth in urban farming, provide nutrition education, and support local food systems
- Educate caregivers about healthy eating and active lifestyles
- Engage youth as leaders within programs
- Distribute free meals and produce to families



Family Housing & Economic Stability

Progress from September 2021 – August 2024

Goal: Promote affordable, safe, and quality housing for children and families in priority neighborhoods and foster improved family economic stability and opportunity.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

724 families newly housed

Of these families, 619 purchased a home through Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance's STASH program or ONE+ Boston.

"Owning our home has lifted a huge weight off my shoulders. I'm no longer worried about rent increases or having to move. It's made me more present and relaxed with my kids, and they're thriving because of it."

- Parent participant

76 families improved asthma or reduced lead, pests, and/or chemical exposure after buying a home through the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance first generation homebuying program

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

1,391 residents engaged in local housing advocacy

Chinatown Community Land Trust mobilized 316 people to send emails, 153 people to send postcards, and 20 organizations to send letters to city officials opposing the use of a parcel of land in Chinatown for parking.

3,213 households participated in housing and/or economic support services

Community Labor United matched working parents with providers who offered childcare outside of traditional working hours.

"[One parent] said this childcare placement changed her life because she could now finally officially join [her local union] and start working because this early morning childcare would allow her to make it for the early shifts."

-Partner Organization

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

2,665 units covered by tenant associations to collectively organize

City Life/Vida Urbana organized the largest rent control campaign to date to contest living conditions, rent increases, and unfair evictions.

"Our highly visible work played a role in multiple legislative victories this legislative session: The Right to Counsel Pilot, the Foreclosure Mediation Pilot, restoration of Chapter 257 in 2023... and a Rent Control Home Rule petition."

-Partner Organization

102 meetings with policymakers to discuss affordable homeownership policies

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$1.83m in funding to 6 funded partners over 3 years

Over 4,000 residents and families engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Chinatown, Dorchester, and Roxbury.

Common approaches

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



Mental Health Systems

Progress from May 2022 – June 2024

Goal: Improve accessible, culturally responsive systems of mental and behavioral health care by expanding and diversifying the mental and behavioral health workforce.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

Students and early career practitioners shared that mentors and supervisors supported their retention in the workforce or programs

"I don't feel as burned out and feel like I can do more self-care practice because I'm able to discuss cases with someone who understands culturally the decisions I'm making and the dynamics at play."

-Practitioner in supervision

80 Spanish-speaking students and practitioners increased linguistic accessibility for families

Social workers within Boston College School of Social Work's Integrative Supervision Initiative secured transportation so immigrant children in shelters could remain in current schools for continuity of social work services.

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

80 students and professionals received culturally congruent and career-aligned coaching or mentoring

"Having a mentor who is also a school psychologist was very helpful. My mentor could relate to the very specific aspects of my program and clinical work that other psychologists may not have had insight into."

-Graduate student

739 students and community members trained in trauma-informed, culturally responsive care

As a result of didactic seminars, students at William James College demonstrated significant increases in multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

276 students and professionals enrolled in social work, counseling, and clinical psychology training programs

87 seminars and workshops held for students and professionals

Springfield College held seminars and workshops to cover topics such as cultural and diversity counseling, teaching while Black, and mental health and urban youth to improve cultural responsiveness when working with diverse youth.

28 honoraria offered to partner agencies for field placements

William James College offered \$3,000 honoraria to 16 community-based partner agencies serving primarily lower-income communities and communities of color in the Boston area.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$3.22m in funding to 6 funded partners over 3 years

277 students and providers engaged

Funded partners engaged providers primarily working in Boston Public Schools and students at 12 Boston-area universities.

Common approaches

- Support racial/ethnic and linguistically diverse students to enter the mental health (MH) provider workforce
- Provide accessible educational opportunities for clinical graduate students, MH providers, and community members to deliver trauma-informed support



Healthy Youth Development

Progress from May 2022 – June 2024

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

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

605 youth improved their understanding of trauma and available resources to address mental health needs

319 youth improved connections with mentors, adults, and peers

Youth with Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center learned how to engage in challenging conversations with family members around racism through participation in the Racial Reconciliation & Healing Project.

"Our youth cited their heightened emotional regulation and support from our staff members as the primary reasons behind their confidence to communicate more openly [with parents or caregivers]."

-Partner Organization

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

1,559 youth and caregivers received mental health or trauma support services

"Involving parents and other family members with our youth early on... has helped parents to feel more respected and less stigmatized. They and their children are more open to advocating for themselves and enlisting the community's support."

-Partner Organization

1,633 youth engaged in education success and career pathway programs

Freedom House launched the PUSH-to-START program, supporting students in a transition year between high school and post-secondary programs.

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

702 youth led and developed community programs

Youth leaders at Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción created written and performance art for the event, "These Schools are Dying – Our Education, Our Choices."

"Our Youth Wellness Committee organized a viewing party of 'The Social Dilemma,' which drew 51 community youth and families to our offices for an evening of discussion and brainstorming on accountability measures for social media companies."

-Partner Organization

146 training opportunities for youth-facing staff

MissionSAFE staff received training on the impacts of trauma and resilience strategies.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$2.92m in funding to 20 funded partners over 3 years

Over 5,389 youth, families, and staff engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan.

Common approaches

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



Children's Health Equity

Progress from January 2021 – June 2024

The Children's Health Equity Initiative advances child health through a place-based, collective impact approach. Four collaboratives, based in Boston neighborhoods, foster collaboration and cohesion in communities disproportionately impacted by inequities in health.

Outcomes

Changes in the lives of children, caregivers, and families.

210 caregivers improved financial well-being through new employment, increased income, or reduced debt

363 caregivers active in shaping their children's education

The Resilient Families Surround Care School Community Coalition helped parents and educators engage in Boston Public School's Green New Deal initiative and provide input on potential school closures.

24 youth improved their leadership competencies

Fields Corner Crossroads Collaborative launched a Youth Ambassador Program, through which Youth Council members interned with Collaborative member organizations and explored career paths.

Change domains

Changes within social and environmental systems impacting children and families.

954 residents connected to programs or resources through referral networks

The Living Safely in Jackson Square Collaborative used early education as an entry point to connect families to economic supports, such as job training and personal banking.

"We opened the very first Haitian Mother's Group in our community. Their children join the early [education] activities... while caregivers attend sessions that can range from mental health support to financial literacy."

-Collaborative leader

388 parents or youth engaged in workforce training, coaching, or internships

Nubian Neighborhood Network held a Life Sciences Open House with three training organizations to enroll residents in STEM programs.

Levers of change

Key funded partner efforts to advance change.

219 youth and residents took leadership roles

Fields Corner Crossroads Collaborative secured a 'Youth as Health Care Change Agents' grant to expand their youth leadership programs.

"Through a joint initiative led by [Collaborative members] and our Youth Board, students mobilized to address persistent issues within Boston Public Schools. Youth participated in a workshop with the Boston Teachers Union to discuss the BPS contract, aligning their advocacy efforts."

-Collaborative leader

157 trainings for youth and resident leaders to build leadership and advocacy skills

Trainings covered topics including education justice, event planning, and organizing principles.

Collective inputs

Collaboration resources and approaches to advancing change.

\$7.98m in funding to 4 funded collaboratives over 6 years

Over 4,063 community members engaged

Funded partners primarily reached Boston residents in Dorchester and Roxbury.

Common approaches

- Develop resident leadership and expand communities' power to address the social determinants of child health
- Increase coordination among service providers and address service gaps
- Address disparities in neighborhoods and schools through targeted expansion of supports and services

Acknowledgements

Boston Children's Office of Community Health would like to thank our funded partners, recognized in this report and listed below, for sharing progress and lessons learned. None of this would be possible without our funded partners and their commitment to advancing the health and well-being of children and families in Boston. Boston Children's also thanks our evaluation partner, Mathematica, for their leadership in developing this report. We appreciate Mathematica's commitment to building the evaluation capacity of funded partners, identifying opportunities for growth, and helping us to communicate the impact of the Collaboration. Lastly, we want to acknowledge the members of the Boston Children's Board Committee for Community Health and Community Advisory Board for their leadership and dedication to creating a healthier future for Boston's children and families.

BIRTH TO FIVE

The Basics
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
Boston Opportunity Agenda
The Community Builders
East Boston Social Centers
Families First
First Teacher
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Neighborhood Villages
Nurtury
Raising a Reader Massachusetts
Room to Grow
Strategies for Children
Urban College of Boston

FAMILY ECONOMIC STABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

Community Labor United
Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance

FAMILY HOUSING STABILITY

Boston's Higher Ground
Chinatown Community Land Trust
Urban Edge
City Life/Vida Urbana

HEALTHY LIVING

Bikes not Bombs and Children's Services of Roxbury
Dorchester Food Co-Op
The Food Project
Haley House
Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition
Playworks New England
Sociedad Latina
Somali Parents Advocacy Center for Education
South Street Youth Center and Southern
Jamaica Plain Health Center
Urban Farming Institute
WalkMassachusetts
Youth Enrichment Services

MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

Boston College School of Social Work
Children's Services of Roxbury
Simmons University School of Social Work
Springfield College Department of Social Work
UMass BIRCh Project
William James College

CHILDREN'S HEALTH EQUITY

Fields Corner Crossroads Collaborative
Living Safely in Jackson Square
Nubian Neighborhood Network
Resilient Families Surround Care School
Community Coalition

HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

BAGLY
Children's Services of Roxbury
Boston Private Industry Council
Brookview House
Bridges Homeward
The Center for Teen Empowerment
Freedom House
Greatest MINDS
Hyde Square Task Force
Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción
Madison Park Development Corporation
MissionSAFE
Mothers for Justice and Equality
Peer Health Exchange
Project RIGHT
Silver Lining Mentoring
Sociedad Latina
Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center
West End House
Young Man with a Plan

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

City Fresh Foods
Heading Home
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Massachusetts
New Hope Community Capital
The Basics
NorthStar Early Education Academy

¹ Ruggiero, C., M. Luo, C. Lynn, K. Adams, R. Burgun, C. Peretti, D. Taitelbaum, and L. Fiechtner. (2024). "Food Equity and Access in Massachusetts: Voices and Solutions from Lived Experience." The Greater Boston Food Bank.

² Executive Office of Education (2023, September 14). "Governor Healey Joins Legislative Leadership to Celebrate Permanent Universal Free School Meals." Massachusetts Governor's Office.

³ Boston Public Schools (2024). "Long-Term Facilities Plan."

⁴ Massachusetts Senate Press Room (2024, May 6). "Senate Leaders Unveil MassEducate: Universal Free Community College for Massachusetts Residents." The General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

⁵ Rios, S. (2024, August 12). "A timeline of the Massachusetts shelter crisis — and Healey's changes to the system." WBUR News.

⁶ Papadopoulos, M. (2024, March 20). "Urgent need: City announces \$21 million for mental and behavioral health services for Boston youth." Boston 25 News.



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Mathematica

Progress Together