

Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission

Year Five Findings and Recommendations

Prepared for:

**Clerks of the Senate and the House of
Representatives**

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

House Committee on Ways and Means

**Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use,
and Recovery**

Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

Prepared by:

**Middlesex County Restoration
Center Commission**

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Introduction

The Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission (Commission), established under Chapter 69 of the Acts of 2018, *An Act relative to criminal justice reform* (Act), as amended by Section 142 of Chapter 126 of the Acts of 2022, *An Act Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2023*, hereby submits its Year Five (November 2022 – October 2023) findings and recommendations to the General Court as required by the Act. The Commission has worked since its inception to do the following:

- Investigate the gaps and needs in behavioral health and diversionary services in Middlesex County that could prevent arrest and unnecessary emergency department (ED) utilization among individuals with behavioral health conditions
- Develop a service model for a Restoration Center pilot program in Middlesex County and implement the program

The Act tasked the Commission with planning and implementing "a county restoration center and program to divert persons suffering from mental illness or substance disorder who interact with law enforcement or the court system during a pre-arrest investigation of the pre-adjudication process from lock-up facilities and hospital emergency departments to appropriate treatment."¹ This report summarizes the activities the Commission completed in Year Five and includes an overview of efforts to launch the Center.

ForHealth Consulting (previously known as Commonwealth Medicine), the healthcare consulting and operations division of UMass Chan Medical School (UMass Chan), compiled this report on behalf of the Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission.

Commission members included:

- Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian, co-chair
- Dr. Danna Mauch, president and CEO, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, co-chair
- Senator Cindy Friedman, 4th Middlesex District
- Representative Kenneth Gordon, Middlesex 21st District
- Lydia Conley, president and CEO, Association for Behavioral Healthcare
- Scott Taberner, special advisor, Executive Office for Health and Human Services
- Nancy Connolly, assistant commissioner for forensic services, Department of Mental Health
- Deirdre Calvert, director, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services
- Eliza Williamson, director of community education and training, National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts
- Chief Justice Paula Carey, Massachusetts Trial Court (Ret.)

¹ Chapter 69 of the Acts of 2018.

ForHealth Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School

- Chief Lester Baker, Framingham Police Department (through August 2023)
- Chief Roy Frost, Billerica Police Department (*beginning September 2023*)
- Audrey Shelto, president and CEO, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

Report Overview

First, this report describes activities the Commission completed in Year Five, which include the following:

- Summary of Commission meetings held in Year Five
- Description of the procurement process for a consultant vendor to assist with four tasks
- Description of the procurement process for a vendor to provide services at the Restoration Center pilot program
- Overview of activities in support of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grant

Next, this report describes the work completed by:

- Facility siting and community engagement consultant(s)
- Planning grant recipients

Finally, this report outlines findings and recommendations, which include:

- Implementation plan and timeline for the Restoration Center pilot program

Commission Processes

This section describes the Commission processes to support the launch of the Restoration Center.

Commission Meetings

In Year Five, the Commission met five times to do the following:

- Introduce new Commission members
- Review feedback received from potential bidders through the Request for Information (RFI) process and provide guidance on next steps, including procuring a consultant(s) and amending sections of the Request for Responses for a provider to operate the Restoration Center
- Develop a Request for Quotes for a facility siting and community engagement consultant(s) to support the selected Restoration Center vendor with facility siting and development, facilitation and community engagement, development of a sustainable funding plan, and development of communication strategies and presentations
- Identify sources of funding and secure such funding to support the Restoration Center pilot program
- Provide input on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant for congressionally-directed spending
- Prepare for the launch of the Restoration Center pilot program

Commission Administration

The state fiscal year's 2023 budget allocated funding for the Commission to the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) line item 4000-0300. EOHHS extended the Intergovernmental Service Agreement with ForHealth Consulting to procure vendors to support and operate the Restoration Center as well as assist with the launch of the Center.

Commission Activities

This section describes Year Five activities for the Commission.

Reappointed and Introduced New Commission Members

During the Feb. 8, 2023, Commission meeting, the Commission welcomed Chief Justice Paula Carey (ret.), formerly of the Trial Court, as reappointed to the Commission, and Audrey Shelto, president of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, and Chief Lester Baker of the Framingham Police Department, as the newest members of the Commission. In August 2023, Chief Baker resigned from the Commission after Governor Maura Healey appointed Baker to the Peace Officer Standard and Training (POST) Commission. Chief Roy Frost of the Billerica Police Department joined the Commission in September 2023.

Identified and Operationalized Funding Sources

During Year Five, Commission members continued to pursue funding opportunities to blend and braid funding for the Restoration Center. New funding sources identified and secured included:

- An annual appropriation of \$1.25 million in EOHHS line item 4000-0300 into the Criminal Justice and Community Support Trust Fund in FY24

Commission members submitted a \$1.5 million request for community project funding to Senator Ed Markey, but it was not included in the final Senate budget. The Commission also reengaged the Pew Charitable Trusts in a conversation to request funding to evaluate the Restoration Center.

The Commission continued to identify additional funding sources and resources to sustain the Restoration Center pilot program financially over the next four years. In support of the Commission's goal to identify sustainable funding sources, Health Management Associates (HMA) (the consultant EOHHS procured to assist with four tasks as described later in this report) researched available funding opportunities and drafted a sustainability plan to present to the Commission. The Commission, EOHHS, and HMA will work closely with the Restoration Center vendor to source, apply for, and secure funding.

Provided Input on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Grant

Secured by Congresswoman Lori Trahan (MA-03) and issued via a grant from SAMHSA to EOHHS in 2022, congressionally-directed funding provided \$1.65 million to support the Restoration Center for one year until Sept. 29, 2023. Following conversations with SAMHSA in preparation for a no-cost extension request, EOHHS advised that it would be advantageous to offer resources to providers to prepare the community for the soon-to-be-launched Center. The key behavioral health service providers play a key role in ensuring the Center is aligned and appropriately woven into the local continuum of care. Commission members discussed the goals of these planning grants, anticipated applicants, and the role the resources would play in jumpstarting activities for the Center. The Commission supported the planning grants to prepare community members and stakeholders across Middlesex County for the Center and build relationships with law enforcement, first responders, hospitals, and other key stakeholders.

EOHHS worked with the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP) to offer up to \$50,000 to each provider, with a maximum of \$200,000 across all providers, to initiate work that advances the objectives of the SAMHSA grant. Funds were available through the end of September 2023, and the recipients' activities are detailed later in this report.

The Commission also discussed a no-cost extension request to extend the length of the project past the Sept. 29, 2023, period of performance. EOHHS submitted a request to SAMHSA to extend the funding period through Sept. 29, 2024, and subsequently received the extension.

Guided and Supported the Procurement Processes

Supported by ForHealth Consulting, the Commission and EOHHS finalized the procurements for the siting and engagement consultant(s) and Restoration Center pilot program vendor during Year Five.

Initial Request for Proposals

ForHealth Consulting published (under the former name of Commonwealth Medicine) a Request for Proposals (RFP) in April 2022 to competitively procure a provider entity to operate a four-year Restoration Center pilot program. Upon the deadline in June 2022, ForHealth Consulting did not receive any proposal submissions. However, before the response deadline, ForHealth Consulting received a letter from a service provider in Middlesex County expressing interest in serving as the Restoration Center provider entity that included an explanation for their decision not to submit a proposal at the time due to the competing priority of launching the Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC) they had already received funding to develop.

In the first quarter of 2023, Massachusetts began the implementation of Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs), which offer walk-in behavioral health services for people with urgent and crisis behavioral health needs, crisis assessment, intervention and stabilization, and other services designed to reduce unnecessary ED utilization. The Restoration Center is envisioned as providing additional capacity and capabilities beyond what a CBHC offers, focused especially on the needs of individuals brought to the Center by first responders.

Request for Information

To gather stakeholder input and understand the barriers that potential bidders experienced associated with the RFP that resulted in no bids, ForHealth Consulting released an RFI in August 2022. In September, two potential vendors responded to the RFI and provided feedback on changes to the RFP that may increase the likelihood of future bids. Vendors provided overall feedback and specific insight on services, timing, and funding. These topic areas are outlined below alongside the Commission's response.

Concern	Commission's Response
Overall concerns include limited vendor organizational capacity, lack of appropriate and available real estate, community resistance to siting, and limited expertise to overcome siting issues.	The Commission requested and was subsequently approved to use SAMHSA funding to secure consultant vendor(s) to assist the provider entity in addressing these concerns.
Feedback about services included questions on the process of managing respite beds, concerns about the	The Commission clarified that a vendor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has the option to apply to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to provide respite beds under several

<p>substance use disorder (SUD) support unit, staffing capacity for both acute treatment services (ATS) (sometimes called medically monitored withdrawal management or detoxification) and clinical stabilization services (CSS), the 24-hour transfer timeline, and potential duplication of CBHC services.</p>	<p>different models, the vendor can refer Restoration Center clients to the vendor's respite center, and clients will need to have applied, not be approved, for DMH services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • would provide harm reduction services/beds on-site and has the option to provide ATS and CSS on-site or arrange for clients to receive ATS and CSS at a different site. • has the option to expand upon existing CBHC services to meet the Middlesex Restoration Center (MRC) service plan.
<p>Responses indicated that vendors would require 18 months from the time a building is secured until program launch and an additional \$2 million+ to meet RFP specifications.</p>	<p>The Commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determined that a vendor has the option to launch some services in existing space and provide the full array of Restoration Center services after an 18-month ramp-up period. • clarified that a vendor has the option to leverage existing services to stay within budget and that the Commission would seek additional funding to support the sustainability of the Restoration Center.

Upon agreeing on the recommended actions to address the RFI stakeholder feedback, ForHealth Consulting solicited additional feedback on vendor concerns, obtained further input from state-level stakeholders, including Senator Friedman's Office and the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, on recommendations for next steps, and incorporated feedback into a revised draft Request for Responses (RFR) and developed a Request for Quotes (RFQ) for a consultant(s) to support the MRC on specific activities. ForHealth Consulting's RFP and EOHHS' RFR had similar goals but each entities' nomenclature for this type of request varies. EOHHS sought quotes from entities to serve as a consultant via an RFQ as the pool of vendors was previously chosen under a statewide contract.

Facility Siting and Community Engagement Consultant(s)

To address the overall concerns that stakeholders provided in response to the RFI, EOHHS, with support from ForHealth Consulting, presented an amended budget to the Commission that was subsequently submitted to SAMHSA. The amended budget allocated \$400,000 of the \$1.65 million EOHHS received in congressionally directed funds to a consultant or consultants to assist EOHHS and the MRC vendor with facility siting and community engagement.

SAMHSA subsequently approved the amended request and EOHHS issued an RFQ on March 16, 2023. Bidders could submit responses for all or some of the tasks. The four tasks outlined in the RFQ are as follows:

- Task 1: Manage the siting of a Restoration Center in conjunction with EOHHS and the selected Restoration Center vendor.
- Task 2: Conduct stakeholder outreach and engagement with community organizations, local governments, and residents concerning the Restoration Center.
- Task 3: Develop, in concert with EOHHS, a plan for sustainable funding of the Restoration Center beyond the initial three-year period.
- Task 4: Develop a communication plan, presentation materials, website, and logo for use by EOHHS and the selected Restoration Center vendor.

RFQ responses were due on April 21, 2023, and EOHHS received bids from two vendors. Both applicants responded to all four tasks in the RFQ and met the RFQ requirements. The review team, comprised of Scott Taberner of EOHHS, David Ryan of the Middlesex Sheriff's Office, and Katharine London of ForHealth Consulting, evaluated the bids and determined Health Management Associates (HMA) to be the best value to EOHHS. EOHHS subsequently signed a contract with HMA and work began in July 2023, as detailed later in the report.

Planning Grants to Key Behavioral Health Providers

Following the Commission's approval to provide SAMHSA resources to key behavioral health providers, ForHealth Consulting, alongside EOHHS, developed planning grant applications. MBHP shared the applications with six providers in Middlesex County to prepare for and garner community support for the soon-to-be-launched Restoration Center. Grants of up to \$50,000 per vendor provided flexible resources to scale up the local behavioral health system of care and initiate activities of the SAMHSA grant. MBHP distributed the applications and two organizations—Vinfen and Advocates—responded. EOHHS subsequently amended the contract with MBHP to allocate \$100,000 for the two organizations. The two providers' work using these funds is outlined later in this report.

Restoration Center Vendor

Following the RFI process, ForHealth Consulting determined that it would need to make significant changes to the RFP to attract responses, and ForHealth Consulting leadership determined it was more appropriate for EOHHS to procure a vendor. Upon the decision for EOHHS to publish a RFR, instead of ForHealth, EOHHS and ForHealth Consulting revised the previous RFR that was posted in Spring 2022 to incorporate service provider and stakeholder feedback. The Commission established a service model working committee that met in November and December 2022 to revise the scope of services included in the RFR.

The revised RFR reflects the service model that the Commission developed and is outlined in the Year Four report. The RFR clarified that bidders shall propose plans and strategies to dedicate capacity to the Restoration Center pilot program for each required service in one of these ways: 1) through a service the bidder operates, 2) by subcontracting with another

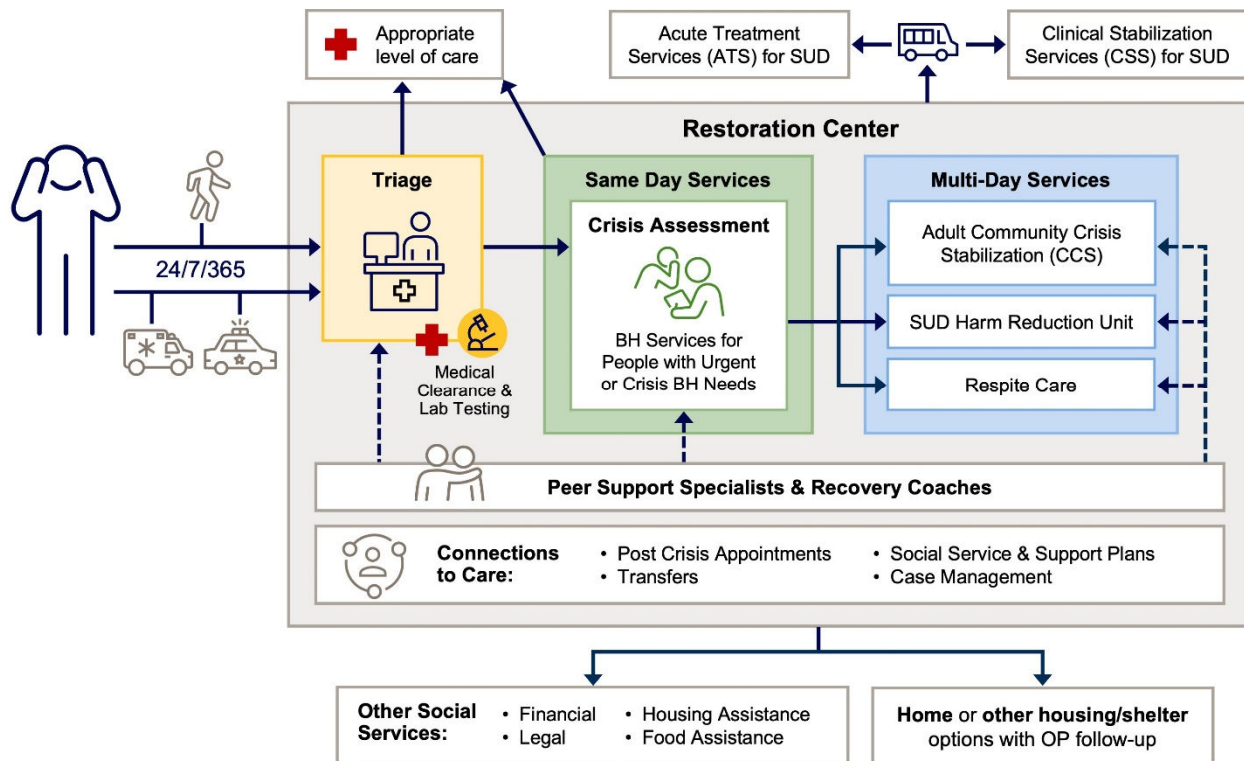
organization that provides the services, or 3) by developing a new service. Furthermore, in addition to crisis intervention and stabilization services that the CBHCs offer, EOHHS anticipated that the Restoration Center pilot program will include the following:

- Behavioral health services for people with urgent or crisis behavioral health needs provided on the same day that someone presents
- SUD harm reduction beds where people who are not yet willing to enter treatment and have been determined to not require emergency or urgent medical care can be cared for as they become sober and receive information about treatment and other supports from peer recovery coaches
- DMH-contracted respite care beds so those experiencing behavioral health challenges and who need respite from their living situation to stay in the community have a place to go beyond a crisis stabilization bed

To complement the above services, the RFR also indicated that the Restoration Center pilot program would fund additional staffing to provide:

- When appropriate, facilitation of a warm handoff to providers of ATS and CSS for SUD patients in a manner that aims to avoid the need for engagement or re-engagement with emergency responders and hospital emergency departments
- Access to and additional capacity for adult Community Crisis Stabilization, where adults with acute psychiatric and or co-occurring mental health and substance use conditions can receive short-term, staff-secure, safe, and structured crisis stabilization and treatment services
- Additional peers, recovery coaches, counselors, and other providers who can offer increased capacity to de-escalate an individual and coordinate the next steps for the individual to receive care in the community, and work with the individual for the duration of the time they receive services through the Restoration Center

A service model that reflects the programs outlined in the RFR and further refines the model the Commission developed last year is outlined below:



Danna Mauch and Deirdre Calvert volunteered to review the draft RFR documents prior to public posting. The timeline for the RFR was as follows:

- June 1, 2023 – EOHHS published the Notice of Procurement for the RFR
- June 14, 2023 – EOHHS formally published the [RFR](#)
- June 23, 2023 – EOHHS held a bidders conference
- July 31, 2023 – EOHHS received one response by this RFR response deadline

Scott Taberner, Audrey Shelto, and Chief Justice Paula Carey served on the response evaluation committee. A contract with a vendor to operate the Center is anticipated to be signed before the end of the year.

Developed a Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission Website

ForHealth Consulting worked closely with EOHHS to develop content, compile materials, and provide feedback on a mass.gov website to showcase the work of the Commission. The [website](#) was published in July 2023 and hosts the Commission's meeting agendas, minutes, media stories, and annual reports.

Work Completed by Vendors in Support of the Restoration Center

Health Management Associates (HMA)

Upon starting work in July 2023, HMA completed and started several activities in each of the tasks.

Task 1: Facility Siting

To support the Restoration Center's vendor identify and select a facility, HMA and its real estate partner, Savills, conducted a scan of commercial real estate that aligned with the RFR and Commission's specifications in the greater Lowell area, resulting in one potential site option. EOHHS provided feedback about potential sites and considerations for siting a behavioral health facility. In assisting the Restoration Center vendor, HMA and Savills will also provide guidance on the benefits and risks of potential sites to help inform the decision-making process.

Task 2: Community and Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

To advance this task, HMA developed a registry to understand the landscape of stakeholders and previous engagement, and inform a strategic plan for community and stakeholder engagement. Commission members and EOHHS provided guidance and input into the registry and supported the development of a plan for outreach meetings. HMA also participated in calls with various stakeholders to learn about the role the Restoration Center would play in the Commonwealth's behavioral health roadmap, potential challenges, and key stakeholders to engage with in conversation.

Task 3: Sustainability and Funding

HMA developed background information and conducted a review of funding sources for six similar centers across the country to demonstrate the blended and braided types of funding. HMA also collected potential funding sources most appropriate for the Restoration Center vendor to explore.

Task 4: Marketing and Communications

To prepare to announce the selected Restoration Center vendor, HMA provided communications guidance and developed a draft press release, talking points, and a Q&A document for Commission members and key stakeholders to use. In addition, HMA created a communications plan that outlines a high-level approach for communicating and marketing built around operational milestones.

SAMHSA Planning Grant Recipients

To prepare the community for the launch of the Restoration Center in Middlesex County, two key behavioral health providers received planning grants. Vinfen leveraged the planning grant funds to:

- Identify a restorative justice training opportunity for staff
- Participate in community forums and stakeholder meetings to discuss the 24/7 availability of mental health services
- Identify potential data-sharing processes and electronic health records system functionalities
- Develop a potential model for triage, including a staffing model and definition of anticipated clinical needs
- Meet with regional community stakeholders on opportunities for collaboration to offer screening and assessment services
- Prepare for engagement with first responders by training staff on best practices and meeting with law enforcement to initiate a formal collaboration
- Assist in filling the service gaps for people who are justice system involved and referred by multiple sources
- Meet with local organizations to build bridges to services and expand the mental health continuum of care to meet community needs

Advocates used resources to:

- Conduct a comprehensive staffing needs assessment to identify opportunities to align with community demands and devise a recruitment and retention strategy
- Strengthen community linkages by attending local monthly community and partner meetings, meeting with local stakeholders and providers, collaborating with leaders and human services agencies, and providing tours to community agencies to learn about the services provided
- Establish a data task force to analyze healthcare records reporting capabilities and develop new reports to capture operations, timeliness, and clinical data
- Enhance recruitment efforts to expand the triage team as indicated by the staffing needs assessment and hire more triage staff who are available to work on weekend shifts and bilingual to meet community need
- Ensure adequate staffing who can provide screening and assessment services by producing a video advertisement that offers an immersive experience into the daily routine of an employee with these job functions
- Foster connections with local police departments through monthly meetings, trainings, and collateral such as magnets, brochures, and business cards
- Collaborate with local hospitals to facilitate enhanced communication and mutual support
- Develop consumer-facing materials in multiple languages

Implementation Timeline

Implementation Plan and Timeline

ForHealth Consulting supported EOHHS in hosting Commission meetings, procuring and managing a siting and stakeholder engagement consultant, procuring a Restoration Center pilot program contractor, and managing planning grants for two key behavioral health service providers in Middlesex County. ForHealth Consulting anticipates implementing the Restoration Center pilot program on the following schedule:

November 2023:	Contract awarded for Restoration Center pilot program
November 2023 – December 2024:	Contractor readiness activities, including finding a location for a Restoration Center pilot program in Middlesex County, renovating the physical space in accordance with facility requirements, hiring and training staff, etc.
December 2024:	Launch date (estimated) of all Restoration Center pilot program services
December 2024 – June 2027:	Ongoing innovation and continuous quality improvement to measure outcomes, success in achieving specified goals, and improvement of the service model in collaboration between the contractor, ForHealth Consulting, and the Commission
June 2027:	Recommendations to be made regarding the continuation and/or expansion of the Restoration Center pilot program