

Homeward Bound

A Report of the NABB Homelessness Task Force

The objectives of the NABB Homelessness Task Force are to build awareness about homelessness and to advocate for effective treatment and prevention services for the homeless and safety for all in our community.

Fast Facts

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness nationally has more than doubled since 1990. Each night in the US, nearly 400,000 individuals who find themselves without homes sleep in shelters and 200,000 will sleep on the streets. A homeless person is four times more likely to die than a housed person and those living on the streets are three times more likely to die than those in shelters.

Boston's challenges in a pandemic:

Homelessness is expected to increase soon due to the pandemic's impact on job loss, mental illness, and evictions. With the second wave of the virus upon us, mask wearing and avoiding dense situations are more important than ever. Boston homelessness service providers have reinvented their programs to ensure social distancing and support for those who become ill.

A major force in the current pandemic has been Dr James O'Connell of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program. (BHCHP) who spoke at the NABB Forum on Homelessness at the Boston Public Library last year.

BHCHP provides direct medical care to over 11,000 people many of whom suffer from exposure to extreme weather, trauma, violence, chronic illnesses, and persistent mental illness. During the height of the pandemic last April, BHCHP, in partnership with the City, State and MGH, established a 1,000-bed field hospital at the Boston Convention Center. Five hundred beds were reserved to handle expected hospital overflow and 500 to care for homeless patients who were COVID positive and at risk with no place to go. It was a remarkable achievement carried out in an incredibly tight timeframe.

Last year at this time, NABB partnered in fundraising with The Women's Lunch Place - a neighborhood day shelter on Newbury Street serving over 1,000 meals this year with a wide variety of services for homeless women.

In this season of sharing and giving, with severe strains expected on city and state budgets if we like we can play a role in helping the front-line workers who are helping the most vulnerable in our community.

If you would like to learn more and help this work:

- Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program website (www.BHCHP.org)
- info@womenslunchplace.org

For full list of services in Boston:

- Boston Public Health Commission website (www.BPHC.org)

Resources:

- "Stories from the Shadows: Reflections of a Street Doctor" author: James O'Connell, M.D. (www.BHCHP.org)