



An Essex County Community Foundation Think Lab

IMAGINING A BETTER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM

September 22, 2021 | Summary Report

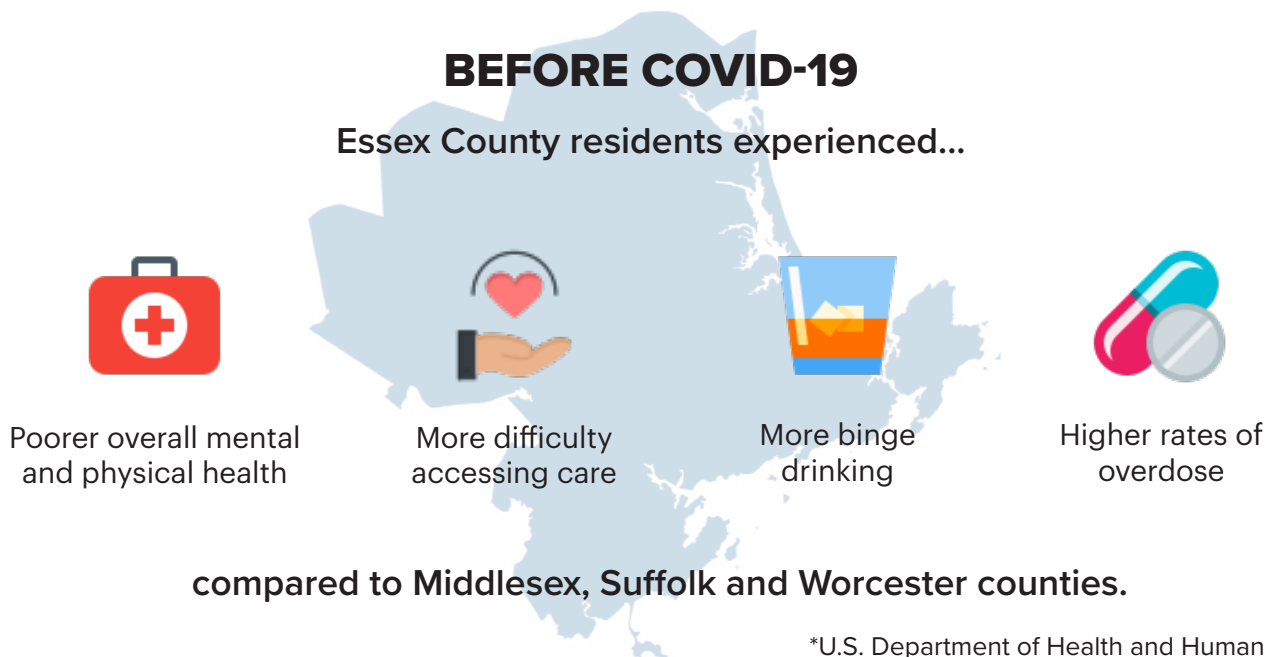


Introduction

HOW WE GOT HERE

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECCF has convened nearly 400 local leaders to discuss the unprecedented challenges facing our communities, and together, explore collaborative solutions to strengthen our most critical social sectors.

Through these interactive convenings behavioral health quickly emerged as a sector that could benefit from collaborative design thinking. Prior to the pandemic, the sector was experiencing a steady increase in demand and this has only been exacerbated as a result of the ongoing crisis.



WHAT IS A THINK LAB?

Essex County Think Labs are interactive community convenings that lead participants through a design-thinking activity to identify strengths and challenges, brainstorm collaborative solutions and prioritize actions around a specific topic area.

Think Lab Goals:



Establish the place and space for leaders to explore and imagine solutions to support the behavioral health system in Essex County.



Build civic and human infrastructure to forge relationships, strengthen partnerships and collaboratively address challenges and issues.

IN ATTENDANCE

On Wednesday, September 22, 2021, ECCF welcomed more than 120 cross-sector leaders from Essex County to the Imagining a Better Behavioral Health System Think Lab.

Participants were intentionally selected and invited to attend based on their knowledge and experience in the sector.

MORE THAN
120
CROSS-SECTOR
PARTICIPANTS

A broad range of organizations representing multiple sectors attended:

Action, Inc.
Andover Public Schools
Behavioral Health Consultant
Beth Israel Lahey Health Behavioral Services
Beverly & Addison Gilbert Hospitals
Beverly Council on Aging & Senior Community Center
Beverly Public Schools
Beverly Centerville Elementary School
Bridgewell
Care Dimensions
Centerboard
Children's Friend and Family Services
Citizens Inn
City of Gloucester
Curtis Strategy
Danvers Public Schools
DKH Investments
Elder Services of Merrimack Valley/NS
Essex County Community Foundation
Essex County Juvenile Court Clinic
Evelyn Lilly Lutz Foundation
FLC
Full Frame Communications
Garden City Pediatric Associates
Gloucester Health Department
GLSS
GraVoc
Greater Lawrence Community Action Council
Greater Lynn Senior Services

Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation
Healing Abuse Working for Change
Independent consultant
Institute for Health and Recovery
JF&CS
Johnson O'Connor Feron & Carucci
K2 Consulting
Learn To Cope
LVCC, INC.
Lynn Community Health Center
Manchester Board of Health
Marblehead Counseling Center
Mass Cultural Council
MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board
MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board
MassHire North Shore Workforce Board
MBHP/Beacon Health Options
McLean Hospital
Mental Health Advocacy Program for Kids (MHAP for Kids)
Methuen PS / MASMHC
Metro North YMCA
MetroWest Health Foundation
MSPCC
NextGen Committee
North Shore community Health Center
North Shore Community Health Network
Northeast Legal Aid
Office of Congressman Seth Moulton
Office of Senator Brendan Crighton

Plummer Youth Promise
Police Assisted Addiction & Recovery Initiative (PAARI)
Private practice, LICSW
Project Adventure
Office of Rep. Andy Vargas
Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation
Rise Above Foundation
Rockport Public Schools
Ropes & Gray LLP
Salem Hospital
Stephanie Jordan Brown, LLC
The Greater Lawrence Family Health Center
The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts
The Klarman Family Foundation
The NAN Project
The Peter and Elizabeth Tower Foundation
The Professional Center for Child Development
Town of Lynnfield / A Healthy Lynnfield
Trefler Foundation
UniCare
Volunteers of America of Massachusetts
ZurickDavis

Learn more about ECCF's Think Labs at eccf.org/insights.

Behavioral Health Think Lab Session

GUEST SPEAKER

The Think Lab session began with a presentation from Stephanie Jordan Brown, former acting Chief of Behavioral Health and Director of the Office of Behavioral Health for Massachusetts Medicaid (Masshealth).

With extensive experience in the MA health sector, Stephanie shared key data points for Essex County and other foundational information from the Massachusetts Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform to frame the upcoming conversation about local challenges and opportunities.



THE FOUNDATIONAL DATA

Next, Think Lab participants reviewed data aggregated from the feedback of hundreds of community leaders previously convened around addressing our region's greatest challenges in a post-pandemic world.

The following PEOPLE, PRINCIPLES and OBSERVATIONS acted as foundational information to spark further conversation and idea generation about the topic of behavioral health.

PEOPLE, ROLES & ORGANIZATIONS

Who should be involved in this work?

Clients and Consumers
Clinicians and Practitioners
Community Leaders
Education Sector
Emergency Responders
Faith Based Leaders
For-Profit Providers
Fundors/ Philanthropists
Government / Municipalities
Healthcare Sector
Insurance Providers
Justice System
Nonprofits
Residents
School-based Behavioral Health Staff
Small and Large Businesses
Treatment Providers
Youth Services

PRINCIPLES

What values and mindsets will guide this journey?

Values to guide us:

Courage
Empathy
Equity
Integrity
Resiliency
Transparency

Mindsets to embrace:

Systems Thinking
Creativity
Resourcefulness
Inclusivity
Sustainability

OBSERVATIONS

What is happening currently happening in the behavioral health field?



There are many bright spots within the system.

- Many organizations are collaborating to provide new solutions and resources.
- National visibility and awareness campaigns are helping to reduce stigma.
- Schools are adapting to meet student needs.



Access to services is a challenge.

- There is more need than there are providers.
- The digital divide has prevented vulnerable communities from taking advantage of telehealth.
- Lack of insurance or insurance burdens prevent individuals from seeking help.



Demand has increased significantly during COVID-19.

- New demand is exacerbating the challenges of already stressed systems.
- Substance use and suicide rates have increased over the pandemic.
- Economic effects of COVID-19 have resulted in needs escalating.
- Children and teens are experiencing more challenges than ever before; 50% of children admitted to Beverly Hospital require behavioral health care.



More behavioral health education is needed.

- Seeking support for behavioral health carries a social stigma.
- Prevention education is under-funded.
- Resources are not always easy to find or understand.



It will take inclusive and innovative thinking to address the challenges.

- Individuals accessing the system should have a seat at the table to help design it.
- Community-based organizations should be considered for service delivery as they serve and are trusted by large populations.
- Need to explore how we expand services while also supporting the service professionals.



Critical workforce issues exist.

- We need to expand the workforce, however funding for services is a major challenge.
- There are currently not enough people interested in behavioral health careers.
- Staff are experiencing burnout both at work and at home.

Behavioral Health Think Lab Session

IDENTIFYING BIG IDEAS

Reflecting on the baseline data, each group was asked to use their expertise in the behavioral health sector to brainstorm BIG IDEAS that would strengthen the regional system.

This exercise was meant to inspire creative thinking, foster the spirit of working collaboratively and build relationships that help produce systems-based solutions.

More than **150 big ideas** were shared and documented across **11 small groups**. From the data, **8 major themes** emerged:

From more than

150
BIG IDEAS

8 Major
themes
EMERGED



ACCESS

Meet people where they are

- Bring care to individuals directly by integrating services at community nonprofits/schools/health providers/faith-based and mobile locations *****
- Prioritize school-based services and solutions to better support youth****
- Pilot an integrated housing development with healthcare, workforce and childcare solutions****
- Invest in individual accessibility solutions like transportation and digital equity**



WORKFORCE

Increase the pipeline and supports for professionals

- Create a regional coalition to address workforce development, worker shortages and advocate for better wages****
- Collaborate with more schools to increase the professional pipeline and provide more training spaces****
- Support new professionals with continuing, multi-disciplinary education in a variety of settings***
- Prioritize new pathways for multi-lingual workers at all levels so that clinicians are more representative of the populations they serve**



EARLY DIAGNOSIS

Focus on early detection and intervention

- Create a universal screening tool and care pathways for early detection and intervention***
- Mandate BH screenings within early education centers and schools****
- Engage families with intergenerational approaches to BH detection and intervention***
- Identify/create a variety of support groups relevant to different populations (youth, seniors, families, grieving family, survivors parents) **



EDUCATION

Prioritize prevention education

- Train educators to deliver services in the classroom via cognitive behavioral techniques and social emotional learning***
- Provide critical trainings like suicide prevention and ACES (Adverse Childhood Experience Study) to everyone in the education or social sectors***
- Provide basic age-appropriate behavioral health curriculum for students and families****
- Create campaigns to change the way people think and talk about behavioral health from an early age to reduce the stigma****
- Help parents address intergenerational trauma before it is passed down to future generations*



INFORMATION | RESOURCES

Centralize resources and data

- Share population data across systems for better understanding of Essex County residents***
- Remove silos with a shared client intake platform allowing providers to deliver more informed and efficient support***
- Create an asset map of behavioral health resources and providers*
- Invest in a regional navigator to create a structure to develop community partnerships for multi-disciplinary, strategic outreach that increases access to services**



CLINICAL INNOVATION

Invest in and pilot new practices and solutions

- Invest in and expand telehealth and other virtual modalities****
- Integrate providers so that behavioral health is considered primary care***
- Strategize how to use evidence-based practices more commonly**
- Focus on holistic, wraparound approaches to care focusing on needs not services*



EXPAND FUNDERS

Reimagine funding for the sector

- Focus on building sustainable funding sources for long-term solutions***
- Create a centralized resource and funding opportunity hub for the sector*
- Offer regular, data-focused learning opportunities so funders can better understand the challenges
- Target philanthropy efforts to those who can underwrite care in their own community



PAYOR REFORM

Advocate for changes

- Get insurers to prioritize “whole” care by reimbursing more for primary care that is inclusive of behavioral health****
- Form a multi-sector collaborative to advocate for reimbursement reform***
- Convene payors to understand the obstacles to providing better reimbursement and help to create solutions***
- Incentivize more private providers/services to take insurance**

Behavioral Health Think Lab Session

BUILDING A PROTOTYPE: THE BEST BIG IDEAS

After generating as many ideas as possible, groups were asked to rank each and choose the most compelling to develop a prototype solution and “pitch” it to the larger group. This exercise gave each team the opportunity to deepen their collaboration, define tangible next steps, have fun and be inspired by what could be.

A sampling of just four of the eleven prototypes documented is below:

COMMUNITY NETWORKS FOR MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

Bridging, bonding, building and belonging!

HEADLINES:

- Multi-lingual, culturally competent behavioral health model scales access by using community spaces to deliver services.
- Local group uses everyday places in creative ways to help improve mental health.
- Essex County delivers the most rapid expansion in access to behavioral health support in decades.

HOW THIS WILL HELP:

- Increase access with a local solution
- Reduce stigma of clinical setting
- Help to identify individuals at higher risk early

PARTNERS TO INVOLVE:

- Schools
- Youth programs
- Housing organizations
- Nonprofits
- Providers
- Community leaders

KEY FIRST STEPS:

- Define and create a network of care
- Identify priorities and metrics of success
- Train clinical staff for pilot

HEALTHY HOUSING

Housing that nourishes!

HEADLINES:

- Join an inclusive community that values and supports your behavioral health!
- Overwhelming demand proves the need for Healthy Housing.
- New housing concept levels the playing field between behavioral and physical health.

HOW THIS WILL HELP:

- Increases access to the local community
- Increases affordable housing for behavioral health workforce and individuals
- Integrates housing and healthcare

PARTNERS TO INVOLVE:

- Real estate developers
- Large employers
- Hospitals
- Payors
- Venture partners
- Community organizations

KEY FIRST STEPS:

- Identify and convene partners
- Assess community needs and wants
- Engage municipalities in the planning



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ECOSYSTEM IN SCHOOLS

Meeting kids where they are at!

HEADLINES:

- All kids now have access to behavioral health services in schools.
- Schools tear down behavioral health barriers and stigma by integrating services.
- Schools and behavioral health professionals work together to meet kids where they are.

HOW THIS WILL HELP:

- Enables teachers to liaise with clinicians about student needs
- Gives students access where they are
- Addresses digital divide by allowing students to access technology at school for services

PARTNERS TO INVOLVE:

- Students
- Educators, administration, counselors, coaches
- Clinicians and doctors
- Parents and families
- Payors

KEY FIRST STEPS:

- Form an ecosystem with all partners
- Make connections and build trust
- Identify what other partners are needed

SKILL UP, SCALE UP

Expanding behavioral health services
while addressing workforce shortages

HEADLINES:

- Large-scale collaboration results in mental health gains for students!
- Continuum of services identifies students in early grades and carries students forward as needed.
- New healthcare workforce pipeline increases access to quality care!

HOW THIS WILL HELP:

- Addresses workforce challenges
- Provides a continuum of care for students
- Focuses on prevention and early intervention

PARTNERS TO INVOLVE:

- Schools / Tech Schools
- Providers
- Training sites
- 2-4 year Colleges

KEY FIRST STEPS:

- Secure investment in staff
- Form cross-sector coalition
- Establish goals and short-term deliverables

****All ideas, themes and prototypes generated from this session have been documented and will inform ECCF's future work in this area.***

LOOKING FORWARD

ECCF COLLABORATIVE GRANTS

ECCF, along with additional funders passionate about innovative solutions in behavioral health, are joining forces and financial resources to co-fund partnership grants. Organizations working together on ideas that can address the barriers to a stronger behavioral health system will be encouraged to apply.

Our collaborative grant program will launch in early November 2021. Virtual Q&A sessions will be scheduled soon and more information can be found at eccf.org.

LAUNCHING!

**EARLY
NOVEMBER**
2021

QUESTIONS?

[Carol Lavoie Schuster](#)

Vice President for Grants,
Nonprofit and Donor Services

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PRESENTER

[Stephanie Jordan Brown](#)

Behavioral Health Reform Consultant, Former Medicaid Director and
Managed Care Executive



VOICES FROM THE THINK LAB

*So glad to be here.
Thanks for including me
in this process.*

*Wow. Loved being a part of
this process. Hope we do
more of these!*

Lots of great discussion in our group!

So much great group thinking!

*Thank you all on this call for
the work that you do and
ECCF for bringing us together
and taking the next steps!*



NEXT STEPS



October, 2021

Publish summary report and share with Think Lab participants and legislative partners.



October, 2021

Share and discuss with ECCF Trustees, County Leadership Council, staff and volunteers for further analysis.



Early November, 2021

Launch collaborative grant program to invest in and encourage systems change.



Stay tuned!

Explore future behavioral health system convenings and additional Think Labs in intersecting areas.

Really like this thinking process. Thanks to all.

Great think lab, as always! Great to see so many other partners here, too.

Group 11 rocks! Thanks so much for a great conversation!

AGREE!!!!...great meeting! Looking forward to next steps!

So many groups and so many ideas - I love seeing the common themes!

Great leadership and ideas! Thank you!



Essex County Community Foundation inspires philanthropy that strengthens the communities of Essex County by managing charitable assets, strengthening and supporting nonprofits, and engaging in strategic community leadership initiatives.

LEARN MORE AND JOIN US IN THIS WORK.

Essex County Community Foundation
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