

Community health centers fulfill their promise

As health care reform takes place in Massachusetts and around the country, more and more patients are being directed to community health centers – recognition that for more than 40 years, these centers in urban and rural areas have improved access to health services, controlled costs, and most importantly, provided care of the highest quality.

Beth Israel Deaconess was involved in community health from the earliest days, helping in 1969 to lead the conversion of Roxbury's New England Hospital for Women and Children into the Dimock Community Health Center. BIDMC has continued to support community health centers (see timeline), which today are a vibrant, crucial part of BIDMC's care delivery system. They are also at the heart of BIDMC's mission to care for the underserved.

Timeline photos: 1960s - Beth Israel pediatrician at New England Hospital for Women and Children. 1970s - South Cove's original building. 1980s - Senator Edward M. Kennedy at the dedication of "Project AFRIC" at Dimock (precursor of Early Head Start). 1990s - Dedication of Roxbury Heart Center, in which Deaconess and BI hospitals collaborated. 2000s - New building underway for Fenway Community Health.

Beth Israel Deaconess and community health centers



National

"War on Poverty" includes first neighborhood health centers as "demonstration project."

1960s

Local

- First community health center opens in Boston at Columbia Point.
- Dimock Community Health Center opens. Beth Israel Hospital (BI) helps found and staff the center. Joint appointment of medical staff has continued to the present.



National

After successful pilot, funds become available for more community health centers through Public Health Services Act.

1970s

Local

- BI is the first hospital to publish a Patient Bill of Rights; it commits to equal care for all.
- New community health centers open, including Bowdoin Street Health Center, Fenway Community Health, South Cove Community Health Center and Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center.



National

After federal funding dips, centers find new funds, as well as new providers through the National Health Service Corps.

1980s

Local

- Outer Cape Health Services formed through a merger of two existing agencies.
- BI and New England Deaconess hospital physicians form clinical relationships with community health centers. Especially robust: collaborations to care for obstetrical patients and patients with the newly recognized disease HIV/AIDS.



National

With Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security funding, more health centers open and expand.

1990s

Local

- Deaconess and Roxbury Comprehensive Health Center build multifaceted relationship.
- BI helps health centers address racial disparities in infant mortality.
- Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center established with BI support.
- Six health centers affiliate with BI, and Bowdoin Street joins BI family.
- Bowdoin Street constructs new building, and opens a senior health center.
- BI supports new buildings for Dimock, Fenway and Joseph Smith, and expansion of South Cove into Quincy.
- Community Care Alliance forms to link BIDMC health centers.



National

Largest expansion ever in federal funding for health centers.

2000s

Local

- Health insurance reform brings thousands more patients to community health centers.
- BIDMC integrally involved in expansion of Joseph Smith into Waltham and purchase of building for South Cove.
- BIDMC supports construction (now underway) of a new building for Fenway, and collaborates with Fenway on a first-in-the-nation residency program for medical care of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender patients.
- Collaboration between BIDMC and affiliated health centers continues to grow.