



WHITTIER STREET HEALTH CENTER  
Comprehensive. Compassionate. Community.

# BEACON OF HOPE

CHAMPIONING HEALTH EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE!



ANNUAL REPORT FY2023



## Vision Statement:

To become an exceptional community health provider that addresses health care inequities, closes gaps in life expectancy, and pursues social justice.

## Mission Statement:

To serve as a center of excellence that provides high quality, and accessible health care and social services that achieve health equity, social justice, and the economic well-being of our diverse patient populations.

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# Dear Friends,

Health equity and social injustice are two closely related concepts that sadly create a great divide between some Boston neighborhoods and the communities that Whittier Street Health Center serves. Unfair and disparate treatment of people based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other characteristics is a shameful problem that Massachusetts shares with the rest of the nation. This centuries-long discrimination has resulted in reduced access to quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate health care services which has led to delayed diagnosis, inadequate treatment, and ultimately poor health outcomes.

In 2023, we continued to combat these inequities. Our Boston Health Equity Program (BHEP), now in its 11th year, was recognized by the Boston Public Health Commission and highlighted in several news articles for its impact on life expectancy. When BHEP was launched in 2011, there was a 33-year life expectancy gap among residents living in the two miles between Roxbury and Back Bay. This May, the Boston Public Health Commission reported a 23-year gap – a significant improvement that involved the contributions of community residents and our cross-sector partnerships. Yet this disparity is still too wide. We are proud of these improvements, but whilst a 23-year gap in life expectancy remains, our work is ongoing and vital.

We expanded our breast screening program this year, thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as part of the Biden Administration's reignited Cancer Moonshot initiative. The Whittier program is run in partnership with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute to help provide greater access to cancer screening and treatment to the underserved communities of Boston.

In the summer, we proudly hosted a press conference where Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell announced a \$1.5 million grant to support maternal health equity in this state. Whittier Street Health Center was a recipient of \$150,000 in grant funding which allowed us to re-launch our CenteringPregnancy Group. This will help to reduce maternal health disparities among women of color, like Michell and Yanilsa who in these pages will share what the program means to them. Our goal is to lessen



these disproportions by providing preconception support, prenatal care, postpartum support services, behavioral health support, and patient and family education engagement. We also continue to address the social determinants of health that are barriers to good health, such as transportation, housing, food, childcare, jobs, and immigration status.

Our first brick-and-mortar School Based Health Clinic at the Boston Day and Evening Academy became a reality this year. It provides a myriad of health services, bringing accessible and culturally competent healthcare directly to students. Services include routine and preventative care and health screenings for both medical and mental health issues. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an alarming increase in mental health concerns, with many of our young patients experiencing increased emotional health problems, from depression and anxiety to a sense of isolation.

Our focus on youth continues with our Whittier Youth Services Enrichment (WYSE) program, which includes primary care-based intervention for youths ages 17-18. This program is a collaboration with several community partners to target at-risk youth and connect them to a variety of services, such as behavioral health and substance abuse counseling, life coaching, domestic violence support, GED attainment, college placement programs, and job opportunities.

In our constant strive to eliminate disparities in health outcomes, the Whittier Health Equity Research Center is steadfast in its focus on issues impacting racial equity. We continue to explore avenues to address the systemic, institutional, and individual barriers that deny opportunities based on race or ethnicity. Discrimination impacts individuals' health by preventing them access to resources, undermining dignity, and placing high barriers to quality of life. Our commitment to fighting discrimination is unwavering,

The ongoing battle with COVID-19 is, unfortunately, likely to remain just that – ongoing. We maintain measures to stop the spread of the virus, protect our most vulnerable populations, and provide access to treatment by offering vaccine clinics. Early in 2023, Whittier was designated by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) as a state-supported site to expand access to COVID therapeutics, which are used to prevent or treat eligible non-hospitalized patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have mild to moderate symptoms.

In this FY 2023 report, we have showcased some of the many services and programs that Whittier offers in support of our consistently growing number of patients. You'll discover how Whittier is positively impacting the lives of young patients like London and Josiah. You'll hear from Beverly, a longtime Whittier patient, who, in her words, can count on "being treated with kindness and respect" at each and every visit.

You'll also read about the strides we continue to take to help patients overcome barriers to care. Some additional highlights of the past year include:

- Celebrating the first anniversary of our Day Engagement Center, welcoming patients like Atarah who now works as a Patient Care Service Representative at Whittier.
- Continuing to build relationships and provide holistic treatment at our Satellite Clinic on Blue Hill Avenue in Roxbury where patients including Mayra, Javier, and Abiezer participate in a Diabetes Group.
- Increasing access to health care through the Satellite Clinic, mobile health vans, virtual care, and remote monitoring of chronic diseases.

- Hosting Dr. Mandy Cohen, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Massachusetts Department of Public Health Commission Robbie Golden who toured our Center, praising it for the services provided to the community.

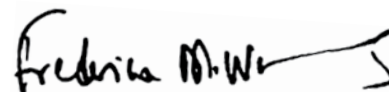
In 2023 Whittier also:

- Expanded its Telehealth program to include Remote Monitoring and Free Devices for patients with chronic conditions including Diabetes and Hypertension;
- Expanded our Prescription for Health program to address the high rates of physical and behavioral health issues post the pandemic;
- Expanded our Food Pantry to increase access to healthy foods and address food insecurity;
- Announced expansion of our Onsite Pharmacy;
- Launched a new Weight Management Support Group; and
- Expanded services in our Oral Health department including new technology and a 3-D printer technology.

The depth of knowledge, sensitivity, and empathy exhibited by our staff members exemplifies the call to care that is the very essence of Whittier Street Health Center. At Whittier, 100% of our social services are free and no patient is denied care! We are striving to address health equity and social justice. It is our quest to ensure everyone has equitable access to high-quality care. With your continued support, health equity can be attained.

With your support, we will continue to serve as a ***Beacon of Hope: Championing Health Equity and Social Justice***. Health equity for all – together we can make it a reality.

Sincerely,



FREDERICA M. WILLIAMS  
President & CEO  
Whittier Health Care Center

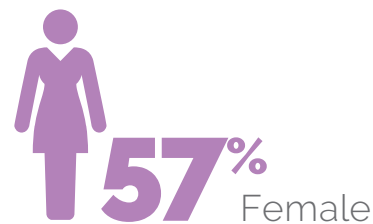
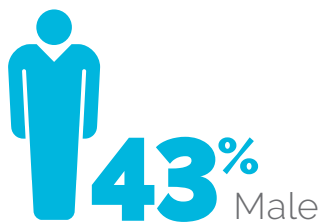
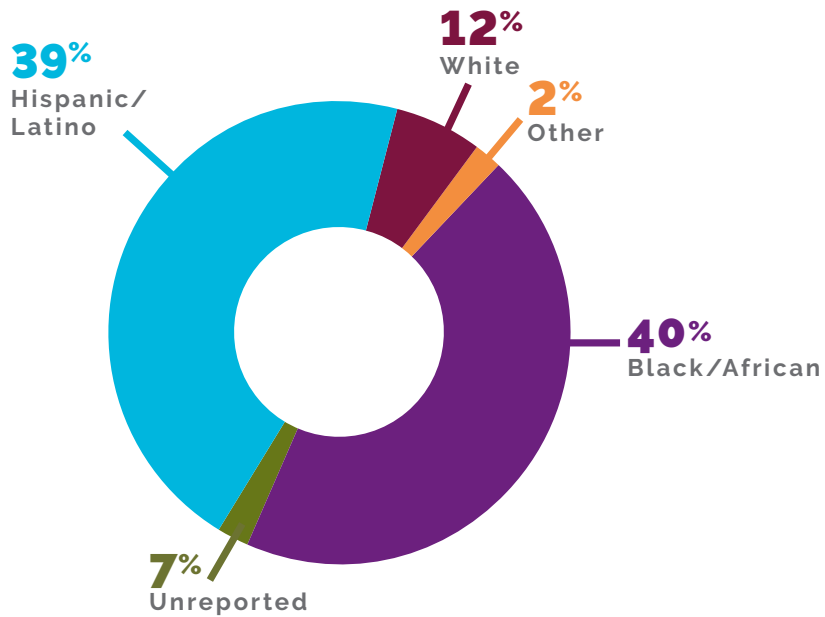


ALICIA WEDDERBURN  
Board Chair  
Founder & CEO, Science Ed Consulting and  
Lead Science Coach, Boston Public Schools

# Patients and Impact

## Who We Care For

### Diverse



### Low Income

**18%** of our patients are uninsured or have no insurance

**82%** live in public housing

**90%** of patients with known income live at or below the Federal Poverty Level.



# PEDIATRIC HEALTH

## Building a Strong Foundation for the Future



## Jesiah Mack

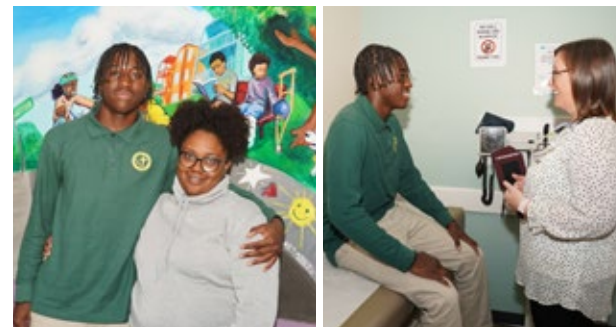
Jesiah Mack is a typical 16-year-old boy. He attends Cathedral High School in Roxbury where he's on the football team, he likes to play video games and socialize with friends.

"I also like spending time at home with my mom and sister and just plain enjoying myself," says Jesiah.

But things weren't always so rosy for Jesiah, who has been a patient at Whittier Street Health Center since he was a baby. "He had asthma and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)," says Jesiah's mom, Rhonisha. "I used to come to Whittier when I was a teenager, and once I had Jesiah I started bringing him here because I knew he'd receive quality care."

With his asthma now under control, Jesiah visits Whittier less frequently than he used to, but still looks forward to annual wellness visits, his physicals, and trips to the Whittier on-site pharmacy for asthma medication.

Jesiah also has fewer struggles with his ADHD, thanks to Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Julie Ahern and in large part to Rhonisha, who recognized the importance of early intervention.



"I heard about someone who has ADHD as a child but wasn't diagnosed and didn't take medication until they were older," says Rhonisha. "I never wanted Jesiah to struggle at school and I don't want to see other kids struggle. I want parents to know that it's important to listen to what their doctors say because they're here to help us – and we should take advantage of their care and concern." Jesiah couldn't agree more.

"You shouldn't be ashamed if you have ADHD or anything else – everyone is going through something," he says. "Having a support group of family and friends helps a lot. For me, a big part of my support comes from Julie [Ahern] even though I don't see her as much as I used to. She's like family and just makes me happy. After all, she's been taking care of me since I was two!"



## Julianne Ahern, PN, **PEDIATRICS CLINICAL MANAGER**

"Pediatrics is about treating the whole family – everything that parents and siblings have going on impacts on a child. The care we provide at Whittier is not just focused on the young patient, but on making sure the entire family has what they need. This also applies to multigenerational households. Kids may have one issue going on in their lives, but their parents and other family members may be going through other things that are affecting the care of the child. We make sure we are treating everyone."



# London Clark

When London Clark first visited Whittier Street Health Center in March of 2022, she was "going through a bad break-up and dealing with some mental health issues."

"I was looking for someone to talk to and I found that someone in Rose [Behavioral Clinician Rose Pierre]," says London.

Coping mechanisms, availability of resources, and that strong connection to Rose have helped London overcome her mental health issues.

"Our sessions can be about serious subjects or sometimes we just have a friendly conversation," says London, adding that she's "open about my mental health issues, but careful about who I share them with."

"But when I'm at Whittier, I feel comfortable and safe."



# Rose Pierre, MSW

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICIAN

"Parents can sometimes be resistant to allowing their children to practice self-determination," says Rose Pierre.

That chance to make and learn from mistakes is vital to the emotional maturing process, says Rose, who was born in Haiti and came to this country when she was 10 years old.

"Children need to be active in making the choices that will directly impact them," she says.

Taking the necessary time to observe behaviors is at the heart of the work that Rose does as a behavioral clinician. She also implements long- and short-term interventions and develops individualized treatment plans.

"It's important not to rush and diagnose," she says. "The Whittier model of care stresses the importance of taking the time to observe and treat patients in a holistic manner...and always with dignity and respect."



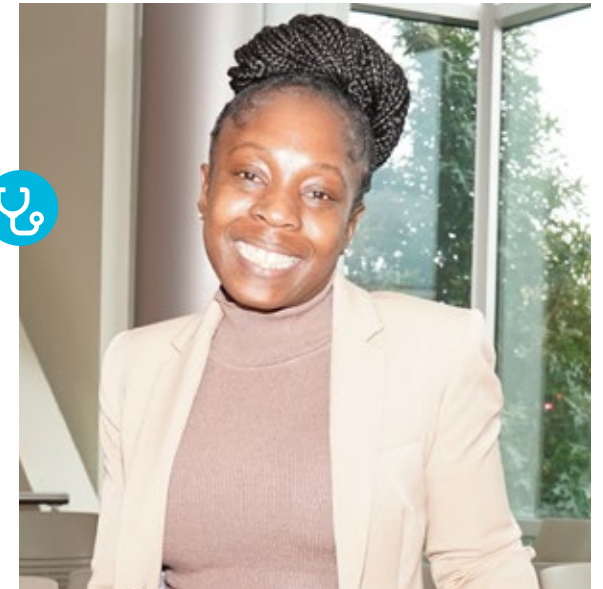
# Cathy Loesch, LICSW

## CHILD AND FAMILY THERAPIST

Anxiety, depression, isolation – these are the most common issues facing Cathy Loesch's young patients in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Socialization and communication are at all-time lows since the pandemic," she says. "Many children don't know how to socialize with peers anymore."

That sense of isolation often stems from the family environment since many parents aren't socializing much.





# ADDRESSING MATERNAL MORTALITY

## Centering Pregnancy Program



Launched in 2010, Whittier's Centering Pregnancy Program is a model of group care that integrates health assessment, education, and support into a unified program. The program was placed on hold in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but in 2023 we brought it back and our clients – and practitioners – couldn't be happier.

Eight to ten women with similar gestational ages meet together for a total of ten sessions throughout pregnancy and early postpartum. They learn care skills, participate in facilitated discussions, and develop a support network with other group members.

"We talk about how to take care of our babies and how to take care of ourselves," says Michell, a participant in the Centering Parenting Program, noting she wouldn't dream of missing a session. "This program makes me feel relaxed, more confident, and supported."

Another program participant, Yanilisa, echoes that sentiment. "The case managers pay attention to what we say and take care of us in all ways. I had some doubts in the beginning of my pregnancy, but I am

more comfortable and confident since entering this program – my worries have disappeared."

Topics cover both child care and mother care and range from infant growth, development, and immunizations to postpartum care and infant attachment. Nutrition, dental health, breastfeeding, depression, short and long-term goals, confidential matters – no topic is left off the table.

"We make sure we provide the correct information, but we also encourage the mothers-to-be to talk and we acknowledge their contributions," says Johanna El Gharbi, the Centering Coordinator and Women's Health Case Manager. "The women who participate grow together, both physically and emotionally, so by the end of the program they have ten new friends."

The unique model of care provides a dynamic environment for learning and sharing, which is not possible to recreate in a one-to-one setting.

"Our goal is to provide the best quality of care and to recognize that cultural differences must be respected," says Women's Health Case Manager Yusef Siraad.



**"This program has helped me deal with issues I had trouble with during my first pregnancy; because of the program I'm truly ready to be a mother again."**

— MICHELL, Program Participant



**"I've heard a lot of myths about pregnancy, but here, I get actual facts."**

— YANILISA, Program Participant





**“The goal of the program is not only for healthy mother and child outcomes, but also for life style changes.”**

— **YUSEF SIRAAD**, Women's Health Case Manager



**“Some of our young mothers-to-be don't realize they have value – we do our best to show them that they do.”**

— **VALERIE DAVIS**, Women's Health Case Manager

## facts

***A study conducted by the CDC indicates that the maternal mortality rate during the COVID-19 pandemic increased by 38% from 2020 to 2021 as racial disparities in outcomes continued to widen.***

***Maternal and infant health disparities are symptoms of broader underlying social and economic inequities that are often rooted in racism and discrimination.***

***In Massachusetts, Black non-Hispanic women are 1.9 times more likely to die either during pregnancy or within one year postpartum than white non-Hispanic women.***

***Minority populations suffer a ten time higher risk of complications from child birth, including infant mortality rates.***

As a foreign-trained physician and native of Somalia who came to this country as a refugee, Yusef Siraad understands the challenges faced by some of the women enrolled in the Centering Pregnancy Program.

“They come from different countries and have no housing, no income, they don't know the language – these are the women who suffer the most,” says Siraad. “I know what these women need based on my own experiences.”

Shared decision-making between practitioners and patients is key to the popular program.

“I don't want my doctor to dictate to me and neither should these women,” says Women's Health Case Manager Valerie Davis. “We want them to ask questions and have input into their own health. We make decisions together and foster a genuine rapport.”



# HOUSING INSECURITY AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



"I feel like I'm moving forward in a positive way," says Atarah – and that's a direction the 24-year-old Boston native hopes to continue in.

Currently living in a shelter, Atarah found out about the Day Engagement Center at Whittier in July and has been receiving help and utilizing its services ever since. The Center, launched in October of 2022, is staffed by trauma-informed professionals. It promotes



**"I felt stuck before going to the Day Engagement program but now I'm uplifted"**

— ATARAH

healthy lifestyles while providing access to medical, mental health, recovery services, and linkage to social services such as housing, healthy food, jobs, and transportation.

"I felt stuck before going to the Day Engagement program but now I'm uplifted," says Atarah – and with good reason.

With the assistance and recommendation of Day Engagement Center Program Manager Diana Sencion, Atarah is now employed at Whittier Street Health Center as a Patient Care Service Representative.

"I check patients in, help make their appointments, and am there to talk to them and make them feel comfortable," she says. "Getting this job has taken a weight off my shoulders and will help me get into housing."

"I am so proud of Atarah," says Diana, a member of the Whittier staff for nine years and Program Manager of the Day Engagement Program. "When she first came here, she was so quiet – never spoke – but now she fully engages and I'm so thrilled to say that she calls me her adopted mother!"

It is with that same care and concern that Diana approaches the individual needs of those visiting the

Center. "I guess the mom in me makes people feel comfortable," she says, noting the Day Engagement Center's "open door policy."

From medical screenings to assistance filling out applications for housing and employment, to referrals to legal services, the Center's staff faces and meets new challenges daily. "We build trust through relationships," says Diana. "I feel that we are doing God's work."

Atarah now has high hopes for her future. "I want to be successful, to have a family, and live a good, comfortable life." Atarah's advice for those on the fence about going to the Day Engagement Center at Whittier? "I definitely recommend going. It's a good place for anyone with issues they need help with – they helped me come a long way in just a few months."

Whittier's Day Engagement Center is open weekdays and Saturdays, providing a comfortable, safe space for unhoused and underserved adults. Staff utilize a therapeutic milieu approach to encourage healthier ways of thinking and to promote healthy lifestyles, while providing access to clinical and medical services.



**"Now more than ever, people need a place like our Day Engagement Center."**

— DIANA SENCION

*Day Engagement Center Manager*





# ECONOMIC INEQUITY

## Building a Strong Foundation for Our Future Leaders!

*Creating career opportunities and subsequent livable wages for students from low income families allows young people in underserved communities to actualize their potential. The Whittier circular model of care includes programs specifically designed to help community youth learn, thrive, and succeed.*

### **Whittier Youth Services Enrichment (WYSE) Program**

In collaboration with several community partners, WYSE offers primary care-based intervention for at risk youth ages 17-18 and connects them to a myriad of services, including Behavioral Health, Substance Abuse, Life Coaching, Domestic Violence, GED, and college placement programs.

### **Whittier Enrichment Program (WEP)**

WEP empowers young people to identify and act on issues that most affect them, such as employment, self-esteem, life skills, police brutality, gangs, teen homelessness, and substance abuse.

### **Youth Advisory Board (YAB)**

Whittier recruits young people to join our YAB, empowering them to take on leadership roles and plan an active part in improving their communities. The Board meets monthly and uses peer interviews, surveys, and research to develop healthy habits concerning exercise, nutrition, safer sex practices, mental health, and substance abuse.

### **Youth Violence Prevention**

Whittier's youth violence prevention services at the Alice Heywood Taylor Apartments in Roxbury offers young people in the apartments onsite access to a variety of much-needed services, including mental health counseling, fitness and recreation activities, and career readiness skills training. We train and place tenants to serve as Health Ambassadors and Social Health Coordinators and also train public housing youths as Peer Leaders and Youth Mentors.

### **Summer Youth Enrichment Program**

Whittier's Summer Youth Enrichment Program, launched in 2003, provides a day camp experience for children in an effort to meet the needs of working parents in the community. Throughout the six-week summer program, children ages 6 to 11 participate in sports and fitness activities, maintain and contribute to Whittier's Community Garden, participate in cooking classes and nutrition workshops, and receive mentoring about career opportunities and healthy lifestyles.



# HEALTH EQUITY AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

## Increasing Access

*Community Outreach and Health Education is at the core of closing gaps in life expectancy, addressing health inequities, and the pursuit of social justice. To that end, Whittier has developed a system that includes both on-site and off-site services to help patients overcome these barriers to care.*

### School-Based Health Services

The Whittier **School-Based Health Services** team provides health services to local students in Boston public schools, bringing accessible and culturally competent healthcare directly to young patients. Services address the medical and mental health issues that frequently interfere with students' academic success. Screenings are conducted for healthy weight, diabetes, blood pressure, vision, depression, and substance abuse for the early detection and prevention of chronic conditions.

Whittier currently manages an onsite School-Based Health Center at the Boston Day and Evening Academy and six school partners through its Mobile Health Van Teams.



**Boston Day and Evening Academy**

### Boston Health Equity Program (BHEP)

Whittier's **Boston Health Equity Program (BHEP)** was established in 2012 in response to disparities in life expectancy numbers between Roxbury and the Back Bay. The program integrates community outreach, wellness support, care management, and coordination in an effort to eliminate health disparities and their associated costs. BHEP prioritizes patients according to conditions to ensure that Whittier's multidisciplinary team of health care professionals can provide appropriate services. During 2023, the program was highlighted by the Boston Public Health Commission, WBUR, and other news outlets for its contributions in closing the life expectancy gap in Roxbury.

### Center for Health Equity Research

Whittier's **Center for Health Equity Research** works to facilitate improvements in health care delivery and health outcomes in order to eliminate health disparities. The Center focuses on issues impacting racial equity and explores solutions to address the systemic, institutional, and individual barriers that deny opportunities to groups based on race or ethnicity.

### Mobile Health Program

Our **Mobile Health Program**, launched in November of 2018, has grown from a single van to a fleet of five, including a Shuttle Van Service and a fully equipped Mobile Unit with two exam rooms, a bathroom, and a lab. This expansion of mobile service exemplifies Whittier's mission to bring high quality health and social services directly to patients.



### Telehealth Remote Patient Monitoring Initiative

Our **Telehealth Remote Patient Monitoring** Initiative simplifies how patients, physicians, and outreach clinicians track, monitor, and manage health conditions. The program targets Whittier patients who are at highest risk for hypertension and/or diabetes. Unique to this program is a Remote Patient Monitoring Hypertension System to allow patients to receive effective treatment in the comfort of their home. In addition, patients receive a free remote monitoring diabetes tool to communicate readings to Whittier clinicians in real time.





## Satellite Clinic

Established in June of 2017 in response to the abrupt closure of Roxbury Comprehensive and the realization that not all patients had access to the main Whittier site on Tremont Street, Whittier's **Satellite Clinic** on Blue Hill Avenue in Roxbury provides primary and preventive care to a diverse patient population. With a committed staff representing multiple cultural backgrounds, the Satellite Clinic provides a comfortable atmosphere for patients, encouraging their commitment to care.

"In addition to offering access to excellent primary care, the Satellite Clinic is designed to help eliminate social disparities," says Dr. Chichi Ojuka, DNP and Director of the Whittier Satellite Clinic. "Whittier recognizes that trauma, substandard housing, food insecurity, and lack of educational opportunities all play a role in a patient's ability to manage their health outcomes; in line with this the clinic runs successful diabetes and hypertension educational groups for both Spanish and English-speaking patients."

Abiezer Ayuso is one of the many patients taking good advantage of the diabetes group. "We talk about the disease, the good outcomes if you follow care plans, and the potential bad outcomes if you don't," says Abiezer, adding, "It's good to hear others share their issues; that way no one feels alone."

Javier Nieves knows all too well the damaging impact of diabetes.

"I've had amputations on my feet," says Javier. "Here I get the education and the information I need to make sure I can control my diabetes. They provide the information, but at the end of the day we have to make the right choices on our own."



**"We look at holistic treatment and build relationships with our patients because we understand the importance of making a connection with the people we serve; that connection is ultimately rewarding for both the patient and the provider."**

**— CHICHI OJUKA, DNP**

*Director of Whittier Satellite Clinic*



**Diabetes Prevention and Management Team pictured with patients Abiezer Ayuso and Javier Nieves.**

For Mayra Santos, the information provided by the clinic has helped her take control of the disease, while the camaraderie experienced as a member of the group "is comforting."

"They are all friendly, nice people who share the same problems and issues," says Mayra, noting that as a result of the education offered at the satellite clinic, she has lost weight, tests her blood sugar daily, never misses medication doses, and can move more easily.

The clinic also provides access to WIC services, nutritional counseling, and has a food pantry for its patients. Transportation to and from the main Whittier site is available for full health screenings, dental health and access to the fitness gym.

"The number of patients we serve has grown tremendously over the past six years we have been operational," says Chichi. "The new patient registrations continue to increase consistently – even during the pandemic. This tells us that the community outreach we are doing works and that we are making an impact within our neighborhoods."

# SOCIAL JUSTICE

## Addressing the Social Determinants of Health

Racial and ethnic injustice sadly continues to shine the light on health disparities and the pressing need for outreach programs to better support our diverse and underserved communities.

Food and nutrition insecurity persists for many reasons and, while poverty remains as the leading cause, lack of transportation options and so-called "food deserts" are also contributing factors. In neighborhoods where there is no public transportation, for those who don't have a vehicle and/or struggle with mobility, access to healthy, nutritious foods is out of reach.

The impacts of food insecurity are far-reaching – from chronic stress, nutrient deficiencies, behavioral and emotional issues, and poor brain development in children. Nutritional deficits increase the risk for several chronic diseases, including obesity, type II diabetes, heart disease, and early mortality.

The sad truth is that food insecurity has increased; one in 10 people live in poverty in this country. With a focus on the national Healthy People 2030 initiative, Whittier is working to increase economic stability

### In an effort to help combat food and nutrition insecurity in the communities we serve, Whittier Street Health Center offers the following programs:

#### Food Pantry

Launched in 2018, the goal of our Food Pantry program is to provide a reliable and accessible source of food and nutrition services that decrease food insecurity and promote healthy diets and healthy families. Patients are eligible for the program receive a Prescription for Groceries and receive groceries once a month. Each bag of groceries contains items from each food group and meet USDA standards.



#### WIC Nutrition Program

Whittier Street Health Center has a WIC office Prescription for Health Program and Weight Management Group on-site at our Tremont Street address. In addition, WIC staff visits our satellite clinic on Blue Hill Avenue and provides WIC service at Boston Medical Center and for two health center partners.



#### Fresh Truck Mobile Market

The mobile market program brings healthy foods closer to the communities that need it the most and comes to Whittier on Thursdays, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.





To help address the challenges facing many of our patients, Whittier offers several social justice programs including Youth Development, Prison Release, Men's Health, Women's Health, Housing Referrals, Day Engagement Center for the Unhoused, LGBTQ clinic, and Infectious Diseases and Special Populations programs.

Our Community Health Outreach staff members are out in the community five days a week at various high-risk locations. They interact, screen, and provide safe sex kits and pamphlets to individuals combatting homelessness, substance abuse, and food insecurity.

Health Ambassadors and Peer Navigators like **Nestor Castro**, are at the heart of the many programs offered.

A patient at Whittier Street Health Center since 2013, Nestor credits the Center for "helping me get better." His desire to assist others faced with medical and other challenges prompted him to become an ambassador at Whittier, presently with the Housing Services program.



### WHSC Community Garden:

On Thursdays throughout the growing season, Whittier patients can attend our Garden Club from 10 to 11 a.m. and receive a bag of freshly harvested produce.



"I provide lists of potentially available housing and help fill out applications," says Nestor. He also attends group sessions at Whittier so he can better understand certain health issues and bring that information to the people he meets.

In response to the disparities in the health of minority and low-income men, Whittier embarked on a strategic campaign to increase access to men. As a result of this commitment, nearly half of Whittier's patient population is now male, owing in part to ambassadors like Nestor. In addition to working in Housing Services, he is also a Men's Health Coordinator, helping to recruit men into the Men's Health program and serving as a role model.

"For me, social justice means listening – really listening – to the needs of people and working toward helping them," says Nestor. "We all want the same things but they come easier for some; at Whittier we try to close that gap."



**"Hunger hurts...  
in more ways than one."**

— **NESTOR CASTRO**

*Housing Services Volunteer, Men's Health Clinic*

# ADDRESSING CHRONIC CONDITIONS, WELLNESS AND PREVENTION



**"They take good care of me. I'm treated with kindness and respect... the way everyone should be treated."**

**— BEVERLY BOUGHTON**  
*Patient of Dr. Johnson*

**"It makes my day when a patient wants me to care for one of their family members – that makes me feel as if I am genuinely making a difference."**

**— DR. MICHELLE JOHNSON**  
*Internist, Adult and Geriatric Medicine*



## **Health Equity and Chronic Diseases – Educating and Empowering our patients and families to live their healthier lives!**

"Dr. Michelle has been a blessing for me," is how Beverly Boughton describes her connection with Dr. Michelle Johnson. A patient with Whittier for nearly 20 years, Beverly has had a number of clinicians treat her over time, all delivering the same sense of "safety and comfort" she receives from Dr. Johnson.

Beverly, who is originally from South Carolina, has dealt with a number of medical issues over the years, including hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol.

"My health is definitely managed better since coming to Whittier," she says. "I feel comfortable here and actually look forward to visits."

She also encourages others who live in her apartment building to go to Whittier.

"They take good care of me," says Beverly. "I'm treated with kindness and respect... the way everyone should be treated."

Dr. Johnson couldn't agree with Beverly more.

"People want to be heard and respected," she says. "Some of our patients don't experience that sense of being heard in other aspects of their lives, so its important they receive it at Whittier."

A member of the Whittier staff for the past 20 years, Dr. Johnson is well aware that patients' medical and emotional issues often go hand in hand.

"People may come in for a specific medical problem, but we understand that many are also dealing with major social challenges, like lack of housing and unemployment – at Whittier, we try to help with all their struggles. That's what sets us apart."





## Refugee and Immigrant Health Program

"Whittier has established itself as a sanctuary for immigrants," said Dr. Joseph DeMertine, lead physician of our Wellness and Disease Management Services program.

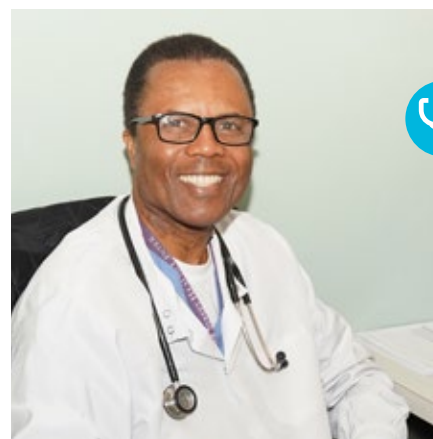
Accessing the health care system can be a daunting task for anyone, but for new arrivals to the Boston area, the challenges can be overwhelming. But as one of ten Refugee and Immigrant Health Centers in the Commonwealth, Whittier serves as a "gatekeeper and point guard to direct patients to a new medical system that is available to them," says Dr. DeMertine, a member of the Whittier staff for three years.

"People are uninsured, don't have transportation or the money to take the train – often they are undocumented, in fear of deportation and have justifiable trust issues," he says. "We try to make people feel safe from their very first welcome in the lobby."

And that sense of safety and trust is vital in order to treat chronic illnesses such as malnourishment, diabetes, and hypertension.

From processing insurance to transportation vouchers, access to Whittier's food bank, to in-house interpreters, the Wellness and Disease Management Services program treats the physical, emotional, and logistical needs of all patients.

"Needs are almost always overwhelming, but one by one, we address them," says Dr. DeMertine. "In general, we have a noble mission to provide a community-oriented environment where migrants don't have to fear discrimination or resistance."



**"There is no language of the world that is not spoken here – that alone makes everyone who visits Whittier feel comfortable and heard."**

**— DR. JOSEPH DEMERTINE**  
Lead Physician, Wellness and  
Disease Management Services

# Thank You, Donors

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(HRSA)  
Department of Housing and Urban  
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Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration (SAMHSA)



# Why Liberty Mutual Insurance Invests in Whittier

**Tim Sweeney**, *President & CEO of Liberty Mutual Insurance*

Our mission at Liberty Mutual Insurance “to help people live safer and more secure lives, embrace today and confidently pursue tomorrow” is at the core of our proud partnership with Whittier Street Health Center.

We live in a world where economic disparity not only exists but is growing. Quality, affordable, and accessible healthcare for all would make the world a better place, because without health, what do you have?

Whittier is truly **special and unique** and helps to reduce that increasingly wide divide in equitable health care. As a business leader, I am aware of the diminishing resources coming from the government – that gap needs to be filled by the private sector and companies like Liberty Mutual Insurance. We must step up and exercise leadership and compassion.

I'm hopeful for the future because you have to be an optimist in challenging times. I believe in the goodness of people and in the generosity of those, who like me, are in a position of privilege.

Whittier Street Health Center gives me hope and optimism for the future – it's a joy to partner with this outstanding organization, one that each and every day works to bring balance to disparity.



*“Whittier Street Health Center gives me hope and optimism for the future – it's a joy to partner with this outstanding organization, one that each and every day works to bring balance to disparity.”*

Whittier Street Health Center (WSHC) is a Joint Commission-accredited urban and NCQA recognized community health center providing primary and specialty health care, oral health, mental health and substance abuse counselling service. Our social and outreach services see more than 30,000 individuals from culturally and circumstantially diverse communities. WSHC operates within the dynamic of championing equitable access to high quality health care.

The health issues of the communities within the Whittier St. Health Center's service area are typical of populations living in poverty and/or with low access to health care. The area's specific indicators of ill health tend to be chronic in nature: diabetes, asthma and cardiovascular disease as well as lifestyle risk factors (poor nutrition, low exercise, high rates of smoking, lack of preventive care, poor dental hygiene) leading to poor health and a prevalence of chronic diseases, complications and co-morbidities, and high levels of depression, substance abuse and other behavioral health problems. These health issues are exacerbated by poverty and are prevalent among the South End/Roxbury public housing community.

Data obtained from the focus groups and community needs surveys were notable in showing that WSHC service area neighborhoods are struggling to obtain affordable housing, healthier food, mental health services, physical activity, and education and job opportunities.

There is increasing awareness that these issues are at the root of poor individual health status, community well-being and overall population health. A growing body of research shows that a small portion of one's overall health can be attributed directly to access to and quality of clinical care. The remainder is linked to genetics, **health behaviors, social and economic factors, and physical residential environments**. In addition, there are two cross-cutting issues that underlie the leading health priorities and that must be addressed to improve overall health status and reduce existing structural disparities:

- **Racism, discrimination, and health equity; and**
- **Health system issues (e.g., access, health literacy, cultural competency, care coordination, information sharing, health education, prevention, screening and workforce development).**



# YEAR IN REVIEW: RECOGNITION

## For Health Care Quality



**GOLD 2023**  
Check. Change. Control.  
Cholesterol™ for care of patients  
with high cholesterol



**GOLD 2023**  
Target: Type 2 Diabetes for care of  
patients with type 2 diabetes and  
cardiovascular risk factors



**SILVER 2023**  
For commitment to improving blood  
pressure control among adults



Certificate of Recognition with Distinction:  
Behavioral Health Integration



The Joint Commission renewed accreditation for  
Ambulatory Care and Behavioral Health

## Employee Recognition



**FY2023**  
**PRESIDENT'S AWARD**  
**RECIPIENT**  
**NAZAIRE NZIKOBA, FNP**

## For Frederica M. Williams, President & CEO



Lowell Richards Award  
for leadership across  
public, nonprofit, and  
for-profit sectors



100 Black Women for the  
*Black Women Lead* project



**American Red Cross**  
Massachusetts

**BOSTON'S 2023**  
**HEROES AWARD**  
**MELISSA LEASTON, RN**



*Celebrating Boston's  
Black Business Leaders*



Top 100 Women-Led Businesses  
by *Boston Globe*,  
for tenth consecutive year



2023 Joan Wallace Benjamin  
Leadership Award

YEAR IN REVIEW

# FY2023 Financial Report

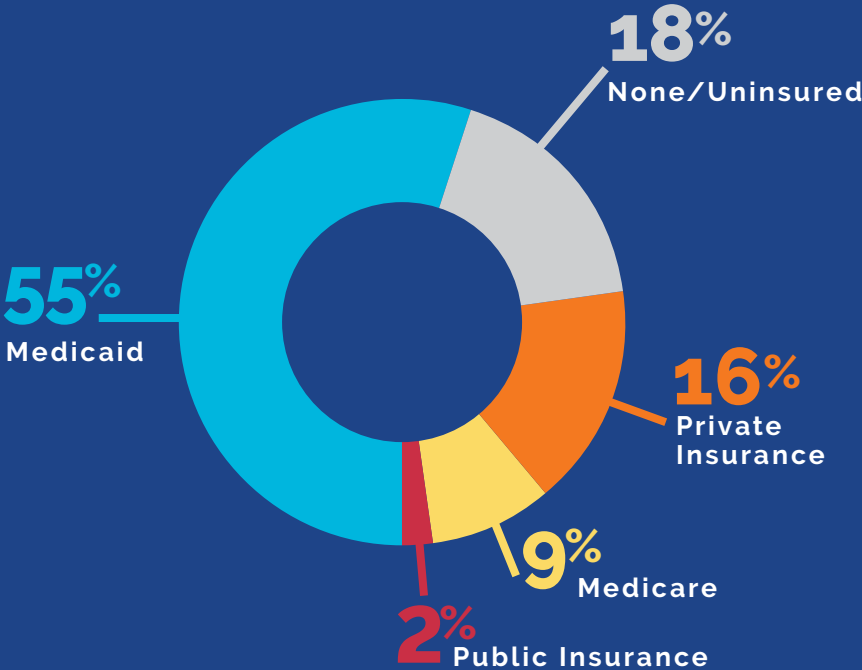


In FY2022, Whittier provided  
**\$2,428,333**  
in free health care

**100%**  
of social services  
were provided  
free of charge



### Patient Insurance Sources





# YEAR IN REVIEW

Quality health care is a human right, the foundation for economic opportunity, and the result of investments by funders and generous supporters. Bolstered by strong financial performance and continued viability, Whittier will continue mobilizing for health equity and social justice.

## Balance Sheet

### ASSETS

Current	\$ 25,558,751
Fixed Assets	\$ 28,899,700
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 54,488,451</b>

### LIABILITIES

Current	\$ 4,395,180
Long term	\$ 5,797,100
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$ 10,192,280</b>

### NET ASSETS

	\$ 39,705,749
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$ 54,448,451</b>

## Statement of Activities

### REVENUE

Patient Services Revenue	\$ 13,759,038
Grants and Contracts	\$ 13,847,957
Fundraising and Contributions	\$ 1,864,338
Other	\$ 4,042,202
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 33,513,535</b>

### EXPENSES

Clinical Programs	\$ 25,040,841
Administration and Finance	\$ 2,194,451
Facilities	\$ 2,521,749
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 29,757,041</b>

<b>NET OPERATING INCOME/(LOSS)</b>	<b>\$ 3,756,494</b>
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<b>NET NON-OPERATING INCOME(LOSS)</b>	<b>\$ 1,196,936</b>
---------------------------------------	---------------------

<b>CHANGE IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 4,953,430</b>
------------------------------------------	---------------------

# LEADERSHIP

## President & CEO

**FREDERICA M. WILLIAMS, MBA**

## Board of Directors

**ALICIA WEDDERBURN**, *Board Chair*  
Founder & CEO, Science Ed Consulting and  
Lead Science Coach, Boston Public Schools

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Semi-Retired Attorney

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**MONICA JOHNSON**  
Teacher/Lawyer, Boston Public Schools

**ANGEL SIMPSON**  
Retired Math & Science Teacher, Boston Public Schools

**CINDY WALKER**  
WSHC Patient

**AURELIA WILLIAMS**  
Retired City Employee

## Senior Leadership Team

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Senior Vice President & CFO

**STEPHEN WRIGHT, MD, MBA**  
Medical Director

**NURULLA DIYANAT, DMD**  
Dental Director

**CHRISTINE PAJARILLO, LICSW**  
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CEO, Corporate Consulting LLC

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**CRUZ MARTINEZ**  
Senior Director of Operations

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**PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**  
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# YEAR IN REVIEW

## Signature Events

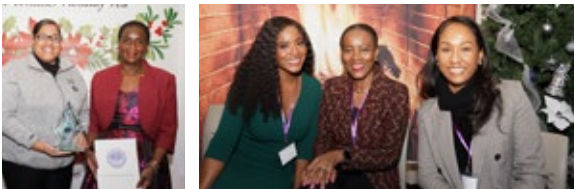
### Whittier's Roast of **David Long**

**Executive Chairman of the Board,  
Liberty Mutual Insurance**





## Women for Whittier Holiday Tea



## 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Men's Health Summit



## Hispanic Heritage Celebration

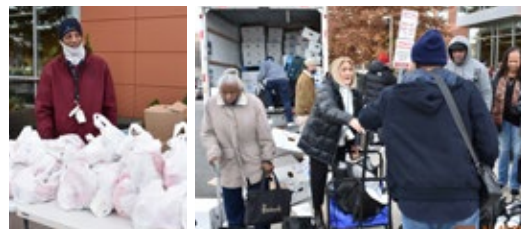




# Community and Health Events

## November 2022

- Turkey Giveaway



## December 2022

- Senior Holiday Event
- World AIDS Day



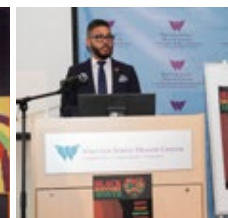
## January 2023

- Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service



## February 2023

- Black History Month Celebration
- National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day



## March 2023

- National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day



## April 2023

- Alcohol Awareness Month Kickoff Event
- National Minority Health Month
- National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day



## May 2023

- Community Garden Opening
- Mother's Day Celebration
- National Mental Health Awareness Month





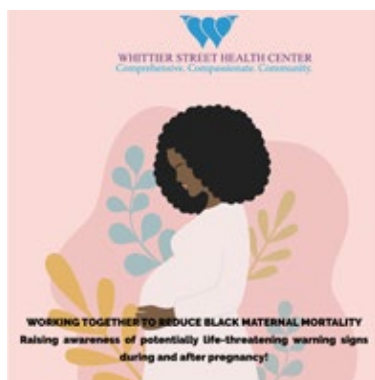
## June 2023

- Pride Month
- National HIV Testing Day
- Men's Health Summit/ Father's Day Celebration



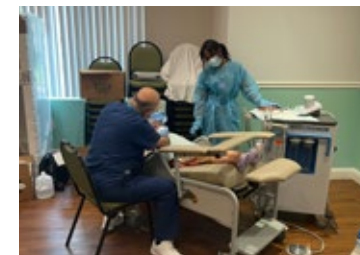
## September 2023

- It Takes a Village Event
- National Gay Men's HIV/ Awareness Day
- Centering Pregnancy Program



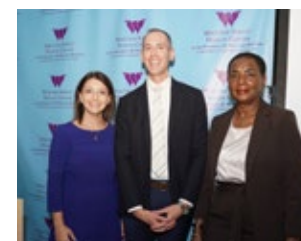
## August 2023

- National Health Center Week
- Dental Day at Camfield Estates
- Back to School BBQ
- Caribbean Carnival



## October 2023

- Boo to Bad Health
- Hispanic Heritage Celebration
- National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day Event
- Breast Cancer Awareness
- CDC visits to Kick Off Fall Vaccination Campaign



## November 2023

- Top 100 Women-Led Businesses Awards
- Slice of Thanks







## WHITTIER STREET HEALTH CENTER

Comprehensive. Compassionate. Community.

Whittier Street Health Center  
FREDERICA M. WILLIAMS BUILDING  
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(617) 427-1000

Whittier Street Health Center  
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278 Blue Hill Avenue  
Roxbury, MA 02119  
(617) 858-2550

[www.wshc.org](http://www.wshc.org)

Do you believe in health equity and  
racial justice for every resident of Boston?

**Then please support our work!**

GIVE  
BY MAIL:

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Frederica M. Williams Building  
1290 Tremont Street, Roxbury, MA 02120

GIVE  
ONLINE



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Read our online blog and CEO memos.

