

Op Ed

We can give Bostonians the best chance at recovery

By Dr. Charles Anderson and Maureen H. Bleday

Making addiction treatment and recovery services easier to access in Boston is critical to addressing the growing opioid crisis in our community. Opioid-related deaths have [increased by 37%](#) in Boston since 2018. For Black individuals, that number is [122%](#).

Substance use or addiction is a complex mental health condition that is treatable when the right expertise and resources come together to support recovery. This May, during Mental Health Month, we are joining the national campaign urging people to “Look Around, Look Within” and consider the impact that our surroundings have on mental health. This is an opportune time to reflect on the steps we all can take to shape our surroundings to improve the well-being of those struggling with addiction in our community.

Right now, if we look around Boston, a city world-renowned for its hospitals and healthcare services, we see that it is easier to access opioids than addiction treatment and recovery services. Funding for these life-saving programs is critical, as is having the right infrastructure to support the work of medical and mental health professionals.

Other programs are [closing](#) their addiction treatment services due to a lack of long-term funding. This will only exacerbate the gap between access to drugs and access to treatment, compounding the effect we saw when services were abruptly cut off on Long Island nearly nine years ago and never fully replaced. What is clear is that we need more, not less, treatment options in our city.

A significant barrier to successful recovery in Boston is the shortage of post-detox clinical stabilization services (CSS). CSS is the vital step after detox where people receive intensive clinical services, including mental health services, to help them stay in recovery and prevent them from cycling in and out of detox. Yet, there are currently no post-detox, CSS beds for men within city limits.

[The Dimock Center](#), with a transformational gift from the [Yawkey Foundation](#), is renovating the historic Dr. Marie E. Zakrzewska (Z) Building on its Roxbury campus to accommodate a new CSS unit that will serve more than 1,000 people annually. This means men in Boston who complete detox will no longer have to leave the city to receive these services.

According to [The National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#), it is important both that treatment is readily accessible to individuals and that they remain in treatment for at least 90 days to have the best odds at a successful recovery.

Dimock is unique among community health centers in offering a model of holistic health and human services on a single nine-acre site to care for the whole person, right where they live. The Dimock Center currently offers one-third of Boston's total non-hospital detox beds. Dimock's coordinated one-campus delivery model increases the likelihood of a person staying in recovery, as demonstrated by its successful women's program. Currently, 90% of Dimock's female CSS patients transfer directly to CSS from inpatient detox just across the street.

To quote David, a Dimock residential recovery patient, “When you are in the detox and can look out the window and see your next step, it gives you hope.”

Continued investment in resources for mental and behavioral health is a longstanding priority of the Yawkey Foundation. The Greater Boston region is blessed with generous and deep philanthropic resources. Supporting community members as they leave detox, when they are particularly vulnerable to relapse in the absence of adequate support services, needs to be acknowledged as a critical and shared priority across leadership in the healthcare, government, philanthropic, business, and civic sectors.

Let's all take time to look within ourselves and around our community for more opportunities to reduce addiction and remove barriers to treatment and recovery. Together, we can help restore hope and give our neighbors the best chance at a successful recovery.

Dr. Charles Anderson is President and CEO of the Dimock Center and Maureen H. Bleday is CEO and trustee of Yawkey Foundation.

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Learn more about and contribute to our Restoring Hope Campaign [here](#).

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