



# ABCD Press

From the Office of Public Information

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ABCD President/CEO Robert Coard, Activist for Boston's Poor, Dies at 82**

Robert M. Coard, renowned community-civic leader and head of Boston's antipoverty agency for 41 years, died November 3 at age 82 at Hebrew Rehabilitation Center in Roslindale. Coard retired as President/CEO of Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) on November 1. He had suffered from heart disease for several months.

Coard died just days after 1,500 people including Governor Deval Patrick, Mayor Tom Menino and Attorney General Martha Coakley celebrated his retirement at the gala ABCD Community Awards Dinner on October 30 at the Boston Marriott Copley Place. He was too ill to attend.

Under Coard's watch, ABCD grew into a \$150 million operation that serves 100,000 low-income and disadvantaged people annually, providing education, child care, fuel assistance, career development and other programs that give people in need the tools to move permanently out of poverty.

Coard's successor, John J. Drew, who worked with him for more than 30 years, said Coard's mission for ABCD was to help the poor lift themselves out of poverty.

"He fought tirelessly for the most vulnerable people in society," said Drew. "He was the essence of community action, about providing opportunities for those in need, about building institutions and revitalizing neighborhoods."

Coard participated on the city advisory council during the school busing crisis of the 1970s. He is also applauded for successfully suing President Richard Nixon in federal court to stop Nixon from shutting down the Office of Economic Opportunity which ran antipoverty programs at that time. That action saved the community action movement.

He was a nationally applauded institution builder, founding the Urban College of Boston to provide low-income people with access to higher education, the National Community Action Foundation in Washington, D.C. to secure and protect legislation supporting community action nationwide, CAPLAW to provide legal assistance to community action agencies, and more.

When Coard announced his retirement plans last July, U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy said: “Bob’s impact has been felt in ways large and small, from the food pantries and city streets of Boston, to Beacon Hill and Capitol Hill and the White House. Bob’s a dear friend and he will be missed.”

Robert Coard was the beloved husband of Donna Makin Coard of West Roxbury; loving father of David of New York City, Ronald of Norwood, Mackie of Jamaica Plain, and Janet of South Boston; and dear grandfather of three grandchildren. His funeral service will be held at 10 a.m. Monday, Nov. 9, in Emmanuel Church ([www.emmanuelboston.org](http://www.emmanuelboston.org)), 15 Newbury St., Boston. Interment is private at Forest Hills Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Robert Coard’s memory may be made to the Robert M. Coard Hope and Opportunity Fund, c/o ABCD Inc., 178 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02111.

**About ABCD:**

ABCD serves more than 100,000 low-income Boston-area residents through its central offices and a decentralized network of Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs), Head Start centers, Family Planning sites and Foster Grandparent sites. Programs and affiliations include Fuel Assistance; Head Start; Child Care Services; Child Care Choices of Boston; Education; Career Development; Housing and Homelessness Services; Health Services; Family Planning; Urban College of Boston; University High – an Alternative High School; Ostiguy High School for high school students in recovery; Weatherization; Foster Grandparents; Elder Services; Intergenerational Programs; Food Pantries in several Boston neighborhoods; management of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employees Charitable Campaign (COBECC) and City of Boston Employees Charitable Campaign (COBECC); advocacy and consumer services.

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