Improving Community Health: A Spotlight on Tufts MC Grant Initiatives

Tufts Medical Center has made a significant impact in improving the health outcomes of underserved communities through its community grant initiatives. The Asian Health Initiative (AHI), Dorchester Health Initiative (DHI), and COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Grants have provided educational programming on tobacco, a range of behavioral health programming including mental health support for children and families impacted by trauma, and economic support to residents to recover from the pandemic. In FY 2022, over 8,100 people were served by these grants.

Dorchester Health Initiative

The Dorchester Health Initiative (DHI) is a highly successful program launched by Tufts MC in 2004. For the past three years, DHI has focused on improving the health and wellbeing of residents in the Dorchester neighborhood by providing critical mental health services, health education, and community outreach to 10,360 community residents.

Tufts MC partnered with and funded six Dorchester-based organizations to tackle behavioral health issues, especially youth violence and substance use. The program’s focus also included addressing social determinants of health, such as poverty, discrimination, and social isolation, which can lead to the development of health problems. By tackling these underlying factors, the DHI aimed to promote overall well-being and prevent the development of mental health problems.
DHI has had a significant impact on the mental health of the communities they serve. DHI provided mental health services to individuals who may not otherwise have access to them, due to financial barriers or a lack of health insurance. By providing counseling, therapy, and other forms of mental health support, DHI helped individuals address and manage a range of issues, including depression, anxiety, trauma, and substance abuse. Additionally, DHI helped to break down the stigma surrounding mental health, encouraging individuals to seek help and support when needed, and promoting a more open and compassionate attitude towards mental health issues. Taken together, the evidence suggests that DHI promotes positive mental health outcomes for children and enhances family functioning, especially among marginalized groups.

Program Reach and Impact
2,909 community members were served by DHI in FY22:
- 53% of individuals served were children and adolescents between ages 1-18
- 56% of clients served were female
Of these individuals:
- 475 community members were identified to have food, education, housing, and mental health needs
- 630 youth participated in educational programming on vital aspects of conflict resolution, violence prevention, and good citizenship
- 183 fathers received training and support to promote nurturing and positive child development
- 1,072 community residents received mental health counseling, treatment, and other supports

DHI Grantee Spotlight
The Family Nurturing Center (FNC) is a vital community resource that is dedicated to promoting social-emotional wellness in Dorchester. Through a range of neighborhood-based parenting education and family support programs, FNC engages young children and their parents together, helping to build the knowledge, skills, and connections necessary for children to develop in a healthy way. In FY 2022, FNC served a total of 40 fathers in various programs, including Nurturing Fathers’ Programs, Breakthrough Parenting, Family Nurturing Programs, and Birth, Foster, and Kinship Nurturing Program. FNC’s programs have shown improvements in parents’ overall scores, as well as specific constructs such as empathy, discipline with dignity, and children’s power and independence. Participants in the program have expressed high levels of satisfaction, with 92–100% reporting being satisfied or very satisfied with their experience. FNC also continues to work with the Suffolk County House of Correction to support parents as they transition back into the community.

“Smart from the Start’s partnership with Tuft MC’s Dorchester Health Initiative had provided our organization with the resources necessary to engage children, youth and families in culturally reflective, strength-based, mental health and wellness programming. Our ongoing collaboration has created opportunities to break down the stigma related to mental health treatment, to promote healing, and to ensure that our communities and families thrive.”

Cherie Craft, CEO and Founder of Smart from the Start