SMOC Responds To COVID-19
Voices Against Violence

- 24/7 phone support hotline: 508-626-8686
- New web chat service at rc.chat/voices (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)
  - Many victims are now in a home with an abuser and cannot make a phone call. Web chat service to discreetly reach out to an advocate by typing on their computer or phone
- Voices shelter residents have been relocated to better maintain safe social distancing
  - Several residents are staying with family or friends
  - Remaining residents are at an extended stay hotel with kitchens
  - Voices provides food and personal hygiene products weekly
  - Staff are in daily contact with clients
Hotline calls now exceed normal volume
  ○ Averaging 7-10 calls/day
  ○ A higher volume occur in the middle of the night
Same number of new clients for sexual assault and down for domestic violence
Number of existing clients served is up slightly for sexual assault and nearly doubled for domestic violence

Voices Outreach and Prevention staff is:
  ○ working with schools to provide trainings for students at home
  ○ launching a new prevention initiative called Embracing New Voices, an effort to engage more men and boys in prevention work.
  ○ Preparing to host our DPH mandated 40-hour training online.
The outpatient clinic is continuing to deliver all of its services, counseling, medical, DAE groups, mental health and recovery groups all either in telephonic or video format.

Clinic is taking new referrals and doing evaluations.

Offering new mental health and recovery groups to all residential recovery programs and expanding to sober housing and congregate settings.

Established a hotline for teachers and families from Child Care/Suburban and continuing to support Head Start students and staff.

Hotline for peer recovery coaching for SMOC residential programs.

Residential Recovery Programs (Serenity, Sage, COE and Rhodes) are operating.

Still taking new referrals:

- Strict screening process
- Quarantine areas in each of the houses so new referrals can be isolated for 14 days.
Food and Toiletry Distribution

- With the United Way- Tri-County, SMOC is delivering 1000 meals a week to individuals and families in our Childcare/ Head Start Programs, Housing Continuum Residents, and Single Adult Shelters in Metrowest
- We have collaborated with the City of Framingham so these deliveries also include residents at Bethany Hill Apartments and Pelham Apartments, many of whom are recipients of SMOC services.
- The Islamic Society of Framingham is generously donating 100 hot meals twice a week
- United Way has set aside times for SMOC Case Managers to pick up food for clients they have referred
- We are working with the Metrowest YMCA to access any toiletry and cleaning supplies donations to deliver in addition to the meals
● As various alternative sites are developed in Lowell, Worcester, and Metrowest, providing sufficient meals will remain a priority that is incorporated into the planning process.

● We have already received a number of grants in Metrowest and Worcester that can be allocated specifically for food assistance as well as permission from some current funders to utilize remaining FY20 funds to provide for the food insecurity that has arisen due to COVID-19.
Food Drive
Staff at the single adult and the family shelters are working around the clock to care for the residents.

Several managers are working 24 hour shifts to give their staff a much needed break.

Residents are staying busy by:
- Decorating their doors
- Having dance parties

The shelters are working with behavioral health and the recovery support systems to help clients through this time.
Scattered Sites

Scattered Sites Family Shelter is generally used for homeless families with severe medical issues, older and/or many children. The families placed here have a high level of self-sufficiency such as employment or enrollment in an educational or training program.

Scattered Sites is still providing support to families by:
- Calling families on a daily basis
- Providing referrals for services such as: food pantries, behavioral and physical health, diapers, WIC, guidance when someone in the household becomes ill, etc.
- Completing Rehousing Plans on the phone
- Completing placements
- Sending ADA Accommodations as requested
- Safely conducting visits to the units when unable to reach families by phone
- Filing 51-A’s as needed and following-up with families that DCF has had concerns with.
- Assisting families with shelter transfers
• Turning Point is open and housing guests
• To keep guests and staff safe during the crisis:
  ○ Guests are staying on the premises
  ○ Guests are encouraged to wash their hands frequently and monitor any illness
  ○ Regular cleanings
• The shelter has received donations of food, soap, and games for the guests
• No overdoses during this time
• Staff have been amazing de-escalating tense situations and keeping a positive attitude
• Staff are happy and appreciate the extra compensation
Residents continue to receive case management services, including:
  ○ EADC applications
  ○ RAFT applications
  ○ housing search
Residents are mostly staying in the house
Working through problem of lack of privacy for therapist phone calls
  ○ Use empty office space
  ○ Need sound machines for privacy
The community has been donating food, including the church next door
Shadows & Meadows

- Shadows and Meadows are now staffed 24 hours a day during the week.
- The women are adjusting to social distancing and spending time:
  - Cleaning up the yard and preparing the garden
  - Taking walks by themselves
  - Assist staff in cleaning the common areas several times a day
  - Watching documentaries, movies and shows on Netflix

- The staff at the shelter have been wonderful and supportive.
GWHC is providing 24/7 shelter services at the Triage Center on Queen St.

Housing and stabilization services are mostly operating remotely.

Clients have been appreciative of the ongoing contact.

Services provided include: food, cell phones, referrals, check-ins, and support and encouragement as clients deal with the fear and unknown associated with the virus.

Staff have pitched in and demonstrated continuing teamwork and support for one another and our clients.

Demand for services:
- Housing stabilization is stable
- Shelter demand remains high
● Working with MEMA and the City of Worcester to identify a shelter depopulation site
● The second floor of our office building at 237 Chandler St has been outfitted with 35 beds in order to reduce the number staying at Queen St
  ○ This allows for social distancing among clients during sleeping and daytime hours
● GWHC has been experiencing COVID-19 related challenges:
  ○ A number of clients and some staff have tested positive
  ○ Despite these incredible hardships, the staff and clients are soldiering on.
Lowell Transitional Living Center

- 90 bed homeless shelter is open
- The Engagement Bed Program is also operating
  - Focused on testing, treatment and housing for individuals who are HIV-positive or high-risk negatives
- Case Managers are working with clients remotely via phone and email to continue housing search services
- Demand for services has remained level
- 201 residents can pick up lunches daily
Open Pantry-Springfield

- Open Door Social Services:
  - Remote case management, including housing search
  - Mail distribution to the City’s homeless population on Thursdays and Fridays

- Emergency Food Pantry:
  - 3 days a week - Tues/Weds/Fri

- Loaves and Fishes:
  - 7 days a week for to-go lunch and dinner

- Taking precautions to mitigate staff exposure and keep clients safe
- Emergency Food Pantry: Averaging 55-60 clients a day, which is a decline from normal demand.
  - Social distancing is implemented for Food Pantry services
- However, of the total clients served, there is a 40% increase in new clients.
- Loaves and Fishes: Demands for dinners have remained steady with a 25% increase for lunches
  - This increased activity may be attributed to our new meal to go model.
Community Support Services

- Continue to deliver care management and care coordination services
- The teams are checking in with clients daily via telephone, text message and email
- Case managers are also working at the shelters in Framingham, Marlboro, Lowell and Worcester
- Coordinating pick up of dry and canned goods, as well a grocery bag and prepared food delivery from the local food pantries

- Clients continue to be enrolled in the Behavioral Health Community Partners Program after being assessed by phone
- Phones were purchased and provided to some clients so that SMOC staff could check in with them
SELF HELP RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

In times of stress and disruption, it is important to care for ourselves and one another:

- **Use distractions to reduce anxiety** – take walks every day and use your senses to observe the world around you. Start a project or a chore you’ve put off for a long time. Tidy the house or begin a home improvement. Be sure to get regular sleep and exercise.

- **Be aware of the latest news and updates but try to limit the amount of time you spend focusing on the COVID 19 crisis every day. Understand that fear and anxiety are normal but if we expose ourselves to a constant stream of negative news it won’t help our mood. Don’t panic and try to take comfort in the communities that you belong to.**

- **Create and positive thoughts about the situation**, maybe you have saved money, re-connected with a friend or family, or finished a book. Try journaling or making a list of things you are thankful for. Go out of your way to help others.

- **Use FaceTime, conference calling or social media apps to provide support and organize recovery meetings.** Connect using the phone with friends, family and recovery supports.

**Remote Recovery Supports during COVID-19:**

**SAMHSA** - SAMHSA National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (6357), is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, information service, in English and Spanish, for anyone facing mental health and/or substance use disorders.

**AA Meetings Online:** - Meetings are available daily, check website for schedule.

**SMOC** - Meetings are available daily, check website for schedule.


At SMOC, our Peer Recovery Coaches are available via phone and text to provide extra support to those who may be feeling isolated, or cut off from their usual recovery pathways, whether one is new to recovery or not. We maintain a confidential safe space and no-judgment zone. Call or text Nicky Soames for enrollment 509-233-6672.
Housing Operations

- Housing staff continue to keep clients housed
- Mostly working remotely but are driving by to check on the properties
- Property Managers in constant communication with tenants and house managers to ensure that needs are being met with regards to food, cleaning supplies, and other concerns.
- Individuals in SRO Housing and Family Housing have experienced an increase rate of unemployment due to COVID-19
- Staff is assisting clients with unemployment and rental assistance applications
Family Services Continuum

- Housing Consumer Education Center’s staff are serving clients remotely via phone calls and emails
- Launched an online application process for individuals and families seeking financial assistance
- Demand for services as a result of the COVID-19 crisis has tripled.
- RAFT (Residential Assistance for Families in Transition) and ESG (Emergency Solutions Grant) program requirements have been relaxed to assist individuals and families affected by COVID-19.
Childcare

- Staff reaches out to families a few times per week for check-ins
- Private donation of $2,500 worth of games, arts and crafts supplies, puzzles, etc. to give to families in need
- Another donor gave new children’s books to hand out to families who come for food
- In addition to distributing meals, childcare families in need have also been given Market Basket gift cards
- Educators are using “Class Tag” to check-in with families at least a few times per week
- They send messages, sing songs, share resources and ideas, and talk with parents
● Staff were provided with the Chromebooks used in classrooms so they can work from home
● Toiletries were ordered for our families in need - including toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, soap, shampoo, conditioner, diapers, wipes, detergent, etc.
● We have seen a higher demand associated with dire needs for diapers/toiletries/cleaning supplies while food requests are being met
WIC is providing remote services including:
  - nutrition counseling
  - free healthy foods and baby formula
  - referrals to other services
  - individual/group breastfeeding classes for pregnant Moms via video conference
  - support groups for postpartum moms
  - assistance to WIC Participants who are having difficulties applying for MassHealth, SNAP, etc.

- WIC Debit Cards are loaded remotely with healthy foods and baby formula
- Seeing a 50% increase in online applications for WIC services
Services are easier to enroll in because the program has waived some of the State and Federal WIC requirements, making it simpler for first-time applicants to get WIC services/benefits, as well as it being more convenient for current Participants to keep receiving WIC services/benefits.

Websites:
- https://www.facebook.com/Framingham.Waltham.WIC
- www.mass.gov/wic
Maintenance

- Facilities staff are working tirelessly to keep environments safe, clean and well-supplied
- Responding to all service calls, prioritizing health and safety calls
- Responding to all agency delivery requests for supplies and food throughout the state
- They are preparing 3 potential temporary overflow/ depopulation shelters
- No reports of sick or ill team members
- High risk team members are not being utilized
- Team morale remains high
IT staff’s hard work has enabled SMOC staff to be able to work remotely.

- Expanded cable television services for shelters to include programming such as The Disney Channel and Nickelodeon.
- Provided computers to shelters for client use.
- Added WiFi and Internet access for shelters to meet homeschooling and other client needs.
- Provided over 60 cellphones to case management for clients who had no means of communication.
- Expanded usage of virtual meeting rooms for staff team to utilize.
Human Resources

- New HR hotline: 978-431-0285
  - Employees can talk to HR staff members about benefits, online access to paystub, direct deposit and more
- Refer staff seeking support to resources including our EAP program, health care providers and SBH
- Weekly video conference chat at noon on Wednesdays, to connect with and support employees
Planning & Compliance

- FY 2021-2023 Community Assessment Report & Strategic Plan
- CSBG FY 2019 6-Month Community Action Plan Report
- HUD-funded Continuum of Care Project Annual Performance Reports
- Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) annual reports
- Tracking/monitoring supplemental Covid-19 funding for CSBG and other programs
- E-learning thru agency’s Relias online training platform and client databases
Fuel assistance numbers are up slightly
Higher benefit amounts being awarded due to the loss of income in many of the households we serve
Applications can now be processed via email or phone
The deadline has been extended until May 31st

The Fuel Assistance staff has adjusted very well to continue providing assistance as quickly and efficiently as possible (They have even received a few pictures of thank you cards through email).
Weatherization

- There has been a decrease in business operations due to the nature of this work which requires entering people’s homes and contracting with vendors
- Appliance deliveries are temporarily on hold
- There have been a few heating system emergencies and staff have been able to resolve them quickly.
- DHCD is exploring the possibility of allowing for virtual audits in the Weatherization Programs, but nothing has been approved yet.
Both Federal and State Voucher programs are fully operational.

All staff are working remotely and adjusting to completing their work with less paper and more PDFs and email.

There has been a large increase (around 30%) in needs for rent shares to be reduced due to loss of income. These requests are processed as quickly as possible.

HUD and DHCD have provided waivers for a number of regulations in response to COVID-19, recognizing the hardships people will encounter (both clients and staff) by trying to obtain proper documentation and follow requirements of the program (i.e., performing a housing inspection).
Employment support programs are still operational, with participants enrolled in the CIES and Secure Jobs Programs receiving support via teleconference and emails.

The Transportation Program has been suspended due to the lack of eligible riders.

Employment support programs using teleconference and email to continue to work with clients.

Staff is researching and developing more online training resources.

DTA has suspended the work-search requirement for their beneficiaries at this time.

Anticipating a substantial increase in demand for services over the next 6 – 12 months due to high unemployment rates.
Joan Brack Adult Learning Center

- Joan Brack Adult Learning Center is offering virtual classes for ESL and HiSet students.
- Students have been responsive and are adapting well to online learning.
- Green Jobs Academy is also offering online training:
  - There is an increased demand for online classes.
  - Many contractors are no longer able to work in the field, so they are taking advantage of virtual learning/education.
Real Estate Development

- Current projects continue to move forward while maintaining all expected construction safety measures and best practices related to COVID-19.
- Renovation of 10-12 Roxanna Street and the realization of the Framingham Community and Cultural Center is moving along at a brisk pace.
- On target to complete all major portions of the renovation by Labor Day and hope that we are able to stay on this track for the foreseeable future.
- Other projects continue to push forward.
- Await word on funding for several other opportunities (e.g. 30 Winfield Street, Worcester project).
- In the late planning stages of executing significant capital improvements across much of the housing portfolio, which will help maintain safe and affordable housing opportunities for our most vulnerable populations.
Resource Development

COVID Emergency grants:
* 7 received, totaling $120,000
* 2 submitted, totaling $30,000
* 2 planned, totaling $60,000
* 6 individual gifts, totaling $3,100

Program grants:
* 2 grants received for our Nutrition program, totaling $16,000
* Community Income Tax Credit (CITC) program renewal of $200,000 for FY2020
* 5 grants submitted for JBALC, Behavioral Health/Peer Recovery Coaches, SMOC Financial Services, Capital Repairs, and Suburban/Framingham Community Center, totaling $71,500 in requested funding
* 3 grants planned - 2 for JBALC and one for capital repairs, totaling $115,000 in planned requests
We would like to express our gratitude to all of our staff, especially those on the front-lines in our 24-hour programs, for all their incredible work and dedication. We also thank the Board for their service and continued support.