



Advocates

Caring Partners. Creative Solutions. Better Lives.



FY22 ANNUAL REPORT



President's Message

All members of the human family want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. We encourage the people we support — and each other — to enjoy the good things available in life, including work, friendship, romance, laughter, and joy.

EXCERPT FROM
THE ADVOCATES WAY

Dear Friends,

Vaccines, boosters, workforce crisis, and inflation. The past few years have been the most challenging in Advocates history. More than 900 individuals and staff tested positive and recovered from COVID-19. Twenty-one lost their lives to complications related to the virus. Countless others experienced mental health challenges due to the pandemic. Despite so much loss and heartache, staff came to work every day with two goals in mind – keeping individuals safe and filling every week with joy.

In the early days of sheltering in place, Zoom singalongs and bingo games kept us going. As the pandemic continued, car parades and drive-through activities helped everyone stay upbeat. Once vaccine rates increased and infection levels decreased, individuals began returning to programs, and we began planning outdoor activities. A group of families and staff went to a Worcester Red Sox game. The Day Services team organized a carnival. And we held our 6th Annual See Me 5K and our Company BBQ for the first time in years.

And what a joy it was to be together again! So many smiles. So many hugs. So much laughter — as well as a few tears.

There are few things that fill my heart more than seeing our staff, families, and people we support so happy to see each other. For the past few years, our mantra has been, “We are stronger together.” We are also happier together, and that’s a wonderful thing.

Thank you to the staff who work so hard every day to encourage the people we support. It’s been lovely to see you again this year!

And thank you to the families, friends, partners, and supporters who make the good things in life possible for all of us. I hope to see you soon!

Warm wishes,

Diane Gould

Diane Gould, LICSW
President and CEO

FY22 HIGHLIGHTS

Each year, Advocates partners with more than 30,000 individuals and families to shape creative solutions to even the greatest life challenges.

AFFILIATION

We are proud of our new affiliation with HMEA, a human service agency offering services for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities or autism.



- This partnership strengthens our mission, creates more opportunities for employees, and provides new options for individuals and families.
- We are excited to help more people in Central MA get the support they need.

RACIAL EQUITY JOURNEY

We are committed to redefining our mission, values, goals, behaviors, and daily operations as we work to build racial equity at Advocates and in the communities where we work and live.

- We hired a full-time Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer.
- We provided DEI training to more than 75 agency leaders and Board of Directors.
- We created three Employee Resource Groups, increased diversity in management, strengthened hiring principles, and created policies to promote a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable agency.

ACCREDITATION

Congratulations to the teams at Day Supports, Adult Family Care, Shared Living, Brain Injury Services, and Community Counseling who achieved a Three-Year Accreditation from The Council on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

- People we support said they are treated with dignity and respect, are comfortable sharing their journey, and feel valued and heard.

FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

Our new Intercultural Family Support Center supports families of children and adults with developmental disabilities in the MetroWest area.

- We partner with families to design supports for their unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic goals, and help them find the resources they need to thrive.

WORKFORCE CRISIS

Skyrocketing demand for services combined with a staff shortage created a workforce crisis throughout Advocates.

- We increased starting salaries and added new employee benefits.
- We launched a recruitment campaign with ads on billboards, bus signs, radio, social media, and TV.
- We partnered with the Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce to recruit bi-lingual clinicians.

THE FRIENDSHIP PROJECT

We received funding from Community Care Corps to reduce social isolation and create community connections for people with disabilities.



- We hired two Volunteer Coordinators to recruit, train, and match volunteers and individuals.
- We matched 42 people with new friends.
- Some friends talked on the phone or via text, while others went out for lunch and explored the community.

JAIL DIVERSION PROGRAM

Welcome to 13 new police departments — for a total of 31 partnerships!

- Advocates clinicians work alongside police officers to help respond to community crises.
- Three-quarters of people presenting with criminal behavior were diverted from arrest and into appropriate treatment.

CORONAVIRUS

We maintained strict rules minimizing the number of people working in offices, and followed CDC guidelines for masks in offices, homes, and programs. More than 97% of staff were vaccinated, and 30,000 tests were delivered to staff and people we support.

Bring the Joy!



Hundreds of Advocates families, individuals, and staff enjoyed a few baseball games this year at Worcester’s new stadium, Polar Park. What’s better than front row seats with friends, family, and foam fingers!



Staff and individuals from throughout Advocates gathered together for a fun afternoon of BBQ, ice cream, and lawn games. Laughs, smiles, and silliness were abundant!



Dunk tank, cornhole, and giant connect four were just a few of the fun games staff and individuals enjoyed while snacking on popcorn and cotton candy at this summer’s Carnival. Just another wonderful day at Day Services!



After a two-year hiatus, we were thrilled to host our See Me 5K Run, Walk, & Roll at Hopkinton State Park, where friends and family helped reduce stigma associated with having a disability while spreading the message “See the person. See the individual. See Me!”

Thank you for your generosity.



Your kindness and support bring joy to our lives, and to the lives of thousands of children, adults, and families.

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Due to space constraints, we unfortunately are not able to list everyone who supported us this year. Please know that we are truly grateful for every single donation of time, energy, or financial resources.

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Aetna
BayPath Elder Services, Inc.
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Advocates Main Office

1881 Worcester Road | Framingham, MA 01701 | (508) 628-6300



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