



**A Memo from
Frederica M. Williams
President and CEO
March 13th, 2018**



Whittier ranked # 1 in Behavioral Health Services Patient Survey - Overall Satisfaction 2017: The Crossroads Group has recently determined that in 2017, **Whittier Street Health Center** was the **top-scoring** Behavioral Health (mental health and substance abuse services) organization in their national database in terms of **overall patient satisfaction**, among organizations using the same standardized questionnaire and methodology and survey sample size. Specializing in healthcare, The Crossroads Group has designed and implemented hundreds of survey projects over fifteen years. We are proud of the commitment of our valued Behavioral Health colleagues who consistently provide compassionate, culturally appropriate, high-quality care to our patients from diverse backgrounds.

Nearly all of Whittier's patients live at poverty-level incomes and two out of three patients are diagnosed with diabetes, hypertension, cancer, asthma, or obesity. Further, one in four has two or more of these conditions. 80% have psychosocial issues. Taken together, the health disparities among low-income people translate to a chilling life expectancy gap. According a 2015 study by the Boston University School of Public Health, residents in densely populated-areas stretching from Mass Ave to Dudley Square in Roxbury, our primary service area, have a life expectancy of 58.9 years – a full 33 years fewer than their affluent neighbors one and half miles away in the opposite direction along Mass Ave in the Back Bay.

Mental wellness is a fundamental component of overall health. The World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. Impaired mental health is common, and attributed to a variety of genetic, environmental, psychological, and developmental factors. There are marked differences in the distribution of mental disorders by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Exposure to stressors may explain in part why certain groups suffer from poorer mental and physical health outcomes than others. Economic difficulties, physical deprivation, job strain, family responsibilities, economic inequality and discrimination can have detrimental effects on mental health. In addition, chronic stress shares a well-established

connection with morbidity and mortality.

Because Whittier's service area is defined by stressors, we believe this correlates with the growing rate of opioid abuse and overdoses, namely, high rates of poverty and violent crime. In Boston's most impoverished areas, what has made opioid abuse especially volatile for low-income minority residents is the mixing of other toxic, narcotic additives, such as fentanyl and benzodiazepines, that dangerously augment the potency and toxicity of street-level opioids, while simultaneously making the drug less expensive to purchase. At Whittier, we are seeing fentanyl in the toxic drug screens of many of our opioid-addicted adults. This toxicity certainly contributes to the unintentional overdoses in the area.

Whittier's integrated and comprehensive model of care addresses substance abuse as a disease and breaks the cultural stigma attributed to mental illnesses in the diverse communities served. Our integrated model of care focuses on providing comprehensive medical, behavioral, wellness, nutrition counseling, physical fitness, massage therapy, yoga, acupuncture, health education and social support services to improve the overall well-being of the patients served.

Whittier is proud to serve as a champion of equitable access to high quality health care for ALL!

Thank you for your continued support for Whittier Street Health Center's mission. Please visit our website (www.wshc.org) and our [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#) pages for more information regarding our impact in the community and upcoming events.



WHITTIER STREET HEALTH CENTER
Comprehensive. Compassionate. Community.

Wishing you good health!

Frederica M. Williams
President and CEO



Whittier Street Health Center | <http://www.wshc.org/> | 1290 Tremont Street Roxbury, MA 02120

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