



Human Rights Commission Meeting

Monday, July 14, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on Monday, July 14th at 6:00 PM. Location: City Council Chamber
 - B. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/83935116963>
 - C. This meeting will be broadcast by Watertown Cable Access Television (WCATV): <http://vodwcatv.org/CablecastPublicSite/watch-now?site=3>
 - D. Public may comment through email: dnewton@watertown-ma.gov
 - E. Please Visit the Human Rights Commission Website here: <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/1195/Human-Rights-Commission>
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- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Roll Call
- 3. Acceptance of Minutes
 - A. Minutes 6.9.25
- 4. Discussion
 - A. Update on Safe Space Project
 - B. Recruit volunteers for safe space sticker canvassing
 - C. News releases for Safe Space Project
 - D. 2026 Pride Committee voting member recruitment
 - E. Human Rights Commission Logo
 - F. Collaboration with neighboring Human Rights Commissions
 - G. Recent Forum in Belmont on ICE activity
 - H. Republic/IBT Local 25 Strike
 - I. Housing Liaison Update- Elizabeth Brusie
- 5. Committee Reports
 - A. Action Plan Committee: Working with Elizabeth Peck for Needs Assessment
- 6. Public Comment
- 7. Adjournment

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2025

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM

2. Roll Call

Present were Corey Barr, Gabriel Camacho (via zoom), Lisa Laplante, Mel Poindexter, Xin Peng, and Sarah Zoen. Elizabeth Brusie and Susan Musinsky joined shortly after the roll call was taken.

3. Acceptance of Minutes

a. Minutes for Previous Meeting

Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Mel Poindexter, that the minutes be approved.

The Commission voted six to zero to approve the minutes.

4. Committee Reports

a. Action Plan: Consultant Hiring Process & FY25 Budget

The Committee shared that three applications came in for the Human Rights Commission's hiring of a consultant to conduct a needs assessment of human rights challenges in Watertown. Susan Musinsky shared that the budget the HRC is able to provide to compensate the consultant is quite limited and that this has been reflected in the applications received. The Commission discussed the possibility of translating resources generated by the needs assessment and potentially using city resources to do so. The Committee concluded by sharing that the goal is to have the consultant in place and for their first meeting to take place by June 30th. To conclude, Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Gabriel Camacho, to allow the Action Plan Committee to hire the consultant of their choosing prior to June 30th. The Commission voted eight to zero to approve the motion.

b. Rules Committee: Approval of Minutes

Lisa Laplante made a motion, seconded by Sarah Zoen, that the minutes be approved. The Commission voted seven to zero to approve the minutes.

c. Immigrant Rights Committee

Corey Barr shared that she has had conversations regarding an event related to immigrant justice and food justice in the fall. Xin Peng suggested that the Commission come up with points to focus on in the program and then circle back with the library. The Commission then discussed its process for planning such events moving forward.

5. Discussion

a. Watertown Pride Recap

Lisa Laplante shared that the event was a great deal of fun, especially for children. Elizabeth Brusie said that she believes every Commissioner attended at one time or another. Susan Musinsky shouted out Liz Aeschlimann who created a project for people visiting the HRC's booth to participate in.

b. Human Rights Commission Logo and Banner

Susan Musinsky shared that she has used ChatGPT to create six potential logos for the Human Rights Commission. The Commission then discussed having WPS students involved in the process of crafting a logo. The Commission concluded that they would like to discuss the possibility of having students involved with Dr. Daly, who serves as liaison from the school administration to the Human Rights Commission.

c. Juneteenth 2025

Doug Newton shared that the celebration of Juneteenth for which the HRC has funded a food truck will be taking place in collaboration with Belmont at 266 Beech Street in Belmont on Sunday, June 22nd from 12-4 PM. The Commission discussed which printed materials it would like to have available for the event.

d. One Pager for Complaint Process

The Commission discussed ensuring that the Human Rights Commission's one-page complaint form is available on the Commission's page of the website. Doug Newton conveyed he will make sure it is posted there.

e. Social Media for Human Rights Commission

Xin Peng said that he doesn't think the HRC has the bandwidth to support its own social media account but wanted to make sure that the HRC is being promoted on the city's social media accounts. Doug Newton asked the Chair, Sarah Zoen, for permission to address item G below in addition to this item. He shared that the Human Rights Commission can have an email with one Commissioner designated to receive the emails along with staff. This would work similarly to a hypothetical social media account to ensure compliance with the Open Meeting and Public Records laws.

f. Human Rights Commission Approved Statements

Doug Newton shared that every statement that has thus far been approved by the Human Rights Commission is available on its page of the website. He also explained how the City Council would address (or not address) statements made by the Human Rights Commission.

g. Email for Human Rights Commission

Please see item (e) above.

6. Public Comment

No member of the public offered comment.

7. Adjournment

Sarah Zoen made a motion, seconded by Mel Poindexter, to adjourn the meeting. The Committee voted eight to zero to approve the motion and the meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM.

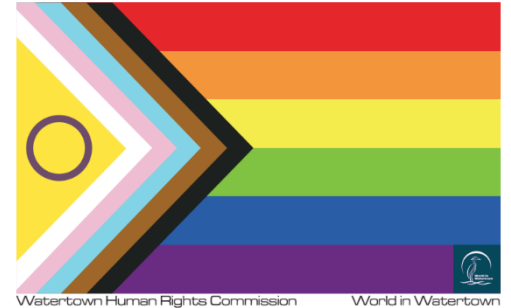
Introducing *Watertown Welcomes All*, a Safe Space Project

Cosponsored by Watertown Human Rights Commission & World in Watertown

What is a Safe Space for LGBTQ+ People?

A Safe Space is a welcoming, non-judgmental environment where people, particularly from the LGBTQ+ community, can feel accepted and supported. It's a place to be authentic without fear. Safe Spaces are vital for promoting inclusivity and well-being, especially for LGBTQ+ people, who are more likely to experience discrimination and harassment.

Watertown Welcomes All



Why Should Your Business Participate?

By displaying a Safe Space sticker, your business shows it is a supportive, inclusive environment for everyone, including LGBTQ+ people. It signals respect, compassion, and understanding, fostering trust and belonging for customers and employees.

Benefits to Your Business:

- Attracting Diverse Customers
- Enhancing Reputation
- Supporting a Positive Workplace
- Tapping into a Growing Market

Benefits to Our Community:

- Fostering Inclusion
- Building Awareness
- Promoting Mental Well-Being

How to Participate:

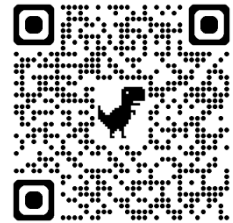
For more information or to request a Safe Space sticker, write to WorldinWatertownCity@gmail.com. Once you receive your sticker, proudly display it and encourage your team to actively support the LGBTQ+ community. Together, we can foster a more inclusive, compassionate, and welcoming environment for everyone.

Thanks for your support! Scan for resources and info on World in Watertown.



World in Watertown

Working for Diversity, Equality, and Human Rights



Introducing Watertown's Human Rights Commission

On September 26, 2023, the Watertown City Council voted to establish the **Watertown Human Rights Commission (HRC)**, a formal government body dedicated to promoting an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

The HRC signals that the City of Watertown is committed to recognizing and valuing every individual, with particular attention to those who have historically been marginalized or overlooked. The Commission has two key objectives:

- **Promoting Human Rights:** Through outreach, dialogue, and educational forums, the HRC raises awareness of human rights issues while celebrating the diversity of our community.
- **Addressing Discrimination:** The Commission responds to instances of discrimination by offering resources, referrals, and support for anyone with a discrimination complaint.

What are Human Rights?

According to the United Nations, human rights belong to each and every one of us equally. Human rights, civil, political, economic, social or cultural in nature, they are all inherent to the dignity of every human person.

The use of a human rights frame for the Watertown Human Rights Commission is essential and intentional. Human rights are broader than civil rights, which are rights that one obtains by being a legal member of a certain political state. For example, United States citizens exercise their civil rights when they vote in elections, but non-citizens still have a human right to be treated with respect and dignity in the community.

What Does the Watertown Human Rights Commission Do?

The Watertown HRC actively promotes human rights through educational programs, campaigns, and events that raise awareness about human rights issues and their community impact. It works closely with the City Council, Public Schools, Police Department, other government Departments, Commissions, and Boards, and local organizations to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the city.

The Commission provides a city-wide, comprehensive approach to educating residents about human rights and ensuring accountability in protecting the dignity of everyone who lives in, works in, or visits Watertown.

To learn more about this important work and the role of the commissioners, we encourage you to read the full Human Rights Commission ordinance, which is available online. To learn more or explore volunteering to serve as a commissioner, please contact dnewton@watertown-ma.gov.

Thank you for your interest and support!

Scan to learn more about Watertown's Human Rights Commission



Residents and immigration activists seek to raise awareness about ICE activities and highlight inaccuracies in the June 17 Belmont forum “What to Do When ICE Comes”

Page 1 of 2

We are members of community groups that work in collaboration with our immigrant neighbors. We are knowledgeable about ICE activities in our communities, and we have serious concerns about the inaccuracies and the significant gaps in information shared with the Belmont community at the June 17, 2025 forum, “What To Do When ICE Comes.”

The hosts of the forum, Belmont’s Democratic Party and Human Rights Commission, invited Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan, Belmont Police Chief James MacIsaac, and Immigration Attorney Elizabeth Goss to speak and answer questions.

We hope to spread the word about the inaccuracies presented at the forum. Below are examples of what the speakers said, compared with what we know are the facts:

- “ICE vehicles always have federal license plates.” FACT: Nearly every day in towns across Massachusetts, ICE and their federal partners show up in **unmarked vehicles with non-federal plates**.
- “ICE agents wear badges.” FACT: They typically wear **plain clothes with unmarked bullet-proof vests. They cover their faces with balaclavas and masks and do not wear badges**.
- “ICE will identify themselves.” FACT: They most often refuse to identify themselves – or even to speak with us when we ask which agency they are with and what their badge numbers are. There **is actually no way to verify that they are authentic ICE agents**.

When a resident asked about public safety threats from unidentified ICE agents, which enable vigilante impersonators to target immigrants, Police Chief MacIsaac said federal agents “regularly go without a uniform” and “it’s a risk we live with.” He suggested that only groups of “4, 5, or 6 individuals” are “likely ICE.” He did not mention that agents disguising their identities or refusing identification is unlawful.

Another inaccuracy that was shared: DA Ryan said that ICE has “scrupulously” obeyed the law about what they do when they are in courthouses, saying “ICE only takes people who are in the custody of law enforcement when they arrive in court...They have done nothing except that.” But immigration attorneys and others have witnessed immigrants being grabbed by ICE in numerous immigration courthouses, including in Boston - innocent people who went to court only as part of their lawful asylum appeals – not in the custody of law enforcement, but rather with family members, friends, or alone. (See, for example: [Boston Globe June 5, 2025](#)).

Serious omissions of facts also occurred when community members asked what should be done with the videos that speakers had instructed people to take with their phones during an ICE detainment. For instance, one speaker suggested giving the recordings to:

- The media (this was after people were told not to livestream or post the videos on social media)
- An attorney (what attorney?)
- The impacted person and let them decide what to do with it (while they are being detained?).

Residents and immigration activists seek to raise awareness about ICE activities and highlight inaccuracies in the June 17 Belmont forum “What to Do When ICE Comes”

Page 2 of 2

Barely mentioned was the statewide [LUCE organization and Hot Line: 617-370-5023](#), to which people can securely send their videos for further **verification and to help impacted individuals**. Anyone can call LUCE if they think they see ICE. The hotline is closely connected with immigrant rights organizations and community watch groups throughout Massachusetts and deserves to be shared widely!

We are dismayed by the inaccuracies and information gaps that were in evidence at the Belmont community forum. We wonder whether the forum’s speakers are simply ignorant of what is happening in our towns, or perhaps they thought that the public should not be told all the facts? In any event: moving forward, public officials should include immigrant rights advocates in such events and consult with real experts – like members of impacted communities – before sharing information. The public deserves accurate and full facts to stay safe during these difficult times.

Very sincerely yours,

Members of the Watertown Rapid Response Network

Fuerza Waltham

Watertown Citizens Refugee Support Group

The Watertown Human Rights Commission recognizes the demands of IBT Local 25, representing 400 workers who provide essential waste and recycling collection services in Watertown and other municipalities. The Sanitation workers are currently on strike, demanding a fair livable wage, improved healthcare, and other work benefits and protections. The WHRC recognizes that these demands are supported by international human rights law which establishes a right to a livable wage and basic humane working conditions (e.g. Article 23(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; The Preamble of the Constitution of the International Labor Organization). Similarly, the WHRC recognizes the right of all citizens of the town to clean sanitation, including waste management. In particular, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/169, adopted in 2015, recognizes the distinct human right to sanitation, including adequate waste management. In light of these internationally recognized human rights, the WHRC calls on the City of Watertown to urge Republic Services to reach a just and sustainable agreement that aligns with the basic rights of both workers and citizens.



EP Strategies Response to Watertown Human Rights Commission Needs Assessment – Phase 1 Consultant Scope of Work RFP

1. Introduction

I am pleased to submit a proposal in response to the Watertown Human Rights Commission's Request for Responses for a needs assessment phase 1. I am the Founder and Principal of EP Strategies (Elizabeth Peck Policy Strategies), a women owned small business in Watertown, Massachusetts that works with nonprofits, government agencies and Grantmakers. My expertise is in multi-issue systems change, public policy analysis, advocacy and mobilizing, community/stakeholder engagement, facilitation, research, and communicating data for action. I am first and foremost driven by two core values:

- **Effective and meaningful systems change happens when people most directly impacted and harmed by programs, policies, and systems are centered in making change.** "Experts" are both those with direct lived experience in the issue area as well as people with content knowledge (e.g., service providers, administrators, academic professionals, public officials etc.).
- **We all thrive when we achieve inclusion, equity and justice.** My frame grounds in the root causes of society's problems including the social determinants of health (please see Appendix A for a slide from my Public Policy Advocacy 101 training that depicts this model). I step into my equity frame through a racial justice lens and take an intersectional approach from there.

2. Statement of Interest and Relevant Experience

As a longtime Watertown community member with expertise excellently matched for this opportunity, I would be honored to support the Watertown Human Rights Commission (WHRC) in gaining a clearer understanding of community concerns, barriers to inclusion, and opportunities for improvement. I greatly appreciate WHRC's emphasis on centering equity and inclusion and reaching those who may feel unheard, underrepresented or excluded in civic life. Amplifying the needs and voices of these groups, including through civic engagement, has been a throughline of my career and personal purpose.

Experience with equity-focused needs assessments, particularly in civic or nonprofit contexts:

I am highly experienced with data analysis and evaluation using a community centered and equity-focused approach. Data collection, analysis and communicating for action (written and oral) have been a thread throughout my career. I began my career as a Research Analyst at Abt Global and spent 15 years civically engaging community through nonprofit public policy work. This included ongoing efforts to capture and communicate community needs and gaps in services to advance systems change through informal and formal research. For the past 4 years as a consultant, I have provided assessment and evaluation services to clients. I am a seasoned facilitator of diverse stakeholders from DCFⁱ involved young parents and families experiencing homelessness to policymakers, funders and nonprofit CEOs. I have over 15 years of experience designing and executing large and small convenings, focus groups, and interviews. As a consultant I specialize in embedding an equity, community-centered and intersectional approach. As evidence of my level of commitment to this approach, I have been accepted into a small



group of equity practitioners across the nation participating in the 2025 Equity Embedded Change Management cohort led by Sheryl Petty, Movement Tapestries and supported by GEO.

Understanding of racial justice, language justice, accessibility, and inclusion:

My resume (attached) includes a non-exhaustive list of racial justice trainings I have engaged in over the years. However, more importantly is my ongoing commitment to living principles of equity and inclusion in my day-to-day personal and professional life, and my track record of work in these areas. For example, EP Strategies contracted with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and its interagency task force to facilitate focus groups with young parents to identify where various state programs were and were not meeting their needs, capture and summarize themes, and present recommendations. Focus groups were with very young parents with complex trauma histories and diverse identities. To gather honest feedback from participants I built trust quickly through my authentic and down-to-earth approach, listening with empathy, and facilitating so all voices had space to be heard. I utilized tailored group agreements, level-set with shared definitions and activities (including definitions of equity; intersectionality, the cliff effect, structural racism, and an interactive [ground water](#) story depicting structural racism); and employed multiple methods for capturing feedback (chat function, recording, and notetaking). There was also Spanish translation, childcare accommodations, and virtual and in person participation. I understand that accessibility can take many shapes – and my method is to ask participants directly what they need with framing that normalizes diverse access needs.

Another example of my demonstrated track record in this area is my role as Strategic Partner with the Restuccia Health Justice Fellowship at Community Catalyst. Community Catalyst re-contracted with me from 2022-25 to support in the design and implementation of this national program. A critical element of the Fellowship is its race equity approach and values of authenticity, holistic wellness, and community connection. I helped to create spaces where, according to evaluation data I analyzed, Fellows felt they could be themselves, a level of inclusion they rarely experienced as leaders of color.

Familiarity with local government or advisory commissions. I am extremely familiar with state government and have also worked directly with local government in Massachusetts. I have a Master's in Public Policy and engaged at state and local levels to influence policymaking and state program implementation for 15 years.

Additionally, as an integrated member of the community who has been engaged in local level systems change over the last 10 years, I have an established understanding of, and connections to, stakeholders and systems within Watertown. I am invested in this community and the work of the WHRC.

3. Recommended Process, Timeline, and Approach to Equity

EP Strategies Approach

I am guided by the Centers for Disease Control Framework for program evaluation and apply an equity lens throughout the process, from my approach in relationships to design and implementation of a project (including facilitation, managing power dynamics, data analysis, and more). I pay careful attention to what it takes to build and maintain trust with community, drawing from my background in



community engagement and policy advocacy. My approach is also thoughtful and collaborative. If there are members of the commission willing and able to engage in the process, I welcome that partnership. I am also highly dependable, and able to work autonomously with careful attention to timelines yet know how to adapt changing landscapes and clients' needs.

Process and Timeline

- [Monday June 30] **Virtual Kick Off Meeting**
- [July – November] **Weekly, then Bi-Weekly, Virtual Meetings** with key commission members.
- [July] **Map Intended Impact of the Commission.** Create a simple logic model, for the purposes of ongoing evaluation.
 - Confirm long term outcome goal that the commission wants to measure progress against, enabling the commission to obtain baseline data through this first phase.
 - Define what success would look like/how data will be used to inform the logic model and questions asked during phase 1 data collection.
- [July] **Establish Process for Engaging Stakeholders.** Determine who needs to be a part of design and implementation of this needs assessment for the knowledge gained to have utility.
 - Through a community-centered and inclusive approach, ensure the right stakeholders are involved early enough in the process.
 - Establish a plan for how community members will be engaged throughout and after this phase ends so that this can be communicated with transparency from the onset.
 - Additional equity considerations: Who needs to receive stipends for participation? How will data be utilized, and how/when can community members see the impact of their participation?
- [July] **Conduct Scan of Similar Assessments Conducted by Others and Summarize Findings.**
- [August] **Develop Focus Group and Interview Questions.**
 - Tie questions to intended long term impact and desired project goal.ⁱⁱ
- [August – September] **Conduct Outreach and Recruitment**
 - In partnership with commission and community connectors, establish focus group locations and plans for potential access needs. Determine if, at a minimum, the following can be included in advertising for the focus groups: food, childcare, wheelchair accessibility.
 - In partnership with commission and community connectors recruit participants via email, flyers, phone calls and in person. *Distribute a very brief form that interested participants can complete to indicate access needs and provide contact information if they wish.*
- [September – mid October] **Conduct Focus Groups and Interviews**
 - Facilitate 3 - 4 in person focus groups. The commission will reach groups who are historically/currently excluded or unheard by partnering with those hubs/people in Watertown who have established trusted relationships *already*.ⁱⁱⁱ Allow this and prior steps in the process to guide focus group design.^{iv}
 - If multiple members of the commission who are skilled in facilitation can participate, consider holding in person focus groups on 1 day, facilitating multiple break out groups (e.g., Spanish speaking, people with disabilities, etc.) simultaneously.
 - Facilitate up to 1 virtual focus group.



- Conduct up to 10 individual phone or virtual interviews. The individual interview method is an important means to increase inclusion and accessibility, as these can be catered to individuals' needs, to the extent resources allow.
- [late October- November] **Analyze Data and Prepare Report**
 - [October] Facilitate 1 working session with WHRC to reflect on initial findings and shape recommendations. *Potentially invite representatives from community groups who participated in the focus groups or interviews.*
 - Prepare 3-5 page summary memo that highlights emerging themes, community needs, and recommended next steps.
- [December] **Commission Shares Out Findings Publicly.** Target methods for dissemination to focus group and interview participants, with clarity on how their feedback was and will be utilized, and how they can stay involved.

4. Budget

Deliverable	Type of Service	Total Cost
Regular 1-hour meetings with key Commission members	Planning	\$1,000
Map intended impact of commission, process for engaging stakeholders, and conduct scan	Planning	\$1,000
Plan logistics for focus groups and interviews, and recruit participants	Planning	\$500
Facilitate up to 4 - 2-hour focus groups with travel/set up; Conduct up to 10 - 30-minute interviews	Facilitation and Data Collection	\$2,000
Facilitate 1 working session with WHRC, analyze data, and write report	Analysis and Writing	\$2,500
Administrative Time	Other	\$500
<i>Total</i>		<i>\$7,500</i>
<i>In kind time and expertise</i>		<i>-\$4,500</i>
<u>Total Cost</u>		<u>\$3,000</u>

5. Sample(s) of Relevant Past Work and Resumé

Please find attached two work samples: DC NEXT! Young Parent Wellbeing Report Executive Summary and MPPTI Power Point Deck. I also included my resumé.

6. Contact Information

I can be reached at elizabeth@peckpolicystrategies.com or (mobile) 617.794.2087 and you can learn more about my business [on my website](#).



ⁱ Department of Children and Family Services

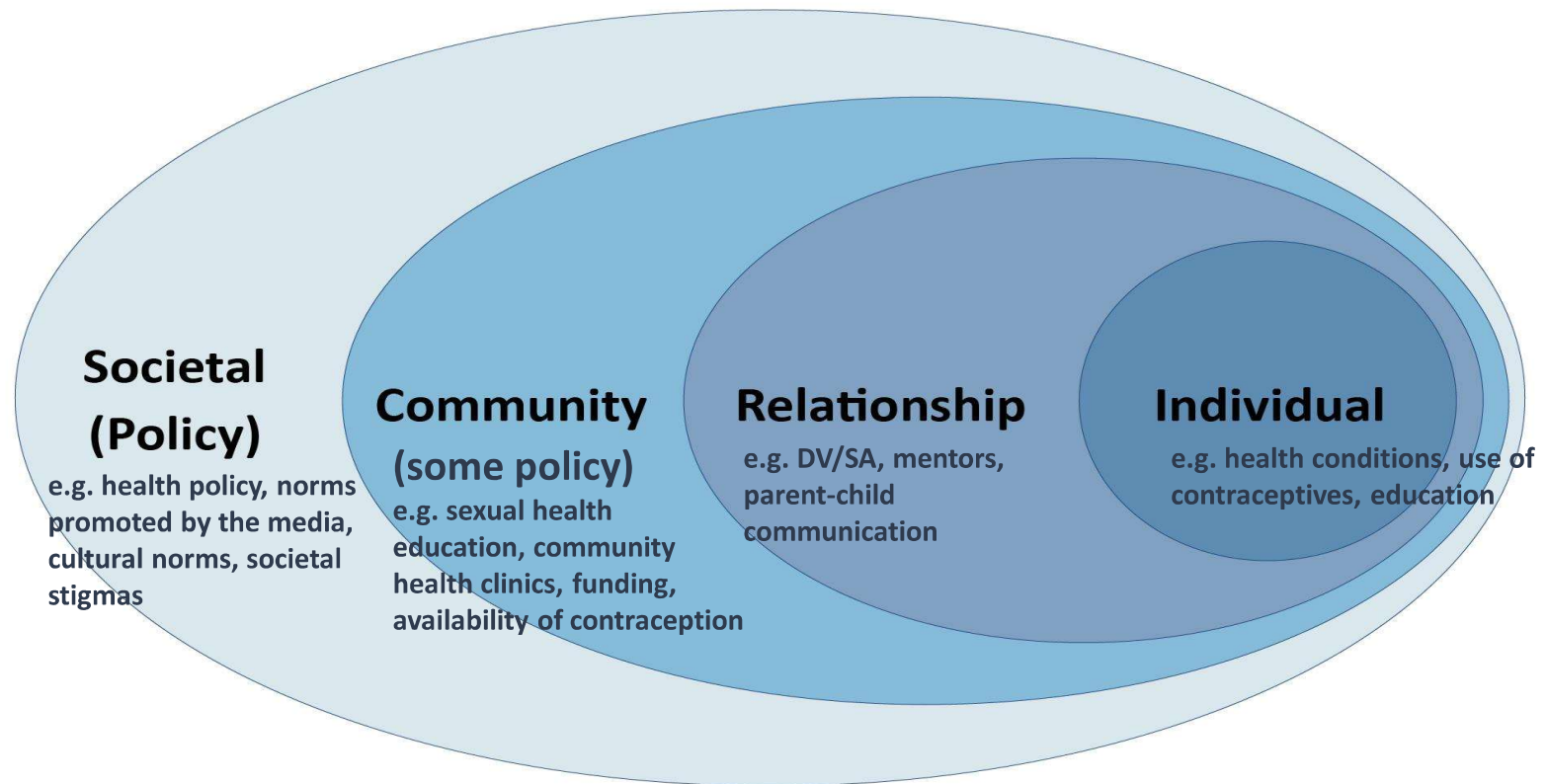
ⁱⁱ Project goal: for the Commission to have a clearer understanding of current community concerns, barriers to inclusion, and opportunities for improvement (with an emphasis on reaching and building stronger connections with those who may feel unheard, underrepresented, or excluded in civic life, including immigrants, LGBTQ+ residents, youth, and individuals with disabilities and using an equity and inclusion approach).

ⁱⁱⁱ Given the timeline of the project, success will depend on leveraging existing points of connection to diverse community groups. WHRC members will have great ideas and important connections to leverage. Here are some of my initial ideas: Connecting to diverse groups often involves meeting community where they are at e.g., partnering with a barber shop (e.g., the People's Barber on School St. hosts community gatherings) or going to a place of worship (e.g., a church that has primarily Brazilian congregants). Another potential opportunity for partnership is with the Watertown Public Schools' Anti-Bias Coalition and/or Dr. Daly (WPS's Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging). Dr. Daly has been holding group meetings with target caregiver populations (e.g., parents of children of color and immigrant families).



ELIZABETH PECK
POLICY STRATEGIES

Socio Ecological Model



DC NEXT! Young Parent Wellbeing Survey Report

Executive Summary

During the winter of 2022 [DC NEXT!](#) conducted a first of its kind Young Parent Wellbeing Survey. This report presents emergent findings on key themes, further inquiries, and potential policy implications revealed by the survey and additional qualitative data. The process for analyzing data and producing this report was interactive. D.C. Primary Care Association held ongoing meetings with the DC NEXT! [context](#) and [leadership](#) teams to listen and respond to their insight and expertise relative to data interpretation and framing.

We know that young parents have tremendous capacity to thrive and raise healthy, happy kids when systems with responsive adults are structured to meet their needs. [Data presented here suggest that overall young parents in D.C. have good health and feel confident and motivated in their parenting roles. Despite these positive findings, young parents' wellbeing and future success are on unstable ground, and a small portion of young parents are particularly struggling. Inconsistent social supports and barriers in pathways to employment, childcare, housing, and other basic needs stand between young parents and the futures they yearn to create. An urgent response that reflects and addresses young parents' needs is required.](#) This is a group of young people uniquely motivated and positioned developmentally to leverage tailored supports, programs and policies that help to foster, not stifle, their wellbeing.

Two hundred and thirty two expectant and parents youth between the ages of 13 and 23 completed the survey. The majority of respondents were African American (not Latinx) young mothers, between the ages of 18 and 24. Most respondents were living in wards 6-8, had children who were under school-aged and spoke English. Washington D.C. teen mother dataⁱⁱ from 2019 and 2020 analyzed by DC NEXT! suggests that these survey data may underrepresent the percent of Hispanic mothers and over represent the percent of Black mothers.

Emergent Findings

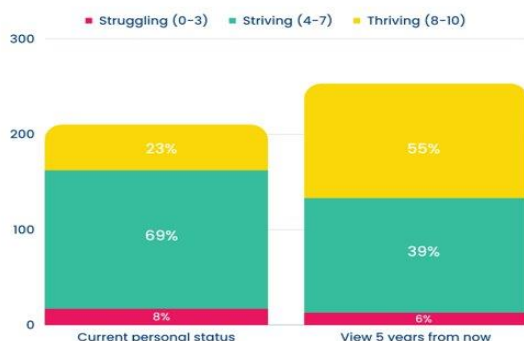
There are three prominent findings from combined survey and qualitative data analyzed.

- 1. Most young parents (63%) reported that they are not thriving, highlighting that barriers related to housing instability as well as inadequate access to employment, childcare, and transportation stand between young parents and the futures they yearn to create**
- 2. A subset of young parents in DC are facing severe challenges including frequent hunger, frequent housing insecurity, poor mental health, and social isolation.**
- 3. Overall, young parents in DC feel confident and motivated in their parenting role.**

In summary, positive findings include young parents' high levels of confidence, motivation, and satisfaction as parents. Young parents also report high quality physical health, and to a slightly lesser degree, mental health. Despite these positive findings, most young parents do not rate themselves as thriving now and many do not see a likely path toward thriving 5 years from now. Housing insecurity, poor access to transportation, and barriers including inadequate access to quality childcare and viable employment impede young parents on their path. Some young parents also lack social supports, and a sub portion are deeply struggling across multiple measures of wellbeing. As parents who are still developing into adulthood, it is our collective responsibility to both be led by what young parents themselves say they need and want, and to take on the responsibility of shifting and revisioning systems and services to meet their needs.

Finding #1: Most young parents (63%) reported that they are not thriving, highlighting that barriers related to housing instability as well as inadequate access to employment, childcare, and transportation stand between young parents and the futures they yearn to create. A majority of young parents do not feel that they are thriving now, and many do not see a likely path towards thriving 5 years from now. Approximately 1 in 2 expectant and parenting youth report inconsistent social support and sense of community belonging. Systems barriers related to housing instability, inadequate access to employment, childcare, and transportation impede young parents on their path. Prejudice associated with being a young parent and structural racism are additional cross-systems issues.

Too few young parents rate their current and future wellbeing as striving: When asked to rank their current personal status, 77% (N=162/210) of respondents rated their **current personal status** as striving or struggling.



When asked to rank their **outlook 5 years from now**, 45% (99/219) rated themselves as striving or struggle. We want to create a future where *all* young parents are thriving or see a pathway to thriving in the near future.

Social support and belonging is inconsistent: 60% of respondents said that in the last 30 days they always or

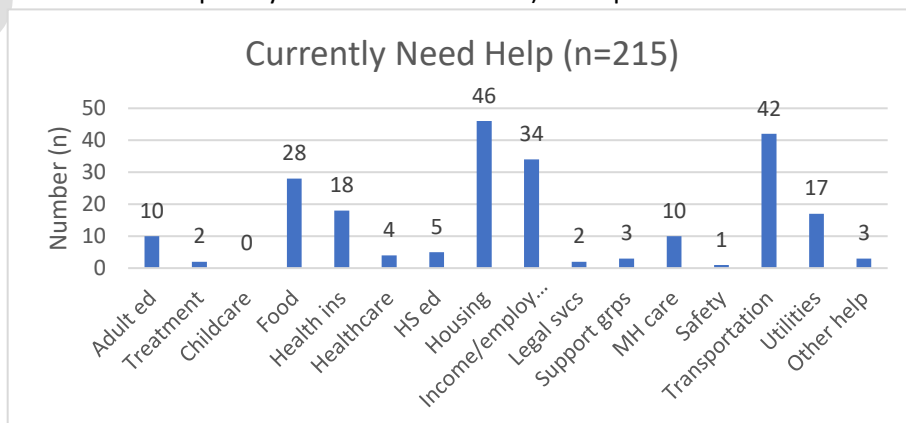
usually had family or friends to count on when they needed them. Several other indicators of social support appear inconsistent for most young parents in our survey. For example, less than half always or usually felt they had a sense of belonging in their local community.

Housing was the most prominent current need identified by survey respondents - 43% of survey respondents said that they worried about housing sometimes, usually, or always over the past year. Lack of affordable housing was most frequently named in qualitative data as a systems barrier. Qualitative data captured housing discrimination as a second factor limiting access to housing.

- *“Now there is more discrimination by landlords, especially to young people who are parents, and it's much more difficult to get stable, affordable housing”* -Context Team Member

Employment and childcare are interlinked systems falling short for young parents. Many respondents (44%) were unemployed and looking for work because of systems shortcomings (and income/employment was the third most frequently named current need). Our qualitative data tell us this

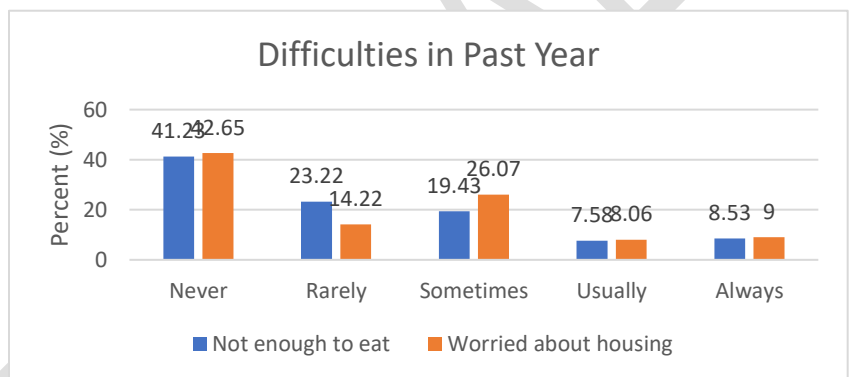
relates to both workforce and childcare systems. While young parents may have some kind of childcare, it is not necessarily adequate, safe, and long-term care. Qualitative data also pointed to employment opportunities that lack family friendly workplace rules and adequate pay. Here, young parents speak to these childcare and employment challenges:



- “...most good centers are full...usually there is a waiting list.” – Maternal Health Context Team member
- “Finding someone to trustthe first year it felt like some providers weren’t watching my kids as well and my child was getting hurt every day. I had to keep switching childcare until I found one where I felt like he was being watched well enough.” -Maternal Health Context Team member
- “If your kid were to get sick and there was no one who could help, you don’t have any choice other than to stay home with your kids (most jobs don’t have many sick days at all)” – Context Team member
- “If you have one or more child, you need a job that pays \$18/hour at least, for 40 hours or more.” -Context Team member

Other systems barriers include transportation (the second most frequently named current need in our survey), food insecurity, and cross systems issues related to systems navigation and stigma.

Finding #2: A small sub portion of young parents are particularly struggling. A subset of young parents self-rated themselves as “struggling” (8%). Fifteen percent of survey respondents reported poor to fair mental health. These indicators of poorer wellbeing may be associated with severe food insecurity: **16% of survey respondents said that they did not have enough to eat usually or always** in the last year, and/or housing instability. **Seventeen percent of expectant and parenting youth reported worrying about housing in the past year always or usually.** Lack of social belonging is also salient for a subgroup of young parents: 31% of respondents said that over the last 30 days they rarely or never had a sense of belonging to their local community. In qualitative data collected on what it’s like being a teen parent in D.C., many young parents said that parenthood is difficult, especially when they are judged by their age and feel worried about meeting basic needs for their family:



- “Being a teenage parent in DC. is not only the most difficult thing but also the most scariest thing. You never know if you will have [enough] to provide for that day or even for that week.” -Context team applicant
- “Since I’m an expecting parent it’s hard. Everyone wants to ridicule you or judge you. It makes school so much harder.” -Context team applicant
- “Being a teen parent for me was hard because I was judged everywhere I went whether it was to school or doctors appointments or just being in public I was judged because of how young of a mom I was...” -Context team applicant

Finding #3: Overall, young parents in DC feel confident and motivated in their parenting role. Survey data paint a picture of overall confident parents, with 81% of respondents who agreed that they know what to do for their child(ren) and 78% who agreed they could do things to improve their child(ren)’s behavior. The voices of young parents in D.C. illustrate how this sense of confidence can develop out of the challenges that come with parenthood:

- “Being a teen parent is all about adapting to new things and growing with your child. As they develop you [are] also becoming a new person and a great parent. It was hard at first - the more time you spend with your child the easier it gets.” -Context Team applicant
- “Being a teen parent in my opinion is not so bad, yes there are things that can possibly be stressful such as school and work if you attend either because you have to balance a schedule between that

and parenting. The easiest part is learning your children and being able to bond and watch them develop every day.” -Context Team applicant

Most young parents are also motivated by their children: 74% of respondents agreed that having child(ren) gives them a more certain and optimistic view of the future. Qualitative data suggest young parents are motivated by their children, and that there may be mediating factors related to age, race and culture that drive their motivation and hopefulness:

- *“Every time I look at him [my son] I feel like I can accomplish everything that I dream about”; “It’s very hard but my kids keep me motivated.” -Young parents interviewed by DC NEXT! partnerⁱⁱⁱ*
- *“Within African American culture, being a strong black woman is like a badge.” -Maternal Health Context team member*
- *[Because they are young]...“They are up for challenges, change, and still feel like they have the world at their feet and can do anything. “ -Maternal Health Context team member*

Priority Policy Recommendations

1. Make teen parents the first priority in the District’s investments in effective two generation income, education, and workforce strategies that impact not only teen parents’ own trajectory, but also that of the young children they parent
2. Develop and fund a teen parent system of care tailored to meet the needs of adolescent parents and their children including:
 - a. Robust pathways/roadmap to educational attainment and career opportunities
 - b. High quality childcare
 - c. Quality, affordable healthcare
 - d. Affordable, convenient transportation
 - e. Housing for young parents who lack family options
 - f. Access to healthy food, particularly through WIC and SNAP
 - g. Mental health support and navigation assistance
3. Support the efforts of DC NEXT! to promote high quality, youth-centered services that recognize teen parents’ commitment and capitalize on their new motivation to achieve.

ⁱ “DC NEXT! is a collective impact innovation network of young parents, community providers, educational institutions, health care agencies, government partners, and other stakeholders grounded in the principle that young people who are valued and respected by responsive adults hold the keys to reducing teen pregnancy, reducing sexually transmitted infections, and achieving optimal health.” (<https://www.dc-next.org/about-us>)

ⁱⁱ DC Health, CY 2019 and CY 2020 Teen Birth Data (shared electronically with DC Primary Care Association June 2022)

ⁱⁱⁱ Alexis Palmer, Iana Clarence, Karen Klauss, Lauren Lapointe, Nadra Henderson, Latina American Youth Center, DC Primary Care Association, and UNITY Inc, “Sexual and Reproductive Health” PowerPoint presentation on interviews conducted with expectant and parenting youth in D.C., Slide 10



Young Parents with Young Children Policy Pilot 2021

*Policy Challenges, Crosscutting
Themes, Site Design Changes, and
Preliminary Outcomes*



Goals of the Pilot

01

1. Elevating young parent voices across state agencies

02

2. Identifying areas for agency alignment to support young parents

03

3. Exploring new local practices to improve coordination

04

4. Identifying policy changes to streamline services for young parents



Policy Pilot Overview



Pilot Context



Timing: launched when COVID was highlighting gaps in services

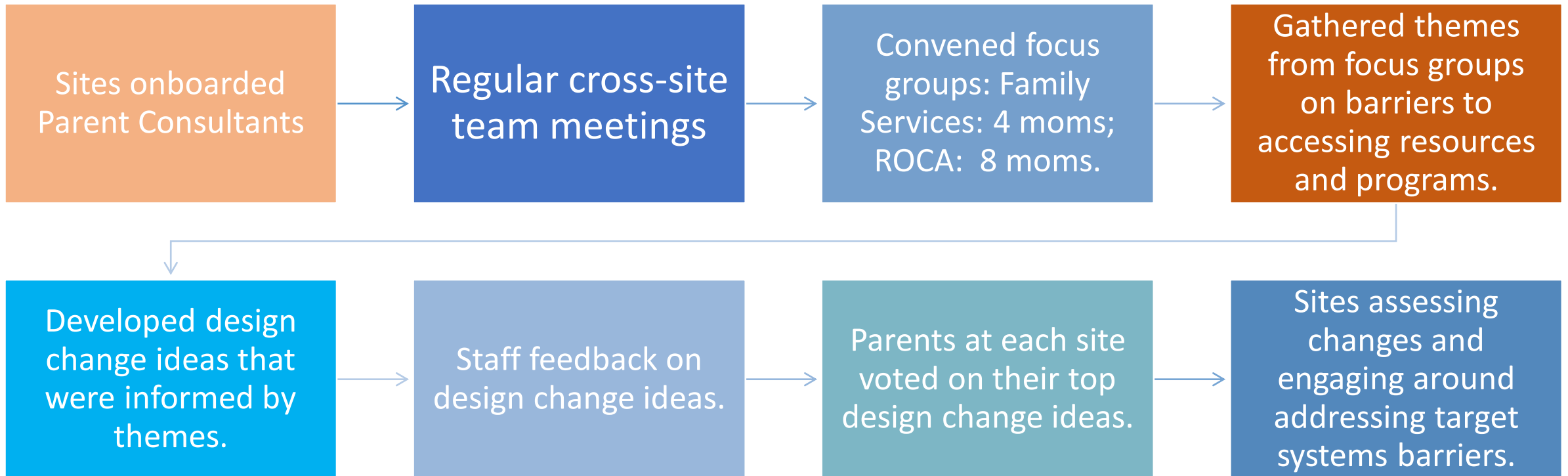


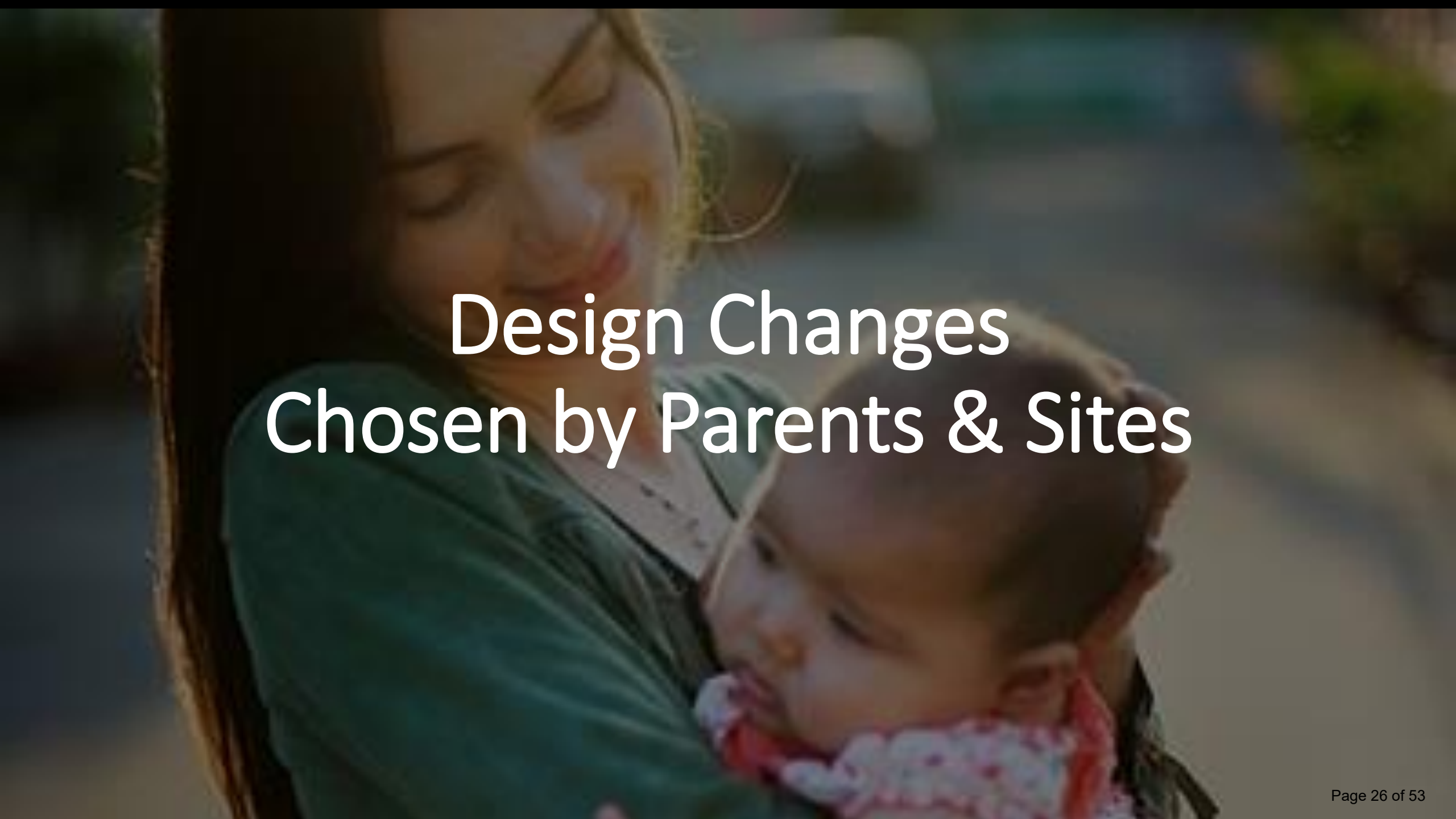
Voice: aimed for greater parent voice among high priority populations, to inform urgent policy and system change opportunities



Going Deep: Lawrence and Chelsea because they are 2 communities with the highest TBR and disproportionately impacted by COVID

Key Process Steps



A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair, smiling and looking down at a baby she is holding. The baby is wearing a red and white patterned outfit. The background is blurred, showing an outdoor setting with trees and a path. The text "Design Changes Chosen by Parents & Sites" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Design Changes Chosen by Parents & Sites



Design Changes

- **Increase opportunities for youth to share their experiences, talk through their traumas, and use their voices to affect systems change:**
 - Hold a series of circles with DCF, DTA, and other community providers to promote shared listening and brainstorming of solutions.
 - Offer a new parent leadership and advocacy training.
- **Increase communication, collaboration, and coordination at the Chelsea community level with systems that touch young families the most:**
 - Increase communication with local TPP to improve support of young parents.
 - Partner and advocate to/with DCF to reduce the number of 51As files, among other goals.
- **Increase the reach and effectiveness of monthly meetings with local DTA staff.**
- **Influence wider systems change through tracking and reporting on successes.**



Design Changes

- **Increase Coordination of Community Level Supports and Resources to Improve Access for Young Families:**
 - **Initiate Young Families Community Group** to increase community-wide communication and advocacy among providers, and thereby, access to supports for young parents with young children.
 - **Increase access to a range of classes** to support work skills and lessen the impact of falling off benefits.
 - **Deepen relationships with point people for key state benefits/services/systems across the community** to promote ongoing feedback loops and opportunities for improvements in service coordination (e.g. WIC, DTA, local tech school, local hospital, and schools).
- **Establish and build a young parent/caretaker advisory board**
- **Influence wider systems change through tracking and reporting on successes.**

Preliminary Outcomes

1. **Greater communication and collaboration between state systems and sites** (e.g. between DTA, DCF, TPPs and sites) leading to more case conferencing and ongoing discussions about young parent resources and supports.
2. **Greater communication and collaboration across community providers working with young families** (e.g. Lawrence provider outreach, presentation and launching of YFCG).

Parent
Consultant
Video:
Janeliee
Gomez





Bringing Parent Voices to the Table with Two Sets of Recommendations



Crosscutting Key Themes from Parents

1. Systems
Communications
can be Improved

2. Culturally
Competent Care can
be Addressed
Across All Systems

3. The Autonomy of
Young Parents can
be at Odds with
Subsidy Eligibility

4. COVID-19
Exacerbated Existing
Issues & Created
New Ones

5. Multi-
Generational
Impacts &
Resiliency

Policy/Systems Challenges:

- **Cash Assistance:** Parents faced multiple challenges in earning enough to overcome benefits losses as incomes increase. Most parents focused on **DTA cash assistance grant** amounts being insufficient to bridge the cliff.
- **Child Welfare:** Parents felt the system itself causes significant trauma and profound stress with lasting impacts. They highlighted systems challenges around **Domestic Violence** and **Sexual Abuse**. Parents said DCF childcare is a critical support and that better access to basic goods would be helpful.
- **Housing and Homelessness:** Parents identified lack of affordable housing and difficulty finding an apartment, even with a subsidy.
- **Immigration:** Parents had immigrant statuses that prevented access to services and/or difficulty accessing services in their language (e.g. therapy), and/or experienced prejudice when speaking Spanish.
- **Child Care:** Parents noted administrative barriers like length of time it takes for childcare subsidies to clear and unnecessary administrative burden; and lack of affordability of EEC and access to coverage outside of weekday hours and aside from DCF subsidies.

Policy/Systems Challenges:

DTA

“

What they give us is not enough to pay for childcare or rent. I was only making \$400 a month when I stopped getting benefits and that was not enough to support myself and my kids... I was making \$500 a week at one point and paying someone \$200 a week for childcare.

”

Policy/Systems Challenges:

DCF

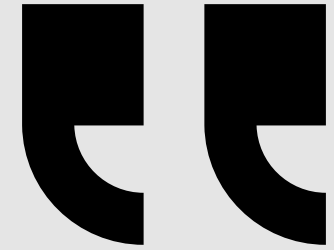
DCF does the opposite of helping to make us safe, they take away kids from moms who are in relationships where they are being abused. Instead, they need to be working on safety for those families: for those moms and their kids. They should be seeing the history behind each mom and parent before making a decision.

“

”

Policy/Systems Challenges:

Housing/Homelessness



In Lawrence a 2 bedroom is almost \$2,000, and they expect first, last and deposit too. Especially during covid, it is a concern getting rent paid.

[I] can't pay rent and it's hard to find something that is two bedroom and so to pay for that I need to work and I can't afford to be in school.



Policy/Systems Challenges:

Immigration/ Language

Being without a certain status of immigration, it's hard to get support - getting into the army or housing or DTA, there are barriers everywhere. DCF even tried to help me apply to other programs.

They [DTA] do not like to translate and they look at you bad when you don't speak English.

”

“

Policy/Systems Challenges:

Child Care

”

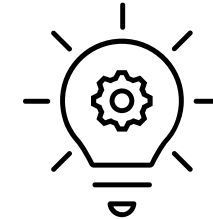
I don't know about childcare – it is hard to find it for your kid because DTA expects a lot to get a voucher for your kid to be in daycare.

”

I used to have day care, for 3 months until the pandemic and so I just got her into daycare again and now I have a new system. Because of the pandemic I needed to call different places to find space for my kids. If a place has daycare, you have to do everything fast because slots fill up. Even for moms who don't have any worker to help them – it's hard to get a childcare or voucher or start school.

Policy Questions/Suggestions Based on Parent Input

- Where can we come together to look across agencies to address **eligibility barriers for teen parents in *accessing*** a program/benefit (e.g. regarding various pathways to subsidized child care/eec)
- Where can we look across systems at barriers for teen parents and young caregivers in the ***amount of a benefit*** they may qualify for (e.g. child care income eligible subsidy amounts, DTA, SNAP) to address **cliff effects**?
- Are there **trainings** to partner around to create greater systemic alignment around triage and referral for young families, implementation of culturally competent approaches to case management?
- Are there **young parent feedback** processes and tools we can share/learn from across agencies?



A photograph of three children playing in a snowy field with snow-covered bushes in the background. One child in a blue jacket and patterned pants stands on the left, smiling. Another child in a red jacket and blue pants is in the center, facing away from the camera. A third child in a yellow jacket is partially visible on the right, crouching in the snow. The scene is bright and wintry.

Crosscutting Policy Themes

Crosscutting Key Themes

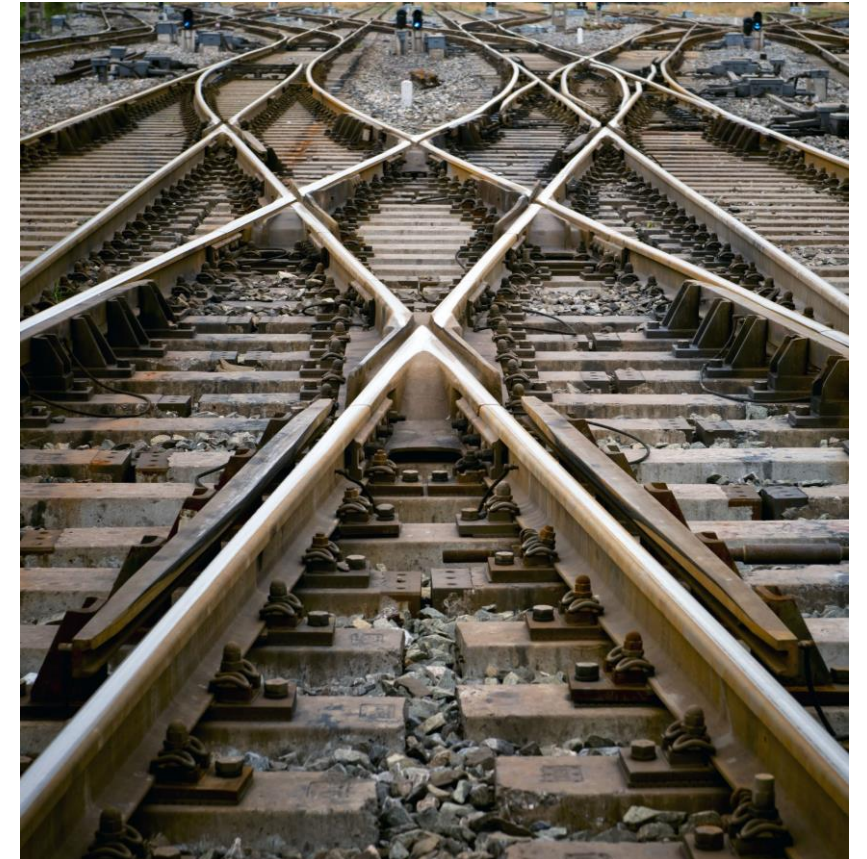
1. Systems Communications can be Improved

2. Culturally Competent Care can be Addressed Across All Systems

3. The Autonomy of Young Parents can be at Odds with Subsidy Eligibility

4. COVID-19 Exacerbated Existing Issues & Created New Ones

5. Multi-Generational Impacts & Resiliency



1. Systems Communications

I was trying to get into contact with WIC for two months because they weren't answering, the voicemail box said full, and it would just hang up.

If it was not for ROCA to help with diapers and food, and others, we couldn't survive.

“

”

Systems Communication

There is a need for better communication and coordination among local branches of state agencies (in particular DTA, DHCD, DCF).

Communication with parents was also a barrier locally, especially in COVID: Safety and access to basic goods depended on providers who could make home deliveries and continually check in on young parents.

Ideas to Explore based on Parent Input:

- **What should staffing structures and processes look like (and are there sufficient resources) for state agencies** to ensure case worker have capacity to be responsive; How can they make it clearer to parents who to follow up with for which questions?
- **MPPTI agencies can bring case workers, from across systems, into regular meetings** with caregivers.
- **State agencies can proactively build partnerships with community providers** that are supporting parents so that gaps in communication can be identified and addressed, and lessons learned can be applied widely.

2. Culturally Competent Care

“

”

I went to DTA for cash assistance and the worker said: ‘You’re 18 and you have 2 kids?’

When I first got DCF, I had a lot of providers: DCF, in home therapy, SSI, ROCA, my own mental health provider, and my child’s mental health provider, and ROCA organized a meeting for them all to come together but no one would let me talk during the meeting. I got so upset I had to leave the room.

Culturally Competent Care

There were a range of themes that point to young parents feeling disrespected, stigmatized, discriminated against or their voices suppressed across systems of services.

Ideas to Explore based on Parent Input:

- **Ongoing trainings** on C.C.C., T.I.C. and anti-racism. Include in trainings stories from young caregivers with underrepresented identities/experiences to illustrate barriers, reduce bias, and offer tools.
- **How can state agencies collaborate more around anti-bias and racial equity work?** How can other state agencies learn from and take on the internal institutional work that DPH begun?; How can state agencies support each other in offering trainings to providers that they fund? Where is more funding needed?
- **Actively advertise how anonymous feedback can be submitted by people seeking/receiving services.**

3. Autonomy of Young Parents can be at Odds with Support Systems

When a teenager has a child, they are expected to be responsible for that child, yet there are unique policy barriers limiting access to basic needs like housing, cash assistance and food.

Their autonomy in parenting is limited by these access issues as well as other challenges (e.g. cliff effects, lack of culturally competent care).

- Policy barriers tied to this theme include:
 - If you are under 18, you are ineligible to apply for housing subsidies;
 - Public benefits and applications are complicated for this population. Benefits depend on who they live with and/or the structure of the family.

4. COVID-19 Exacerbated Existing Issues & Created New Ones

“

My partner tested positive for COVID-19, I informed the [shelter] of his test results, and they informed me that my daughter and I needed to provide a covid test in order to reenter the building. Once the negative test was provided, they called to inform me that I needed to pick up my belongings and when I asked for an explanation, they said it was supervisor's orders.

”

I was senior in high school I went on maternity leave in February and the school wouldn't give me a tutor. I had to work to provide for my family and couldn't attend virtually school, and they said if I wasn't on virtual school, I would fail. And I can't get a job if don't have a high school diploma.

COVID-19 Exacerbated Existing Issues & Created New Ones

- **Home visits and access to basic goods:** Programs that were able to remain present throughout the pandemic became invaluable, specifically, those that did home deliveries.
- **Shelter Instability:** One parent staying at their teen parent shelter had difficulty accessing a COVID test, and then re-entering shelter, ultimately losing her TPP unit.
- **Human Centered Healthcare Access:** Accessing healthcare in a human centered, trauma informed way, was more challenging during COVID.

5. Multi-Generational Impacts & Resiliency

The issues discussed by parents can all have multi generational impacts. In particular:

- Tenuous access to basic needs (e.g. diapers, formula, food)
- Housing instability
- DV/sexual assault
- Limited access to early education and care

These can all have detrimental impacts on child development.



Multi Generational Impacts & Resiliency

In the face of risk factors and system challenges, parents *also* illustrated their **resiliency**.

They courageously used their voices when given the opportunity, showed tremendous commitment to their children, and demonstrated
a desire to be a part of change.

Small Group Discussion/Reflections



WHAT STOOD OUT?



WHAT QUESTIONS OR IDEAS
ARE COMING UP?

Elizabeth Marie Peck

Resume

Education, Honors and Awards

- **Master of Public Policy (MPP)**, Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies (IPS)
Certificate in Public Health Policy, IPS and the Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD **May 2008**
- B.A., Psychology/Sociology and Spanish Minor, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY **May 2003**
 - Member of Phi Beta Kappa and Psi Chi honors societies
 - Filene music scholar and honors in psychology, Skidmore College
 - Advanced Spanish study, University of Granada, Spain **Spring 2002**

Relevant Professional Experience

EP Strategies, (Elizabeth Peck Policy Strategies, WBE) Watertown, MA **Jan. 2021 – Present**

Principal and Founder

- Provides services in public policy and systems change; program management; grants administration; community coalition building and learning cohorts; stakeholder engagement; research, analysis and content development; advocacy and organizing; event planning; facilitation; and more.
- Specializes in a community centered and equity approach. Offers deepest expertise in public health, health systems, reproductive justice, housing instability, families, and intersecting areas e.g., education and economic mobility.
- Examples of previous client projects can be found [here](#), and include public policy analysis and writing for DC Primary Care Association, project management and evaluation for Community Catalyst, and stakeholder engagement, public policy systems analysis and oral/written products for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health..

Homes for Families, Boston, MA

August 2016 – Dec. 2020

Director of Operations and Member Engagement & Director of Policy and Member Engagement

- Led during executive transition, Winter 2019. Managed key programming with business management elements. Then, directed HFF's policy agenda, leading in policy analysis, lobbying, and creation of policy fact sheets, letters, briefs, etc.
- Amplified the collective voice of family shelter providers and families experiencing homelessness. Facilitated teams of providers, enhancing cross-system communication and best practices, affecting systems and practice change (through legislation and regulation), and leading meeting/event planning and facilitation. Addressed both the emergency needs of families and the root causes of housing instability, through a racial equity and a trauma informed approach.
- Strengthened agency efficiency through leadership on operations.

Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy, Boston, MA

Public Policy Director

June 2008 – August 2016

- Directed public policy initiatives and led program management to promote adolescent sexual health, education and other support for expectant and parenting youth with an equity and social justice frame. Mobilized youth and communities, lobbied policymakers, collaborated with community-based stakeholders, partnered with Young Parent Policy Fellows and providers, and engaged in press communications and fundraising. Worked across state agencies (e.g., public health and education) and affected change from policy creation through implementation.

Interim Executive Director

Sept. 2013 - Jan. 2014

- Fulfilled all executive director responsibilities while maintaining public policy director duties. Oversaw programming and business management elements including fundraising, board, finances, operations, and staff supervision.

Intern then Consultant:

- Drafted fact sheets and other publications on sustainability, framing, managing controversy, educating policymakers and science-based approaches in youth health and wellbeing.

Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies, Baltimore, MD**Jan. - May 2007**

Research Assistant

- Prepared materials for a workgroup, which created a business plan for the healthy development of 0–3-year-olds.

Abt Global (formerly Abt Associates), Social and Economic Policy Division, Cambridge, MA**Sept. 2003 - Aug. 2006**

Research Analyst 2005-2006

Associate Analyst 2004-2005

Research Assistant 2003-2004

Select Projects:

- Adolescent Family Life Demonstration Grantees: Abt developed data collection tools to assist grantees to evaluate adolescent pregnancy programs: Task leader for recruiting expert workgroup, co-task leader for piloting instruments, participated in establishing survey measurement plan.
- Building Evaluation Capacity with Theory-Based Evaluation: Abt studied the use and applicability of theory-based evaluation in STEM education for an NSF grant: Worked with team to research and write meta-analysis.
- School Lunch and Breakfast Cost Study-II; U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service: Created and maintained recruitment tracking database, coordinated recruitment efforts; interviewed district officials.

Publications:

Johns Hopkins:

- Class collaboration, *Abandonment in Baltimore: Considerations for Public Investment Priorities* (2006), Policy Analysis for the Real World class, Institute for Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy:

- Primary author, *Living on the Edge: The Conflict and Trauma that Lead to Teen Parent Homelessness* (2013), Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy.
- Primary author, *Not the Exception: Making Teen Parent Success the Rule* (2012, Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy.
- Co-author: *Expecting Success: How Policymakers and Educators Can Help Teen Parents Stay in School* (2010), Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy.

Select Trainings

- Strategic Communications, Better Nonprofit Management Series, Third Sector New England
- Effective Supervision, Better Nonprofit Management Series, Third Sector New England
- Stand and Deliver, 3 month intensive leadership and mindfulness program, Pathways Institute
- Facilitative Leadership, 3-day training on effective facilitation, Interactive Institute for Social Change
- Facilitator Training for Community Dialogue, Watertown Community Conversations
- Evaluation 101 course, American Evaluation Association
- Completed 7-hour video course and beta tested: *Shifting the Paradigm: Introducing the Tenacious Change Approach for Community, Organizational, and System Change*, an ownership-based change model from Tenacious Change Academy
- Racial equity trainings, including but not limited to, Fundamentals of Facilitation for Racial Justice (Interaction Institute for Social Change), Beyond Diversity to Inclusion (Third Sector New England), Undoing Racism (The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond), and Kingian Nonviolence Conflict Reconciliation (Watertown, MA, Kingian Response Team).
- Foundations 101, 5-part training series, Exponent Philanthropy