



CHILDREN'S LEAGUE OF MASSACHUSETTS

PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN THE
COMMONWEALTH BY INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY.



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORNER

CLM began FY2021 no different than we ended FY2020, laser focused on supporting our members through an unprecedented global pandemic. While we prioritized access to PPE, testing and vaccines to address the public health threats, we also advocated for the need for financial supports needed to fully execute health and safety requirements.

Our bi-weekly COVID forums provided an opportunity for our members to ask questions, discuss challenges and raise issues that we shepherded to the administration and legislature as needed. With your input and feedback, we were successful in securing a centralized statewide testing initiative for all congregate care staff and in addressing the challenges in the statewide vaccine roll out.

Research is clear that supporting caregivers is critical to the health, well-being and resiliency of children and youth. Throughout the year, our members were on the frontlines providing community supports to children, families and foster parents. Family Resource Center's served more families monthly than they did pre-pandemic. Foster parents and congregate care providers supported children who were learning remotely and visiting with family members virtually or out in the community. At CLM our job was clear: to support all our members in caring for others.

Together we learned an important lesson from the pandemic: we don't have to settle for the status quo or incremental change. Forced by necessity, our field adapted to new ways of operating that ultimately improve how we serve children and their families, such as using technology to keep families connected, and helping more kids access school and treatment programs from their own homes. Increased direct cash assistance provided families with a safety net that ultimately helped them meet basic needs and reduced incidence of child abuse and neglect.

The pandemic exponentially exacerbated existing inequities in health care, education, juvenile justice and child welfare. And while communities of color have been hit the hardest, the death of David Almond shone a light on multi-system failures in ensuring the safety and well-being of children with disabilities.

In recognition of the fact that so many child serving systems lack data on disproportionality and inequity, we took a bold step and filed "**An Act to Eliminate Disproportionality and Inequities for At Risk Children.**" Our hope is that by requiring agencies to collect data that presents the reality of who is represented in systems and who gets access to services; it will allow the Commonwealth to use data to efficiently target investments and make effective use of resources to support families in meeting their basic and persistent needs like access to childcare, behavioral health services and safe, affordable housing.

Tammy Mello

Executive Director

CLM CRISIS RESPONSE TO COVID-19



As the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the state of emergency went into effect, CLM quickly set up communication structures with HHS, State Agencies and our members. We immediately began weekly meetings with HHS and used that forum to elevate questions and concerns we heard from our members during our bi-weekly COVID forums. CLM tracked and disseminated the rapidly changing COVID-19 rules, regulations, guidance, and best practices related to provider and youth needs and implementation concerns and challenges.

Weekly HHS meetings resulted in:

- Implementation of state funded, centralized, COVID testing for all staff to include updated guidance as needed
- Vaccine access for all staff
- Continuation of regulatory relief to ensure flexibilities
- RFI proposal to HHS for use of ARPA funds to address workforce crisis

Monthly meetings with state agency Commissioners and leadership resulted in updated guidance to address:

- Family Visitation for children/youth in out of home placements and/or mental health facilities
- Testing of children/youth in out of home placements
- Continued supports for Transition Age Youth
- Vaccination for eligible children/youth in care
- Supports for children/youth who are remote learning

RULES, REGULATIONS, GUIDANCE & SUPPORT FOR PROVIDERS

Safety guidance and regulations

- Continuation of regulatory relief to ensure flexibilities
- Family Visitation for children/youth in out of home placements and/or mental health facilities
- Health and safety guidance to include access to PPE in order to mitigate spread of infection

Testing Access

- Implementation of state funded, centralized, COVID testing for all staff to include updated guidance as needed
- Testing of children/youth in out of home placements

Vaccine access

- Vaccine access for all staff
- Vaccination for eligible children/youth in care

Funding Enhancements

- Monthly enhancements to cover the costs for testing and PPE
- Relief payments for foster parents and program staff



COVID-19 RESPONSE



Critical Pandemic Support for Youth in DCF Care

- Advocacy with DESE, DCF, OCA, and our education partners regarding technology needs for children/youth remote learning, resulting in CLM members receiving laptops.
- Advocacy for extended pandemic-related support for youth aging out of care.



Addressing the Ongoing Workforce Crisis

- Emergency Child Care Availability for essential employees working at CLM programs.
- Rate enhancements to reflect the most recent BLS benchmarks.
- Relief payments to address the financial burden of PPE, loss of staff due to exposure, and testing requirements.
- RFI proposal to HHS for use of ARPA funds to address workforce crisis.



CLM Serving as an Information Hub

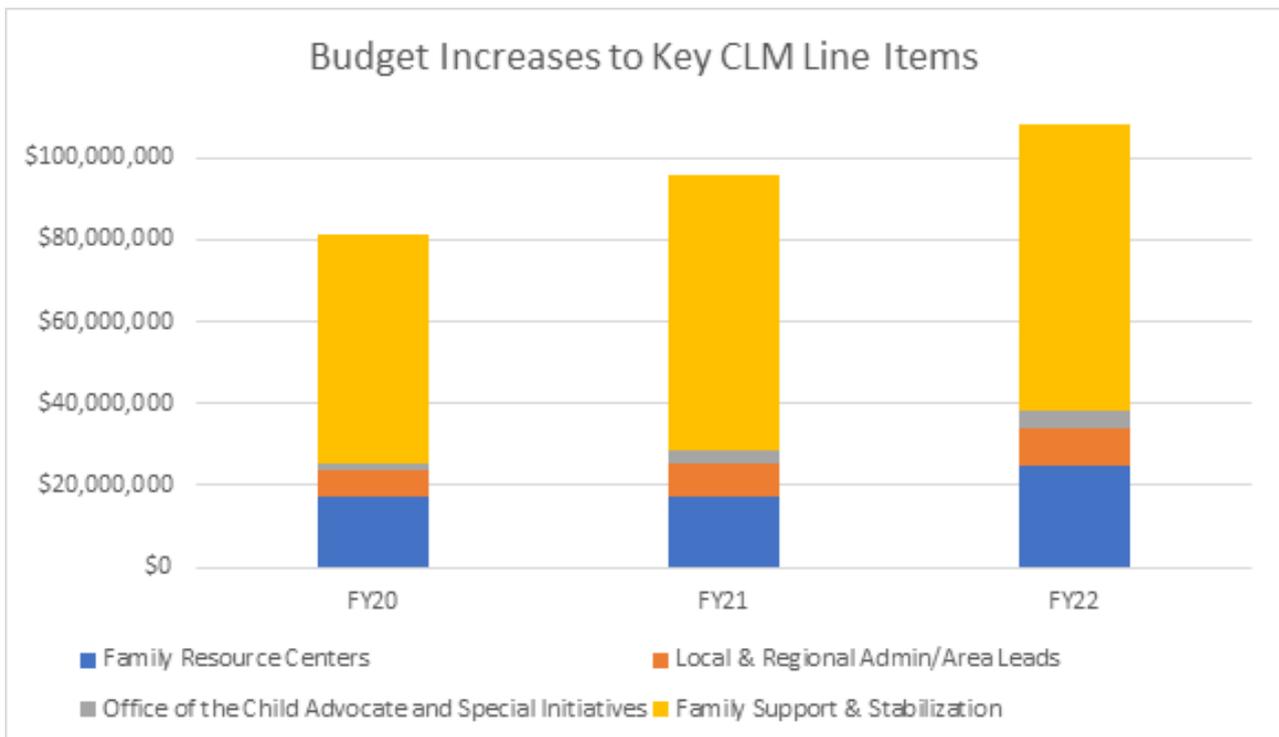
- CLM held monthly meetings and served as a conduit for sharing state issues, concerns, and information with national child welfare partners (including CWLA, NOSCA, and federal legislators,) on issues related to Family First implementation, the need for regulatory relief and funding allocations for individuals and families that were impacted by unemployment, housing insecurity and eligibility restrictions that left them vulnerable.
- CLM served a convener and conduit for information-sharing among our members around state developments, likely scenarios, best practices, and challenges.

POLICY

State Budget

The FY2021 state budget season was delayed by several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Legislature faced tremendous pressure to ensure families and communities could meet basic needs, with severely reduced overall state income. As the FY2022 budget cycle returned to a normal schedule, Massachusetts is emerging from the pandemic in a strong financial position, but with many lingering pandemic effects to address especially in low-income and under-resourced communities. Against this complex landscape, CLM members and partners successfully advocated for FY21 and FY22 state budget increases in key line items including:

- Family Resource Centers (43% increase over 2 years)
- Local & Regional Admin & for Area Leads & RRC (35% increase over 2 years)
- Family Support and Stabilization (25% increase over 2 years)
- Office of the Child Advocate and special initiatives (139% increase over 2 years)



Rates

CLM worked in partnership with the Collaborative (ADDP, ABH and Providers' Council) to successfully advocate with the Baker-Polito Administration and the legislature to secure \$160 million for Chapter 257 rates in FY20-21.

Woven through our policy agenda and working group discussions are efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within child and family programs and policies. These include improved data collection and reporting on disproportionality, supporting our members' workforce strategies, eliminating discrimination in foster care and adoption, and supporting juvenile justice reforms. DEI is a long-term, ongoing effort that we are proud to work on in partnership with our members and communities.

CLM also serves on the Steering Committee of the WellBeing BluePrint, a national network of system and community leaders and implementers committed to a common vision and set of principles to create system transformation that ensures every member of society has a fair shot at wellbeing. This work requires removing the roots of racism – across fields and sectors- and re-rooting the change in wellbeing.

State Policy Advocacy

With the start of a new two-year legislative session in January 2021, CLM has a full legislative agenda that looks to broadly improve services and supports to children and families and address the intersectionality of a family's relationships with various state agencies and community programs.

Priority legislation introduced and referred to the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities:

- An Act to eliminate disproportionality and inequities for at-risk children.
- An Act relative to expanding access to adoption.
- An Act establishing a stakeholders' committee on family first prevention services and racial equity.
- An Act to ensure positive transition plans to prevent youth homelessness.



CLM Advocacy Highlights:

- 2021 session activities:
 - Testified in support of the **Foster Parents' Bill of Rights** and the **Foster Care Review Office**.
 - Joined new coalitions in support of state child care reform and language access legislation.
- 2020 session activities:
 - Passage of **An Act Relative to Justice, Equity and Accountability in Law Enforcement**, which includes provisions including expungement of some youth court records, reducing racial profiling of students through privacy protections and some limits on school resource officers. (November 2020).
 - Submitted testimony to **An Act Relative to Accountability for Vulnerable Children and Families** regarding the need for Massachusetts to codify implementation of the Reasonable Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS), particularly during COVID-19, and to urge the Legislature to adopt improved reporting recommendations for the DCF Data Working Group.

Additional Legislative Advocacy Highlights

- The Behavioral Health Working Group met weekly with Chair Marjorie Decker to discuss challenges with mental health and substance abuse work during the public health pandemic.
- CLM maintained weekly contact with members of Joint Committee of Children Families and Person's with Disabilities to keep them informed on the challenges for CLM members in serving children and families during the pandemic.
- CLM continued ongoing work with the National Organization of State Associations for Children (NOSAC) on specific issues including:
 - Family First Implementation challenges to include advocacy to delay implementation.
 - Legislation to create an exemption from the Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion to ensure children in foster care receiving care in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) can continue to receive care provided in these settings without losing their federal Medicaid coverage.
 - Participated in the Full Frame Well-Being Blueprint Initiative as a Kitchen Cabinet member, a national initiative to address the systemic inequities that were exacerbated during the pandemic and perpetuate disproportionate access to well-being for communities of color.

TASK FORCE & COALITIONS

CLM coalitions and task forces met monthly as fora to raise specific area-based issues faced by members during the COVID-19 pandemic. The year ended with each group meeting and resetting its strategic mission and goals for FY22.

Adoption Task Force

Continued to recruit, educate, train, and support families at all stages of the adoption continuum.

Family Preservation Coalition

Continued providing support to families through a variety of child safety, health, and well-being services.

Family Resource Center Task Force

Tracked the degree to which FRCs served more people during COVID.

Intensive Foster Care Task Force

Provided in-depth support to foster families.

Transition-Aged Youth Coalition

Made sure youth didn't age out/become homeless during pandemic.

External Policy Partners, Coalitions, and Task Forces

CLM Raises Member Voices and Perspectives to these Meetings

- Access Massachusetts
- Children's Health Access Coalition
- Children's Mental Health Campaign
- Citizens for Juvenile Justice Coalition
- Coalition for Special Education Funding
- Massachusetts Coalition to End Child Marriage
- Language Access for All Coalition
- Common Start Coalition

CLM Raises Member Voices and Perspectives to these State Commissions and Workgroups

- Childhood Trauma Task Force
- DCF Data Work Group
- Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board (JJPAD)

HONORING DAVID ALMOND

In March 2021, the Office of the Child Advocate released an Investigative Report on the tragic death of David Almond. While David's father and his girlfriend are ultimately responsible for David's death, multiple systemic failures created the opportunity for it to happen.

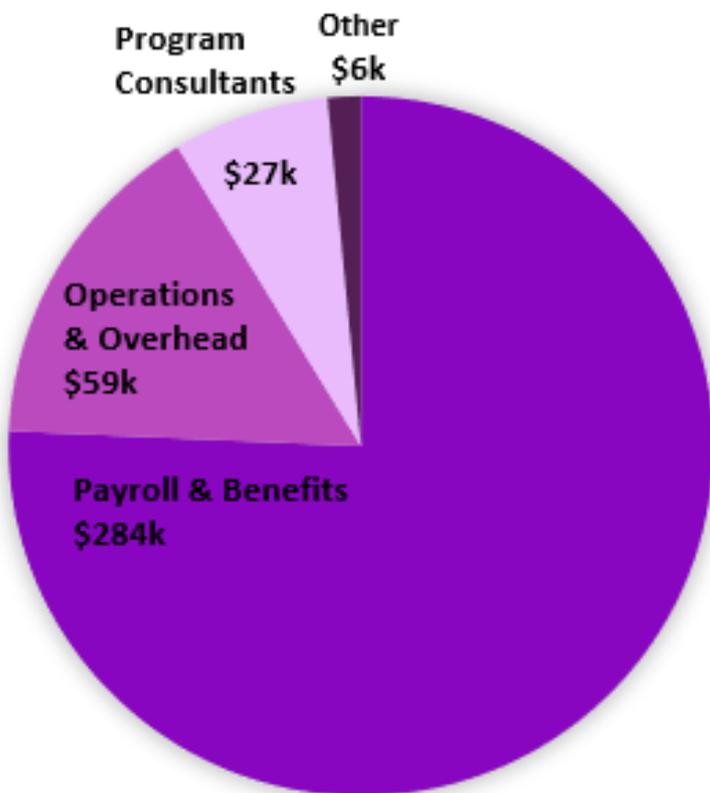
Welfare of children is everyone's responsibility; however, child protection, education and courts have a unique responsibility to ensure that children who have been abused or neglected are safe, have supported caregivers that meet their needs, and are loved. The Investigative Report on David's death highlighted breakdowns in clinical judgement, communication, and abdication of responsibilities, all systemic breakdowns we have worked to address for years. The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated these systemic breakdowns and left David and his brothers, isolated, alone, and unseen.

This year we will honor David's memory by ensuring we are laser focused on addressing the systemic failures that create opportunities for other children, like David, to fall through the cracks.

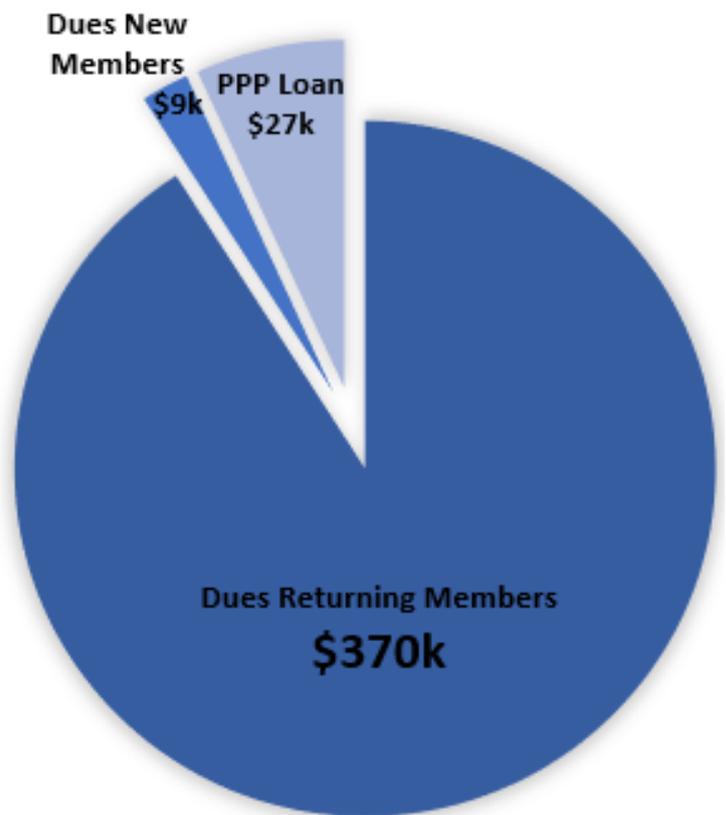
OPERATIONS & FINANCE

- Operations at A Glance
 - In February, CLM said goodbye to longtime Director of Public Policy, Kathryn Cohen. Kathryn guided the league's public policy agenda for nearly five years and was able to secure targeted wins for our members, as well as children and families across the state. After nearly five years with CLM, Kathryn has transitioned to a new role with the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers.
 - In April, CLM welcomed Rachel Gwaltney to fill the vacant Director of Public Policy position.
- Working Remotely
 - CLM continued to respond to the pandemic by having all staff predominantly work remotely.

FY21 Expenses



FY21 Revenue





MEMBERSHIP

- 18 Degrees
- Ascentria Care Alliance
- Bay State Community Services
- Bethany Christian Services
- Boys Town New England
- Brandon School Residential Treatment Center, Inc.
- Cambridge Family & Children's Service
- Center for Human Development
- Centerboard
- Child & Family Services
- Children's Services of Roxbury
- Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)
- The Children's Study Home, Inc.
- Citizen's for Juvenile Justice
- Communities for People
- Community Providers of Adolescent Services, Inc. (COMPASS)
- Cotting School
- Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health
- Perkins ~ RFK Children's Action Corps
- Fall River Deaconess Home
- Family & Community Resources, Inc.
- Family Continuity
- Family Nurturing Center
- Friends of Children
- Gándara Mental Health Center, Inc.
- Heading Home
- Hillcrest Educational Centers
- The Home for Little Wanderers
- HopeWell, Inc.
- James F. Farr Academy, Inc.
- Justice Resource Institute
- Kennedy-Donovan Center
- The Key Program, Inc.
- Latham Centers
- LUK, Inc.
- Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE)
- Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA)
- MA Mentor
- Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI)
- More Than Words
- Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC)
- NFI Massachusetts, Inc.
- North Suffolk Mental Health Association
- Old Colony YMCA
- Open Sky Community Services
- Plummer Youth Promise
- Rise Above Foundation
- Roxbury Youthworks, Inc.
- St. Ann's Home and School, Inc.
- Saint Vincent's Services
- Stetson School
- Stevens Treatment Programs
- University of Massachusetts Medical School
- Wayside Youth and Family Support Network
- YOU, Inc.
- Youth Villages

CLM BOARD & STAFF

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Board Vice Chair, **Daurice Cox**, President & CEO, Bay State Community Services
Board Treasurer, **Michael Ames**, President & CEO, Doctor Franklin Perkins School
Board Clerk, **Beth Barto**, CEO, LUK, Inc.

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Bill Lyttle, President, The Key Program

Bob Gittens, Executive Director, Cambridge Family and Children's Service

Eric Masi, President & CEO, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network

Jackie Moore, CEO, North Suffolk Mental Health Association, Inc.

Joseph Leavey, Executive Director, Communities for People

Kari Beserra, Executive Vice President, Justice Resource Institute

Lesli Suggs, President & CEO, The Home for Little Wanderers

Lois Nesci, CEO, Gandara Center

Mary McGeown, Executive Director, MSPCC

Matthew Stone, Executive Director, Massachusetts and New Hampshire Youth Villages, Inc.

Mia Alvarado, Executive Director, Roxbury Youthworks, Inc.

Tammy Mello, Executive Director

Rachel Gwaltney, Public Policy Director

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