



WHITTIER STREET HEALTH CENTER

Comprehensive. Compassionate. Community.

Whittier Street Health Center update from the CEO



**CEO Year- End
Memo
December 11, 2019**

Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of 2019, we would like to look back at our accomplishments - but even more importantly set our goals on even greater successes in 2020. Whittier is a community health care center, and the emphasis is on community and health. This year we were able to put into action several exciting initiatives which will directly impact the health of our community for years to come.

Before I share with you the progress we made in fighting against the social determinants of health which disproportionately impact Boston's most vulnerable populations, I would like to say none of this would be possible without the community of dedicated and talented individuals who make up the entire staff at Whittier. From our talented, multidisciplinary team, to our outreach teams, to our lobby front desk greeters, to the youth leaders who are helping to mold a new generation of leaders – the amazing work this staff accomplishes as a team is a testament to our united vision and their dedication to living it out every day.

Looking to the Future:

Whittier has long been on the forefront of tackling the social determinants of health, here are some of the initiatives we launched and expanded this year:

- **Opening of the Weight Management and Related Diseases Clinic** To battle the epidemic of obesity so many in our community struggle with, Whittier has opened a groundbreaking holistic Weight Management and Related Diseases clinic. The clinic will offer accessible, life changing access to programs, care coordination, and service to assist those who are battling to lose weight and keep it off in a healthy way.
- **Proactive response to high rates of STDs in our service area.** We strengthened our comprehensive Infectious Disease program embedded in our primary clinic focused on addressing Sexually Transmitted diseases, HIV and HCV infection at every stage of their continuum for all populations, especially vulnerable and minority populations. We hired an experienced Infectious Disease Specialist, Dr. Brian Wong, to provide high quality and culturally sensitive care to our complex patients. Our community health workers are out in the community five days a week at various high risk locations, where we offer HIV and HCV prevention counseling, condom and safe kit distribution, HIV testing, referral and linkage to comprehensive care. We also identify those who are previously diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and link them to treatment. We encounter and support all HIV-positive individuals in need of psychosocial support such as transportation assistance,

financial support, access to medical and non-medical appointment, food, clothing, insurance and recreational assistance.

- **Defending Childhood - Responding to Community Violence** : We hired several experienced behavioral health clinicians from diverse backgrounds and three psychiatrists to address the high rates of mental illnesses, substance use and abuse disorders and community trauma. Our Behavioral Health Department serves hundreds of individuals seeking trauma-focused treatment each year. Clinicians are trained in the delivery of trauma-informed care and are competent in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT). The children participating in our Defending Childhood are demonstrating increased perception of safety, decreased presentation of symptoms related to witnessing violence, and improved emotional functioning. Research indicates that TF-CBT has been more effective than child-centered supportive therapy in improving the child's PTSD, depression, behavior problems, and shame. By investing in the emotional health and well-being of our future leaders, we will help them reach their full potential and in leading healthy and productive lives.
- **Reebok grant for Whittier's LGBTQ Youth** Thanks to funding from Reebok, Whittier has launched a pilot program tailored to address the wellness needs of our communities LGBTQ youth – many of whom face violence, bullying, as well as housing and food instability. The youth will receive full access to Whittier's Wellness and Fitness resources, as well as linkage to healthcare services to monitor the outcomes.
- **Whittier is the Greater Boston home for the Moms Do Care Program** The program provides whole-person support and care for women (18 years and over) who are either pregnant, postpartum and/or parenting a young child.
- **Expanded the use of our Mobile Health Van** The van is a vital part of our commitment to meet residents of our community – where they are at. To date the van has focused on community outreach to test for HIV, Hep C, and other infectious diseases, providing a lifeline for those recently released from prison, suffering from immediate health issues, or out of touch with treatment. We are now working to expand the services offered by the van to include retinopathy, health screenings, eye exams, dental cleanings, and substance abuse screenings.
- **Whittier's community garden is growing!** Thanks to funding from the City of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development we have expanded our Community Garden with 14 irrigated gardening beds which will be available to the community and Whittier patients to grow and harvest healthy, fresh vegetables. The expanded garden also features several benches to relax on and look at our new and expanded family of cows and sheep. Make sure to join us Spring 2020 as we celebrate a naming ceremony for our public art (cows and sheep) and the launch of the expanded gardening program.
- **A new expanded Food Pantry** This new facility stocked with staples and canned goods is able to provide healthy options to patients and their families who do not have enough food. Approximately 50% of our patients report being food insecure, and access to free healthy foods will support our efforts to address the high rates of chronic diseases in our patient population.
- **Dental and Mental Healthcare services at our Satellite Clinic in North Dorchester on Blue Hill Ave** By equipping our satellite clinic to provide an even more diverse array of services, we have doubled down on our commitment to meet patients in the neighborhoods where they with the highest quality of care.
- **Whittier has improved our financial footing in 2019 and will partner with an ACO in 2020** This past year saw a financial turnaround for Whittier, as we continue to keep an eye out for future financial growth through sound investment strategies, expanded grant and fundraising, and our partnership with the Steward

For 85 years, Whittier has been a beacon of hope for diverse populations. Approximately 40% of Whittier's pediatric patients and 35% adult patients are uninsured, 91% live below the poverty level and **no one** is denied access to care. With help and resources from our partners and donors we will continue to meet the needs of our underserved populations.

We are committed to using our capabilities, expertise, resources and partnerships to fulfill our mission in making our Boston community a healthier place for all.

I would also like to thank you for the generous support of our mission *to provide reliable, accessible and high-quality health care and support services for diverse populations, to promote wellness and eliminate health disparities and social inequities.*

On behalf of the Whittier staff and our patients, I extend our best wishes to all this Holiday Season.

Warm regards,
Frederica M. Williams

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<http://www.wshc.org/>

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