

# *It Takes a Village: Forging New Pathways to Early Childhood Services for High-Risk Families*

Presented by Roca, Inc.

The Boston Foundation Early Childhood Coffee & Conversation

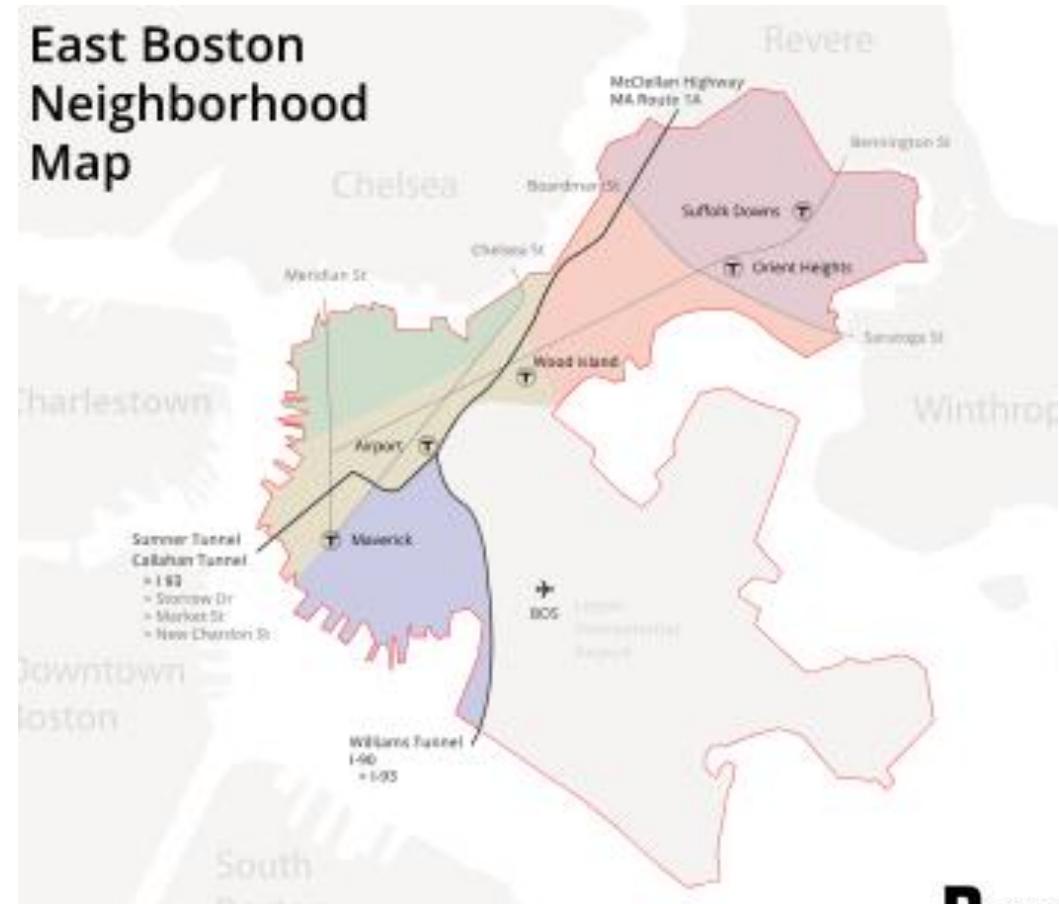
April 12, 2019

# Who Are Greater Boston's Highest-Risk Families?

- Single mothers ages 15-24 with children ages 0-6
- Limited or interrupted education
- Little employment experience
- Multiple systems involvement, history of victimization, history of trauma, and housing instability
- Their children are most vulnerable to adverse experiences, developmental concerns, and long-term poverty, and are set up to repeat intergenerational cycles of violence and incarceration

# Where Do They Live?

- Move between Chelsea, East Boston, Everett and Revere – 3<sup>rd</sup> highest teen pregnancy rate
- Instability due to rising housing costs and increased threat of deportation
- Lack of coordinated services and gap in access to quality early childhood services
- Disinclined to seek out services for themselves or their children due to culture, stigma, and fear



# A Population No One Else Is Serving

<b>Parent Factors</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>MA Home Visiting</b>	<b>Roca HRYMP</b>
<i>Substance Abuse</i>	Binge drinking 37.6% Illicit drugs 23.7%	Binge drinking 50.8% Illicit drugs 33.4%		57%
<i>History of Abuse</i>			64%	85%
<i>Systems Involvement</i>	7.2%	4.1%	4% (DCF)	56%
<i>Not Completed HS</i>	10.8%	9.3%	59%	93%
<i>No Employment History</i>				83%
<i>Immigrant to the US</i>	9.8%	13%	12%	56%
<i>Undocumented</i>	3.3%	3.8%		>33%
<b>Child Factors</b>				
<i>Child Poverty</i>	20.3%	14.6%		100%
<i>2+ Child ACES</i>	19.3%	15.4%		100% (4+)

# East Boston Young Parent Partnership



# Partnership Goals

1. Identify the most challenging barriers that prevent East Boston's young parents from accessing high-quality services for children aged 0-3 and which can potentially be improved by cross-sector partners changing the way they work together.
2. Pilot actual practice and/or policy changes to improve or streamline access to early childhood services.
3. Develop actual practice and policy changes to systematically address these barriers, while addressing any systemic (e.g., political, legal, or policy-related) obstacles.

# Survey of East Boston Young Mothers

## Parent Profile

- 82 mothers with 123 children 0-6
- 27% ages 16-20, 49% 21-24
- 56% living in East Boston
- 76% on WIC
- 23% utilizing health/mental health services
- 10% utilizing licensed child care, 45% have children at home with them
- 8% in Home visiting, 2% in Head Start, 9% in Early Intervention

## Challenges/Barriers

- 30% do not access services due to fear of authority figures
- 12% find staff to be friendly and unresponsive
- 12% find information to be confusing
- Only 16% have trusted service provider they are comfortable with
- Housing and DTA benefits most sought after services/resources

# Pilot East Boston Young Parent Family Night

- 24 mothers age 16-25 with 38 children ages Prenatal-5
- 60% living in East Boston
- 10 service providers, including:
  - Boston Basics – 7 referrals
  - BPS School Finder
  - Child Development & Education (Family child care) – 12 referrals
  - Community Advocacy Program (domestic violence)
  - Countdown to Kindergarten – 3 referrals
  - Department of Transitional Assistance – 7 referrals
  - East Boston Neighborhood Health Center – 7 referrals
  - East Boston Social Center – 1 referral
  - North Suffolk Early Intervention – 4 referrals
  - Roca – 9 referrals
  - WIC – 9 referrals



# Pilot East Boston Young Parent Family Night



**Roca**   
YOUNG MOTHERS

# Anticipated Outcomes

Family-focused service providers **increase or improve the quality of co-case management** around child programming;

DCF case workers **work upstream to prevent developmental delays by engaging parents more intentionally** in child development activities in the home;

By **sharing strategies across partners and sectors**, our agencies learn to collectively deliver high-quality, low- or no-cost early childhood services in informal or non-center-based settings;

**State-level data systems (DTA, DCF, DPH) communicate differently with community-based service providers** to ease the transition of families across systems, communities, and childcare providers; and/or,

**Local and/or state level policy changes** allow this region's highest-risk families – socially vulnerable, immigrant youth with one or more children ages 0-3 – to access public financial assistance and/or other systems of care for their children.

# Results/Impact

## Lessons learned by partners:

1. High-risk young families need to be connected to resources
  - For example, understanding TAFDC
2. Local providers need to learn more about each other's work
  - Financial resources allowed providers to come together
3. Typical outreach strategies do not work for this population
  - They will not RSVP!
  - Only 8 out of the 19 participants responded to follow-up



# High-Risk Young Families – What Does it Take?

For people who are not ready, willing, or able....

...we must think differently, feel differently, and do differently.

Relentless Outreach



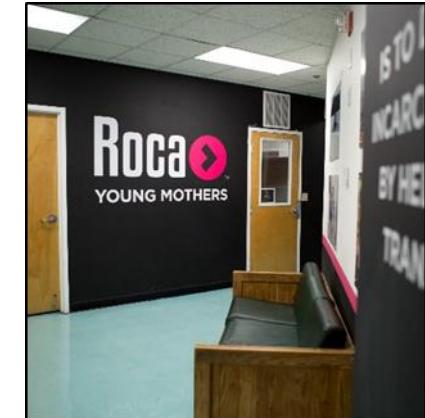
Transformational Relationships



Stage-Based Programming



Engaged Institutions



# In order to support high-risk children, we need to support their parents first.

Children of high-risk young families:

- Are among the most disadvantaged, in the short and long term
- Are unable to realize the benefits of formal Early Care & Education
- Are most positively impacted by a high-quality, stable home environment

Additionally:

- Poverty and stress are linked to less responsive parenting, which is a risk factor for decreased child executive functioning and worsened motor and social-emotional competence in children



# Thank you!

Questions?

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