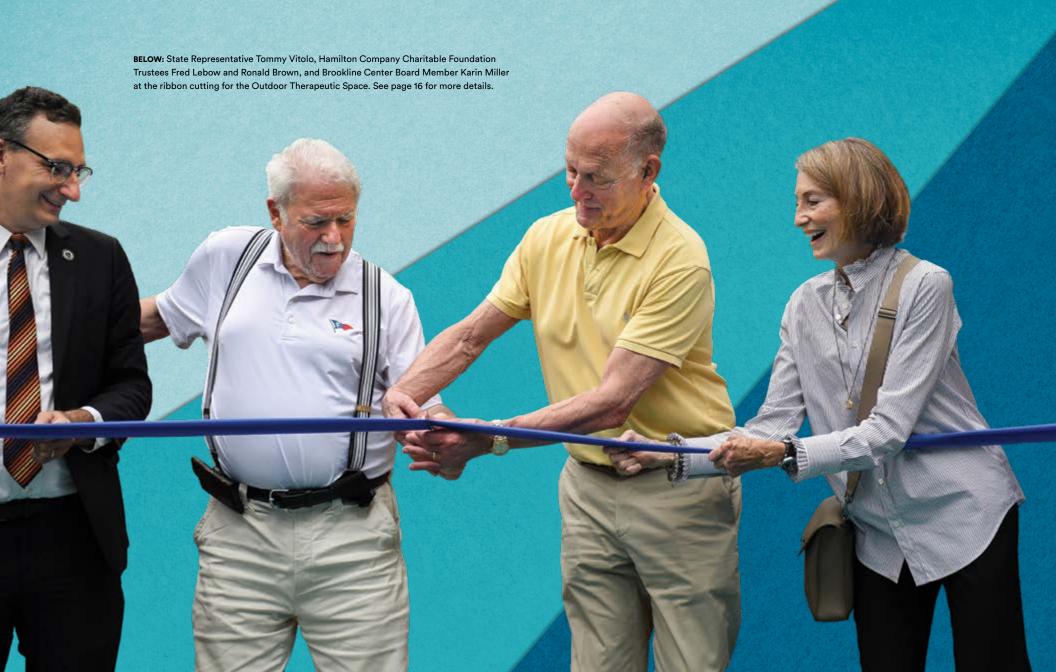
THE BROOKLINE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

# transforming together



## **DEAR FRIENDS,**

In 2024, we continued our critical work addressing one of the most urgent challenges in mental health: ensuring that effective, equitable care reaches everyone in need. Despite years of advocacy by public health officials and calls for increased resources, the number of people experiencing mental health struggles continues to rise, as does the number of individuals unable to access the care they deserve.

At The Brookline Center, our mission is to transform the mental health system. Our Innovation Institute builds upon our traditional community mental health model, creating a dynamic hub for designing and scaling groundbreaking programs and services that you will read about in these pages. Delivering outstanding, compassionate care is at the heart of everything we do, and through the Institute's work and your partnership, we are expanding our reach with much of The Brookline Center's work now extending statewide.

Throughout this report, you will learn about your impact—from the state's \$13 million investment in our bryt program to our exciting work in early psychosis. We are immensely proud of all that we have accomplished together, and ready for all that comes next. Together, we are fighting for a future where mental health care is accessible to all.

Increasing access to care is an ongoing, collective effort. Whether you're a Brookline Center donor, community partner, funder, healthcare provider, advocate, volunteer, or staff member, your contributions are vital and we are grateful for your continued partnership.

As we look ahead, we are driven by purpose and commitment. Together, we will continue to advance the work of transformation, creating lasting change for both those we serve and the mental health system as a whole.

With heartfelt thanks from all of us at the Center,

lan Lang, Chief Executive Officer

Kathy Gardner, Board President



For some students struggling with mental health conditions, the school year will be interrupted by an extended absence. But thanks to an unprecedented \$13 million investment by Governor Maura Healey and the Massachusetts Legislature, students at more than 45 schools across Massachusetts. will have access for the first time to The Brookline Center's bryt program. In particular, the funds are accelerating bryt expansion in economically challenged and under-resourced communities, including Boston, Brockton, and Springfield.

bryt (pronounced "bright") transforms how schools support students who have experienced a mental health disruption. Using its signature model for support, bryt helps schools implement effective interventions that enable students to successfully transition back to school after a mental health crisis. Since its launch in 2004 at Brookline High School, bryt has reshaped how schools statewide approach student mental health. Now active in over 200 schools across Massachusetts, bryt has helped thousands of students successfully resume their education with more than 85% of program participants completing their academic year and continuing to the next grade or graduation.

In announcing the investment, Governor Healey highlighted the growing need for programs like bryt. "Far too many young people in Massachusetts have been affected by a growing mental health crisis that was only amplified by the pandemic," she said. "Every student should have the support needed to balance their mental health and education. Expanding bryt is a critical step that is bringing us closer to that goal."

"With schools facing budget cuts due to the end of federal COVID-19 relief and rising costs, it's become increasingly difficult to introduce critical interventions like bryt—even though they're more needed than ever," said Paul Hyry-Dermith, Director of bryt. "We're proud to be able to support these additional schools with the funding they need to launch and sustain bryt programs."

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the program's founding at Brookline High School, and efforts are underway to create a pathway for schools nationwide to bring bryt to their students. The bryt national team is developing a strategic framework for scaling the program, with initial expansion targeted in Connecticut, New York, Ohio, and Rhode Island.

"Far too many young people in Massachusetts have been affected by a growing mental health crisis that was only amplified by the pandemic. Every student should have the support needed to balance their mental health and education. Expanding bryt is a critical step that is bringing us closer to that goal."

**GOVERNOR MAURA HEALEY** 

## **LEARN MORE**



For more information about Massachusetts's historic bryt investment visit here: www.brooklinecenter.org/bryt-expansion

# We Are Transforming Parent Mental Health

Expanding access to services beyond individual therapy, The Brookline Center's network of group therapy programs is creating new pathways to mental health support for overwhelmed parents. "Our parenting groups are designed to meet families' needs with a variety of approaches, allowing parents to find the support that resonates most—whether they're looking for practical, strategic skills, or a more self-reflective process that explores how their own upbringing shapes their parenting style," says Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jessica Stern.

The wellbeing of parents is essential to raising healthy families. In a recent advisory, former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy highlighted the urgent need for more mental health support for parents and caregivers. An alarming 41 percent of parents reported that "most days they are so stressed they cannot function" and 48 percent said that "most days their stress is completely overwhelming." Prolonged stress can significantly impact a parent's mental health, which, in turn, affects the health of their families and increases the risk of anxiety and depression for their children.

Community support is an important aspect of the Center's parenting groups. Outpatient Clinician and Child and

Adolescent Group Program Manager Erin Wagner explains, "When caregivers don't have the space to share challenges in their lives when it comes to parenting—especially when there is fear of judgment, or it feels as if nobody else can relate—it leads to feelings of isolation. Our parenting groups are an intentional space of connection and shared experience that combat isolation with belonging and support."

When parents receive support, the whole family experiences its ripple effects. For instance, in the Center's Supportive Parenting of Anxious Childhood Emotions (SPACE) program, parents learn techniques to adjust their response to their child's anxiety, which in turn helps reduce the child's anxiety levels. Similarly, our Circle of Security Parenting Group supports caregivers in creating secure relationships with their children. Parents work to understand their child's emotional world by learning to read their emotional needs, supporting their child's ability to successfully manage emotions, and enhancing their child's self-esteem.

"Programs like Circle of Security Parenting are particularly effective, focusing on primary prevention—helping parents address challenges early—rather than waiting for a crisis to develop," says Dr. Stern.

When parents receive support, the whole family experiences its ripple effects.



The Center offers a range of parenting groups tailored to support different goals and approaches.

- Circle of Security Parenting Group: helps parents create emotionally secure relationships to support their children.
- Supportive Parenting of Anxious Childhood Emotions (SPACE): a parent-based treatment program for children and adolescents with anxiety.
- Inside Parenting: a group for parents to consider their childhoods, values, and what they bring into parenting through exercises, discussion, and peer and therapeutic support.
- Drop-In Caregiver Open Support Group: support for Center clients and caregivers of Center youth clients focusing on community connection, self-reflection, and sharing ideas and perspectives.

## **LEARN MORE HERE**

www.brooklinecenter.org/parenting-groups/

We Are Transforming
Family Wellbeing

Not long after moving her family back to Brookline, Emily Foster Day noticed that her first-grader, Beckett, was having a harder time adjusting than she had expected. He was acting out in class and expressing a lot of anxiety at home. His struggles at school signaled he needed more help than she could provide at home, and his pediatrician suggested that Emily turn to The Brookline Center for support.

"When Beckett went from being happy and effervescent to completely dysregulated, it caught me by surprise," said Emily. "I felt lost. I didn't understand what was happening or how I could help him."

Beckett began seeing a therapist at the Center who helped him understand and manage the feelings he was experiencing. With careful coordination with Beckett's guidance team at his school, Beckett's classroom experience improved. By the end of second grade, Beckett was making great progress.

But Beckett's parents' divorce brought new emotional challenges for the entire family. Weekly therapy sessions became a lifeline for everybody, with Beckett working through his anger, younger sister Piper coping with panic attacks, and Emily seeking guidance on how to support her children while managing her own stress.



"The Center has been our second home. The clinicians are exceptional, consistently going above and beyond in ways
I've never experienced anywhere else."

When the COVID pandemic hit, the family's world was further upended. The sudden shift to remote learning and constant togetherness at home created new stresses.

These challenges, combined with the emotional strain from the divorce, overwhelmed the family. The Brookline Center provided invaluable support with a combination of individual, parent, and family therapy to help them navigate this difficult time.

"The Center has been our second home for a long time. The clinicians are exceptional, consistently going above and beyond in ways I've never experienced anywhere else," said Emily. "They take care of the complexities around things like health insurance so you can focus entirely on what matters most: your family's wellbeing."

Today, each member of the family has found their footing. Beckett is a high school sophomore, already thinking about college applications. In June, he graduated from therapy and had the honor of sharing his story at The Brookline Center's Kids Fund Gala. Twelve-year-old Piper is in middle school and diving into her passions for art and volleyball. Emily has settled into a new job and found a renewed sense of balance.

"This was a good year, 2024. We've finally reached a place where everyone is doing well. Because of The Brookline Center, my kids have gained incredible life skills and coping strategies that will carry them through the rest of their lives," said Emily.



Primary care integration has been identified as a vital tool to advancing mental health and wellness and improving the position of mental health in the healthcare system. However, primary care providers are often stretched thin, and referring patients for additional mental health support is challenging due to limited availability. The impact of adding onsite mental health staff is also limited as their caseloads quickly hit maximum capacity.

To help meet the growing demand for care, The Brookline Center with the support of Accelerate the Future is piloting a new approach using the Collaborative Care Model (CoCM). Integrating mental health services directly into primary care settings, the model improves care access and enhances clinical outcomes.

Collaborative Care offers a patient-centric, evidencebased integrated care model designed to identify and treat patients by a team of healthcare providers working together to deliver comprehensive and coordinated mental health support. Care teams create personalized treatment plans that may include medication, therapy, behavior modification, and social support. Research shows this approach improves

LEFT: Dr. Caitlin King, behavioral health care manager Zoë Schefter, and Dr. Laura DeGirolami provide integrated care to patients at Centre Pediatrics in Brookline.

symptom management, reduces hospitalizations, and engages patients and families in the care process, thereby enhancing treatment effectiveness.

"Our approach is guided by one simple question: how can we help providers better meet people's needs where they are already accessing care," said Innovation Institute Director of Implementation and Special Projects, Stephanie Trilling, who oversees the pilot project. "By adding mental health professionals to the primary care team, we can more effectively help individuals and families make progress towards their health and mental health goals."

In addition to expanding access and improving clinical outcomes, Collaborative Care leads to higher treatment initiation and completion rates, faster time to clinical improvements, greater patient and provider satisfaction, and reduced healthcare costs. Early signs suggest CoCM also creates a financially sustainable model for both patients and providers.

At the outset of the pilot, the Center partnered with an Arlington-based family care practice and a pediatric practice in Brookline. Nearly 80% of youth patients treated by the CoCM team have reported positive outcomes.

"We're not just opening doors to care, we're seeing real changes in our patients' lives," said Trilling. "At one site, we had a young teen who was struggling with anxiety and depression. Before the pilot, she was on a waitlist for more than six months to see a specialist. With CoCM, she got help right away."

Echoing this success, Dr. Caitlin King from Centre Pediatric Associates in Brookline added, "Since we began working with the Center's Collaborative Care team, the impact on our patients has been remarkable. Families feel supported knowing they have a dedicated team looking out for both their physical and mental health. It's truly been a game changer for our practice and our community."

A third site at Burlington High School opened this fall to pilot the Collaborative Care model within a school-based setting. At this location, we have seen an increase in Spanish-speaking students and families seeking care, reflecting the area's growing immigrant population. Many of these families are uninsured or underinsured and lack regular access to medical care. The CoCM care manager bridges this gap by connecting students and families to both mental health and medical services, providing comprehensive support directly within the school. As schools across the Commonwealth are struggling to meet their students' mental health needs, we hope to learn if this model can provide a sustainable pathway for improving adolescent mental health outcomes.

"We're not just opening doors to care, we're seeing real changes in our patients' lives."



We Are Transforming
Early Psychosis Care

For 15 transformative years, CEDAR has been changing the trajectory of young lives affected by early psychosis. What began in 2009 as a pioneering early intervention program has grown into a beacon of hope, providing specialized care and support for youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of psychosis. As we mark this milestone anniversary, CEDAR's impact continues to demonstrate how early, targeted intervention can reshape mental health outcomes.

CEDAR is one of just a few programs in Massachusetts offering specialized early psychosis intervention. Our multidisciplinary team provides comprehensive support for young people ages 12–30 and their families, weaving together coordinated specialty care that spans individual and family therapy, educational and vocational coaching, and psychiatric services. This holistic approach ensures that each young person receives personalized, evidence-based care that addresses their full range of needs.

"When CEDAR was established, it was one of the first programs in the country focused on early intervention for patients showing signs of psychosis," said Dr. Henry White, Senior Innovation Advisor. "The Brookline Center's integration of CEDAR into its programs in 2018 has enabled us to draw on our deep culture of meaningful innovation to transform and scale the program, expanding its reach and making it more accessible, equitable, and impactful."

"CEDAR shows what's possible when you prioritize access and provide coordinated, specialized care tailored to each patient's needs," added Dr. Amanda Weber, PhD, CEDAR's Clinical Director. "Each success story reinforces the vital importance of making this early care available to all who need it."



## 2012

CEDAR moves to the Massachusetts Mental Health Center's location in the Longwood Medical Area.

## 2018

CEDAR becomes a program of The Brookline Center and its mission recenters around equitable and accessible early psychosis care.

## 2022

The Brookline Center launches the Massachusetts Psychosis Access and Triage Hub (M-PATH) to quickly connect young people experiencing early psychosis symptoms to services statewide.

## **Today**

CEDAR has impacted the lives of hundreds of clients and trained more than 50 psychology graduate students, psychiatry residents, and undergraduate trainees.

## 2009

The CEDAR Clinic opens at 76 Amory Street in Roxbury as a collaboration of the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and the Massachusetts Mental Health Center, funded by a grant from the Sidney R. Baer Jr. Foundation.

## 2015

CEDAR forms a "Prevention Collaborative" comprised of representatives from Boston Public Schools, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), DMH, Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Children's Hospital, and others to spread awareness of early psychosis.

## 2021

CEDAR is awarded a SAMSHA grant to collaborate with other programs to expand Clinical High-Risk for Psychosis services in Massachusetts.

## 2022

CEDAR restarts
group programming
to address service
gaps for families
and clients who
need assistance
in transitioning to
college.

## 2023

The Center's
Kids Fund Gala
spotlights CEDAR
to bring attention
to early psychosis
and CEDAR's
transformative
work.

## 2024

CEDAR celebrates its 15th anniversary with a new website and logo that highlights its commitment to wraparound, personcentered care.

## 2020

CEDAR formally moves to the Center's offices at 41 Garrison Road in Brookline.



## **LEARN MORE**

Check out CEDAR's website! www.brooklinecenter.org/cedar



# We Are Transforming Care in Community Health

Each year, more than 1,100 young people in Massachusetts are diagnosed with psychosis—a complex and often misunderstood condition. Early intervention is critical to improving outcomes, but most primary care providers feel ill-equipped to identify and treat psychotic disorders. To address this, The Brookline Center's M-PATH program has launched a groundbreaking initiative to help primary care providers (PCPs) better identify and support young patients showing signs of early psychosis.

In partnership with the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, which serves over 285 federally qualified health centers, the Community Health Center-Primary Care Provider (CHC-PCP) Early Psychosis Outreach Initiative aims to strengthen the ability of primary care and pediatric providers at CHCs across the state to recognize, treat, and support patients experiencing early psychosis. Seed funding for the initiative comes from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, the Sidney R. Baer, Jr. Foundation, and other private donors.

For many young people, especially those from marginalized or under-resourced communities, their PCP is a trusted partner and connector to community resources, making these providers well-positioned to identify, assess, and refer youth with early psychosis symptoms. However, many feel unprepared to effectively support individuals experiencing psychotic symptoms, leading to missed diagnoses and lags in receiving care.

Through specialized training, education, learning communities, and ongoing consultation and support, the Early Psychosis Outreach Initiative will train community health center providers to identify early warning signs, implement screening tools, and coordinate with M-PATH specialists. This approach will help ensure that patients receive swift, psychosis-informed care.

"Psychosis can significantly impact young peoples' lives. By partnering with the League, we're not just bringing services to community health centers—we're providing PCPs and other CHC staff with the vital tools and knowledge they need to detect early signs of psychosis. For many of these youth, it's about getting the right care at the right time from someone they already trust," said Dr. Emily Gagen, Director of M-PATH.

# We Are Transforming Our Community

When Masu Haque-Khan and Badar Khan moved to Brookline from Houston, they brought with them a deep commitment to philanthropy rooted in their faith and a desire to support their new community. Their connection to The Brookline Center began at a dinner party hosted by a board member, but their involvement and ongoing support truly took root at the 2018 Kids Fund Gala, which they attended as guests of their neighbors.

The Kids Fund Gala proved to be a turning point for the Khans. They were struck by the compassion and sense of community demonstrated by attendees in support of the Center's mission, and the client stories shared that evening resonated with them. "It was one of our first experiences feeling the strength of the Brookline community and the impact we could have together," recalls Masu.

Since then, the Khans' commitment to the Center has grown, driven by the urgent need for accessible mental health care. "The need for mental health services has always been there, but during the pandemic, it became undeniable. As parents of two teenage daughters, we saw how isolation and the sudden loss of independence impacted young people, especially high schoolers. Almost every parent we spoke to shared stories of someone in their family or close circle who needed support," says Masu. "It's that overwhelming need that keeps us committed to supporting the Center and its mission."

The Khans cite the Center's strength in developing innovative models that maximize limited resources in an integrated and community-supported way as another reason to stay involved. They highlight the success of the bryt program, which supports students returning to school after a mental health crisis. For Badar, programs like bryt are important because they're designed to be sustainable: "bryt equips teachers and staff with the tools to support students, which is crucial for making a lasting impact."

In addition to philanthropy, the couple give considerable time to the Center. Masu serves on the Board of Directors and chairs the Strategic Development Committee. In 2023, the Khans co-chaired the Kids Fund Gala with two other couples and set a fundraising record, thanks in part to Badar's role spearheading corporate support.

Reflecting on their journey with The Brookline Center, Masu shares, "Our involvement has been transformative in ways I didn't expect. It has opened our eyes to the prevalence of mental health challenges and the critical, lifesaving care the Center provides. It's an honor to be part of a community that truly cares, supports one another, and never stops striving for meaningful change."



## **GET INVOLVED**

Together, we can expand access to mental health care in our community. We can help you set up a fundraising page to "donate" your birthday or other milestones, you can give in honor of someone who inspires you, you can include The Brookline Center in your estate plans, or you can volunteer to help with events and initiatives that make a difference.

## TO LEARN MORE



Please email us at development@brooklinecenter.org or call (617) 277-8107.



The gentle scent of flowers, a slight breeze, the warmth of sunlight—these calming elements of nature are now part of the therapeutic experience at The Brookline Center.

In July, the Center opened its Outdoor Therapeutic Space, a major step forward in enhancing our provision of innovative, patient-centered care. The first of its kind in a local community health center, this unique space harnesses the mental health benefits of nature, offering new opportunities for clients, especially children and youth, to heal and grow.

"Spending time outdoors has been shown to reduce stress, depression, and anxiety," said Rachael Hennessey-Crowell, Clinical Director of Outpatient. "With this new space, we have the flexibility to further adapt sessions to individual client needs. From mindfulness practices to play therapy, we now have a broader range of tools at our disposal."

Center clinicians are already seeing positive outcomes. "Having such a beautiful—and accessible—space has truly transformed the way we provide clinical treatment, especially in individual and group therapy for children and youth," said Erin Wagner, Outpatient Clinician and Child and Adolescent Group Program Manager. "We've seen many of our young clients thrive in this natural setting, and it's making a noticeable difference in their progress."



"Mental health is critically important, and this new Outdoor Therapeutic Space is a shining example of The Brookline Center's commitment to community and innovation in mental health care."

STATE REPRESENTATIVE TOMMY VITOLO

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Outdoor Therapeutic Space was made possible through the generous support of the Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation. The space was designed by studioMLA Architects and constructed by Bauman Remodeling.



We Are Transforming
Wellbeing for
Women and Girls

Twelve years ago, a group of passionate Brookline Center board members with a bold vision to support women's and girls' mental health launched Women at the Center to champion mental wellbeing in our community, raise funding for the Center's work, and nurture connections among local women.

Over the years, Women at the Center, affectionately known as WAC, has evolved from a small group of women holding events in homes and the Center's conference room, to a thriving community. WAC's annual Kickoff brings together women across the community and features guest speakers like Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell, former CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, authors Elizabeth Gilbert, Sherry Turkle, and Judith Viorst, and former First Lady of Massachusetts Diane Patrick.

In addition to the Kickoff, WAC hosts Hand in Hand, an annual "philanthropy in action" event where community members assemble custom care packages intended to nurture and bring joy to caregivers experiencing economic hardship or mental health challenges. Through partnerships with the Brookline Housing Authority and the Brookline Food Pantry, and with the participation of dozens of Center clinicians, these care packages are distributed across the Brookline community to caregivers in need,

We asked three long-standing WAC leaders to reflect on the group's origins and its remarkable growth.

### MICHELE FISHEL

Our initial idea was to bring women from the Brookline community together—not just to support women and girls receiving care at the Center, but to create a network that could nurture women supporters of the Center, as well.

More than 65 women attended the "soft launch" at Georgia's house. There was so much excitement—a real desire to participate and make an impact.

Everything we did circled back to the Brookline Center's core mission. The first WAC Kickoff was met with great enthusiasm. We kept hearing from attendees how lovely it was to reconnect with women from across the community, some they hadn't seen in years. Dr. Alice Domar was our speaker that year, and her message about the importance of self-care hit just the right notes.

### **GEORGIA JOHNSON**

What really struck me at the beginning was the energy created by bringing women together. It was exhilarating, and that feeling has carried through. People who attend a WAC event always comment on how inspiring it is to be surrounded by hundreds of women from across the community.

I've sponsored a table at the WAC Kickoff for years, and everyone I invite loves it. The events are so compelling, and the speakers are always insightful and relatable. It's a space that fosters unexpected connections—there are women I've met through WAC who have become close friends.

WAC has raised the visibility of The Brookline Center enormously; it's incredible how much more a part of the conversation the Center has become, and to see how far WAC has come.

## **DANA LAZOWSKI**

By prioritizing women's mental health, WAC is helping build healthier families and create a more compassionate society. For me, the most rewarding aspect of WAC is witnessing the impact we make in our community.

The Brookline Center changes the lives of women and girls in remarkable ways. Knowing that WAC plays a vital role in this keeps me motivated and deeply engaged. It's incredibly gratifying to work alongside such an amazing volunteer committee and the development team at the Center.

One of my proudest moments with WAC was at last year's Kickoff, when two dear family friends, Nancy and Madelyn, shared their story about how the bryt program helped save Madelyn's life during her time at Brookline High School. It was an unforgettable experience.



the Center events and initiatives!
Learn how to get involved
www.brooklinecenter.org/wac

## We Are Transforming Lives

Through your generosity, The Brookline Center expands access to mental health care for all, advancing new approaches and growing high-impact programs and services that improve the health and safety of children, adults, and elders in our communities.



## **REVENUE**

- 52% State and Federal Funding
- 17% Insurance and Fees
- 17% Private Philanthropy
- •8% Program Revenue
- 6% Town of Brookline and Brookline Agencies



## **EXPENSES**

- 77% Program Services
- 22% Administration
- 1% Depreciation

In fiscal year 2024, philanthropy represented 17% of The Brookline Center's revenue, more than \$3.1 million in total. This support came from 1,445 generous individuals, companies, and foundations, reflecting confidence in the Center's vision and work and growing recognition of mental health as a public health priority.

We carefully manage our \$18 million budget to ensure every donation has its intended impact: creating a mental health care system that is effective, accessible, and equitable for all. This year, 77% of our operating budget focused on mental health programs, services, and clinical operations.

## Thank You

## \$100,000+

Anonymous (2)

Accelerate The Future

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Leise Jones: pp. 6, 8, 10, 15, 17, 19

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