**CRC Advisory Minutes**

3/11/20

**Present:** Amanda Blomberg-Faura, Florenny Cabrera, Emily Doerr, Erin McLeod, Katelyn O’Connor,Hannah Perry, Kalina Sabeva, Bianca Viazzoli.

**Excused:** Jacqueline Walter, Glynis Wood

**Advisory members’ action steps/follow-up requests:**

* **Please share minutes with your team in full or in part as you deem appropriate.**
* **Before next meeting please ask if your team has any feedback, questions, project ideas, resource sharing or topic suggestions for staff meeting review.**

**Next meeting: Thursday, June 10, 12 noon – 1pm**

***Style note****- Agenda in black text; discussion, further information and tasks in* ***purple****.*

**Membership Changes**

* **Welcome Florenny Cabrera** (ID team)!Kalina Sabeva will be stepping down.
* Amanda Blomberg-Faura announced she will be leaving at the end of March.
* Big thanks to Kalina and Amanda for your contributions to the committee! We’ll miss you!

**CRC Updates**

* **Request for “Overview of Community Resources” handout for Maine, Rhode Island and maybe upstate New York** (teams A&B) **–** [Maine version](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/Basic%20Needs/Overview%20of%20Community%20Resources-MAINE.pdf) completed and posted to website. Rhode Island to follow. (New Hampshire version shared last meeting.)
* **Overview of Community Resources** **(MA)** **Spanish Translation** - we revised and simplified language and sent to translator in early February. She apologizes for the delay; hoping to complete it shortly. Update! We’ve received the translation and it has been posted to our [website](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/Basic%20Needs/Overview-Community-Resources-SPANISH.pdf) and crossed-referenced throughout.
* **Gateway instructions** – Found pre-existing; see on our **website** - **keyword**:
  + Gateway: Patient Gateway [Enrollment Instructions](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/MGH%20I&R/Gateway-Enroll_MGB.pdf)

**Team feedback, questions, project ideas, training needs and/or resource sharing?**

* **Affordable air transport**– member asked about a volunteer pilot program. Please see our [Air Transportation](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/Basic%20Needs/BN_Transportation.html#AirTransport) list, Note on p 1 about a program that says they can connect patients to all available programs “**Patient Travel Referral Patient Travel Referral**, a program of Mercy Medical Angels, provides referrals to help available from the **national charitable medical transportation network**. Referral Request: [www.patienttravel.org/](http://www.patienttravel.org/) Note: all referrals are processed through the website.”
* **Special assistance for patients with disabilities traveling through Logan airport?** (Blake 11 pts) SW is familiar with the **Logan Airport Medical Patient Assistance Program (LAMPAP)** program (Massport program created to alleviate the arrival and departure-related stress of traveling through Boston Logan for passengers and their companions who come to Boston for medical assistance. More information: [LAMPAP](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/news/2019/1-Newsletter.html#LAMPAP)). Unfortunately, it doesn’t fully meet the needs of patients with mental health concerns and we aren’t aware of other options. Perhaps with additional advocacy they can modify their program? [Ellen](mailto:MSanchez@massport.com) to follow up with member and connect with MGH Disability Manager (Zary Amirhosseini) as appropriate.
* **Medical Escorts** – thanks for reporting broken links
  + Corrected broken link in: Escorts, Medical- [patient handout](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/Basic%20Needs/medical%20escorts%20handout.pdf) and link to [Escorts, Medical](https://www.massgeneral.org/social-service/programs-resources/transportation/) (see "In need of a medical escort?")
  + Unfortunately, limited options for free/low cost. For Boston Residents: [**Friendship Works**](http://www.fw4elders.org/)- **Boston Residents only** (formerly Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers) 617-482-1510.
  + For non-Boston residents this is challenge especially for short distances/times or if request is for medical observation- may be beyond the scope. This is a service gap- no simple answer. May need to be communicated back to medical teams, perhaps discussed at administrative levels.
  + CM colleague had shared that these two agencies offer medical escorts: Ezra home care, Senior Bridge.
    - Bianca subsequently researched- these are both private pay agencies that do not have free or low-cost services. Note that most if not all private homecare agencies will offer this service for a fee.
    - Note that when the CRC refers to private pay programs we include a disclaimer to avoid impression we’ve vetted or are endorsing: *This list is not comprehensive; there may be other options in your area. Mass General Hospital does not endorse any non-Mass General affiliated facilities.*
* [**PCA handout**](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/SpecificPopulations/PCA_Handout.pdf) **has broken links** – now updated. Thanks for reporting!
* **Request for handout about benefits for children after parental death-** CRC to research and if appropriate resource doesn’t already exist, create a Social Security Survivor’s Benefits handout
* **MA Paid Family and Medical Leave Act**
  + Request for **pt handout** and, if possible, translation into other languages. Program is complex, challenging to simplify for handout, but CRC will investigate feasibility.
  + **Staff meeting presentation?** Address details such as people who didn’t earn enough, interaction with unemployment.
* **Individual Shelters** – is list updated? Shelter status for the most part has not changed, but the latest information we have will always be updated on our [Shelters](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/SpecificPopulations/SP_HomelessNEWShelter.html) page. **See the aqua-colored “COVID** **Specific Content” box** (look for the aqua-colored box throughout the site for COVID specific content.)
* **Providing pre-paid phones to certain homeless pts** request from December meeting- any update?
  + **Update:** Dept has purchased a limited number of phones to trial with the ED SWs. If successful, we can weigh-in on where pilot extends to next.
* **Resource sharing:** **Tech Goes Home**- virtual currently, teach people to use tech, the internet, how to use computer; participants can keep computer if they complete program. All ages. CRC to research and include in newsletter and website. Thanks for sharing!

**Community Resource/Public Benefits Updates**

* **Correction: New MA Paid Family Leave Law- where to apply?**
  + Last meeting prior to roll-out the information I had was to apply through your employer. New information – **apply on the state’s PFML website** <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-apply-for-paid-family-and-medical-leave-pfml>. You do need to notify your employer, 30 days notice if feasible, and employer should have a designated administrator to work with state.
* **SSDI 5 month waiting period eliminated for those with ALS** 
  + **From our** [**SSI/SSDI**](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/Basic%20Needs/BN_PB-CA_SSI-SSDI.html) **page: **Ineligibility/Waiting Period****
    - **There is a five month period of ineligibility (AKA "waiting period"), after the date the disability began** (as determined by Social Security) before SSDI benefits are due. The first SSDI benefit will be due for the sixth **full month**after the date of disability onset. **NEW exception - patients with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)**
    - **ALS exception**- in the final days of 2020 the **ALS Disability Insurance Access Act** was signed into law that eliminates the five-month waiting period for individuals with ALS. **The provision applies to applications for disability insurance benefits filed after the date of the enactment - December 22, 2020.**
    - Prior to the new law, SSA had an expedited approval process, but it meant only that an individual could receive SSI and Medicaid. They still had to wait five months to qualify for Social Security disability benefits. **In addition, an individual approved for SSDI benefits for ALS becomes eligible for Medicare at the same time.** (Most other individuals must wait two years for Medicare eligibility.) ***Source:***[*The National Law Review*](https://www.natlawreview.com/article/als-disability-insurance-access-act-eliminates-waiting-period-social-security)*, February 2, 2021 and on the*[*SSA website*](https://www.ssa.gov/legislation/legis_bulletin_122220.html)*.*
* **Public Charge- Rules Will Revert to Pre-Trump Changes**
  + **Background (from our** [website](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/SpecificPopulations/SP_Immigrants_PublicBenefits.html#publiccharge)**)** 
    - **Public Charge** describes persons immigration service believes will become primarily dependent on public benefits. Depending on your immigration status, the USCIS and State Department consular officers abroad can refuse to let you enter the U.S., re-enter the U.S., or become a permanent resident, if they think you will not be able to support yourself without these benefits in the future.
    - **Rules in effect since roughly 1999.**
    - **Only applies in certain circumstances- many immigrants are not subject to public charge**
    - **The Trump Administration changed the rules to include wider array of benefits in the public charge test**
      * **Added SNAP, federal housing benefits and Medicaid with certain exceptions**
      * **Vast majority of those eligible for these programs are NOT subject to public charge**
      * **BUT chilling effect was strong- many eligible people unnecessarily withdrew from programs or refused to apply for much needed nutrition and other assistance**
  + **On March 9th,** the U.S. Department of Justice decided to stop defending in court the Trump Administration public charge regulations. As a result, pending legal appeals were dismissed, including by the Supreme Court.
    - **The Trump Administration’s 2019 public charge rule is blocked nationwide.**
    - The 1999 version will be in effect.
  + **1999 Rules to Resume – more limited scope of benefits considered**
    - Public charge is concerned with **cash assistance** (receipt of SSI, TANF/TAFDC or EAEDC) or whether you will require **long-term care at public expense** (Medicaid for long-term care).
    - **Public charge is NOT a concern for:**
      * Immigrants receiving **non-cash benefits** such as health care (except for Medicaid for long-term care), SNAP, WIC, housing, fuel assistance, child care vouchers, Emergency Disaster relief, school lunch, P-EBT, and more
      * Immigrants who are **applying to become citizens** (generally public charge is only a concern for those who **do not yet have** Legal Permanent Resident/Green Card status) with one exception: LPRs who travel outside the US for more than 180 days (LPRs who’ve received cash assistance should consult an experienced attorney before traveling outside the US for more than 180 days).
      * Refugees or persons granted asylum
      * Immigrants receiving cash payments that have been **earned**, such as Title II Social Security benefits (SSDI, retirement, survivor's benefits), government pensions, veterans' benefits and unemployment compensation.
      * Other green card applicants where public charge does not apply
        + Including Registry, Suspension & Cancellation of Removal, Special Immigrant Juveniles, and in special adjustment of status cases (HRIFA, NACARA, Cuban Adjustment Act, Lautenberg, battered spouses/children of USCs/LPRs, U and T visa beneficiaries)
* **COVID Vaccine Related (see our** [**COVID page**](http://healthcare.partners.org/ss/ssframebottom/staffresources/New%20Site/Basic%20Needs/BN_Disaster%20Response-Coronavirus2020.html) **for more)**
  + **Transport – PT-1** (emailed to Dept)
    - PT-1 transportation can be used to vaccine appointments for people with ANY type of MassHealth (including family assistance, Children’s Medical Security Program and Limited) AND people with Health Safety Net. (Undocumented immigrants are eligible for MassHealth Limited and Health Safety Net if otherwise eligible.)
    - PT-1 can be submitted by providers as usual OR **members (or caregivers) can call MassHealth directly** at 800-841-2900 (TTY: 800-497-4648)
    - Senior Care Options, One Care plan or Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) members should continue to contact their health plan or PACE provider for transportation.
  + **New Vaccine Pre-Registration:** the state is launching a new site ([mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine](https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine)) on Friday that allows vaccine pre-registration. **Unfortunately, at this time it only includes the 7 mega vaccination sites. State is promising it will be adding additional sites.**
    - Eligible residents will complete an online form to request a vaccine, and can select if they want to be contacted by text message, email or **a phone call**. They will then be notified when an appointment becomes available, and will have 24 hours to accept it before being sent back into the queue to wait for another.
    - Family members and caregivers will be allowed to fill out the form as needed. Those who are unable to access the internet or need help to fill out the online forms can also call 211 to preregister.
  + **Scheduling assist and new pre-registration assist**for those with limited computer access/literacy, limited English proficiency, etc.
    - **MA Residents: Dial 211 (or 877-211-6277)**and select the prompt for help with scheduling an appointment.
    - **Hours** extended (as of 2/13): **Monday to Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.** **Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**
    - Callers will be asked to confirm that they are vaccine eligible and that they’re having trouble with the website. Live call center workers will be available who can speak both English and Spanish, and translators are available about 100 additional languages.
    - **Boston Residents age 65+ - call the Age Strong Commission at 617-635-4366** or dial 311 and ask to be connected to Age Strong.
* **New Stimulus Package** 
  + The IRS has said it will issue information and details on the distribution of this third payment once the bill is signed into law by President Biden.
  + **Stimulus payments** Individuals earning up to $75,000 and couples earning up to $150,000 would receive the full direct payments of $1,400 per person. plus $1,400 payment for each dependent claimed on their tax returns. Senate Democrats agreed to lower the income cutoff at which payments phase out from $100,000 to $80,000 for individuals, and from $200,000 to $160,000 for couples filing jointly.
  + **Supplemental unemployment insurance of $300 weekly**, which was set to expire later this month, will be extended until at least September.
  + **Temporary expansion of the Child Tax Credit**- expands the credit from $2,000 per dependent to $3,000 per child aged 7 to 17 and $3,600 for every child under 6. The updates to the tax credit allow it to be advanced to parents in monthly payments of $250 to $300, as opposed to once annually through their tax returns. Children must be 17 or younger, have a Social Security number and live with the parent for at least six months during the year to be eligible for the payment. According to [Kiplinger](https://www.kiplinger.com/taxes/602378/senate-passes-3000-child-tax-credit-for-2021), if Biden signs the package this week, the payments will go from July through December, with parents receiving a total of $1,800 for children aged 7 to 17 and $1,920 for younger children. Parents can claim the rest on their 2021 tax returns.
  + **Additional provisions** include increases for fuel assistance (LIHEAP), will extend, through September, a 15 percent increase in SNAP benefits from December’s relief package that is slated to expire in June, allows states to extend P-EBT through the summer and the end of the pandemic, and a temporary boost in WIC (for 4 months).
  + **Rental assistance** - $25 billion for emergency rental assistance, including $5 billion for emergency housing vouchers for people experiencing homelessness, survivors of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking.

**Next Meeting: Thursday June 10, 12-1, via Zoom**