Many perspectives, one goal

Each year we work with more than 100,000 of our neighbors who are striving for better lives. Their strength and resilience inspires us. Their voices guide us.

This report provides a window into ABCD’s work in 2019. Through it you will hear various perspectives about the challenges of poverty.

But most importantly, you will hear the experiences of people who are building brighter futures, using the tools provided by ABCD. We hope that their voices will inspire you, as they do us.
Because poverty is complex, we help in many ways.

Everything we do is tied together by the belief that each of us should have a voice, and all of us should have a chance to thrive.

**ABCD’s programs cover everything from children and youth to elders; from education and training to homelessness prevention.**
At ABCD, we’re visionaries—but practical visionaries. That means we are focused on concrete, measurable change—for families, for neighborhoods, and for our society as a whole.

This focus means dealing with the ways in which the roots of poverty are entangled with disenfranchisement and injustice. ABCD’s mission is to dig away at those roots. Over the decades, I have seen hard-won progress. Too many of our neighbors are still being left behind.

This is an extraordinary kind of organization—one owned entirely by the community, directed by a community Board. Our purpose is extraordinary—to be a place where people can work together to create opportunity.

And ABCD is in it for the long haul. The economy changes. Administrations come and go. But we stay, boots on the ground, opening our doors every day—doing everything we can with the resources we have.

But most important are the people who make ABCD what it is. For almost 60 years, our energy has come from people ready to fight the odds for economic justice. That energy still motivates us.

As I think about the past year, I am grateful to my colleagues who have continued the fight. As practical visionaries, we’ve achieved a great deal. We hope you will join us!

John J. Drew
President/CEO
Action for Boston Community Development
Because of what ABCD did for me, I wanted and I needed to give back to the community.

I always had a desire to go to college, but life’s circumstances got in the way. When I arrived in Boston, I met someone who told me about the Urban College program. With the assistance of ABCD, I was able to acquire my Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services Management from Lesley College and my Master of Education degree from the University of Massachusetts Boston.

I became a member of the Dorchester Neighborhood Service Center Advisory Board, and as a result of serving there, I was invited to serve on the governing board of ABCD. ABCD is very near and dear to me.

If ABCD could change my life, it could change other lives as well. Today, ABCD continues on this mission of educating and empowering people to move forward with their dreams.

When I think about what ABCD means to me, I think of an old spiritual song, “We Need a Savior.” In times like these we really need a savior. In my opinion, ABCD is that savior that changes the lives of people and their families and strives to embody the spirit of hope in those who are going through life’s challenges.

Yvonne Jones
Chairperson
Action for Boston Community Development
So much depends on the first few years of life.

Research makes it clear: much of a child's future is determined in the earliest years. With support for the whole family, parents and children can overcome the challenges of poverty. That's why ABCD has invested deeply in building systems of support for two generations.

ABCD's Head Start & Children's Services programs set the standards for high-quality early care and education.

In 2019, these programs reached:

- **2,316 preschool children** (ages 2.9 to 5)
- **651 infants and toddlers** (birth to 2.9 years old).

In 2019, Head Start expanded its reach by opening the new Savin Street center in the Roxbury neighborhood. To support the field, ABCD sponsored a statewide conference on the Early Education workforce, and launched new models for recruiting and training.

Child Care Choices of Boston (CCCB), the regional Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, contracted to manage state-funded vouchers, provided licensed care to **more than 8,736 families**.

“My children were a product of Head Start and I know it works because I see what it's done for them. My youngest daughter is going to law school and my oldest is a nurse, so I believe in Head Start.”

— Venitte Burke, Education Supervisor at Mattapan Head Start
Work is changing, and too many young people are being left behind.

Youth unemployment in Boston is at epidemic levels; young people need role models to show them what’s possible. Without support, many teenagers risk ending up in dead end, low-wage jobs—despite talent and hard work.

**ABCD helps young people succeed in the work world.**

ABCD’s youth programs are built around the transformative potential of work that leads to a career. This year, SummerWorks’ 679 participants earned a paycheck, learned job readiness and life skills, and built supportive relationships with adults and peers. WorkSMART—a comprehensive, year-round approach combining skills training, internships, academic support, college courses and mentoring—served 68 youth.

“Every year we get between 3,000 and 5,000 applications for SummerWorks, but we only have room for a about 1,000 of those applicants. We would like nothing more than to be able to offer jobs to more Boston youth.”

— Jessica Rosario, Director
ABCD Youth Services
“My whole life I struggled with being confident in myself. ABCD gave me the discipline and experiences I needed to not be afraid to try new things.”
Xavier has come far.

Two years ago he was a shy 16 year-old from Mattapan without a job, and with no real idea what he wanted to do with his life.

But he knew he wanted to succeed.

He signed up for ABCD’s SummerWorks program and earned his first paycheck. He then enrolled in ABCD’s Future Protectors Program, which offers paid internships and training for first responder careers. He gained invaluable real world experience.

In his first year at UMass Boston, Xavier is getting a degree in business management but dreams about becoming a filmmaker. He’d like to run his own production company one day.

Xavier praises his mother, the rock in his life, for always making sure he dreamed big. He also credits ABCD’s Youth Service programs for providing his first paying job—along with the confidence and discipline to pursue his passions.
Young people facing extraordinary barriers need extraordinary schools.

Talent is equally distributed. Opportunity is not. And some of our most promising young people face multiple, complex, and daunting barriers to success. They may be homeless. Hungry. Survivors of violence. Struggling with addiction. They may have told at an early age that they can’t succeed in school.

Without a helping hand, they risk becoming part of some grim statistics: more than 840 youth drop out of Boston schools each year with thousands caught in the school-to-prison pipeline.

University High School in Dorchester works with young people who have dropped out, or who are at risk of failure in conventional public schools. Ostiguy High School is a recovery school adapted to meet the specific needs of youth overcoming substance abuse.

Statistics show that people who complete a high school education increase their lifetime earnings by 33%.
For a family to make progress, home is the foundation.

Without the stability of a secure place to live, even the hardest-working family can strive in vain to improve their situation. And that foundation is getting harder to maintain.

In 2019, the Foreclosure Prevention program helped 24 homeowners stay secure. Emergency scattered site housing—a form of publicly funded, affordable, low-density units “scattered” throughout diverse, middle-class neighborhoods—provided a temporary safe haven to more than 54 homeless households. Housing search workshops and housing counseling helped more than 82 participants navigate the complex process of finding a decent place to live.

Thanks to the leadership and legislative action of local officials, ABCD’s Mobile Homeless Outreach Team returned to the streets of Malden, Medford and Everett—helping homeless individuals connect with services.

*Boston remains one the most expensive housing markets in the country; a minimum wage earner would need to work 3.5 jobs to afford the average two-bedroom rental in the city.*
Trauma. Addiction. Homelessness. Eunika has endured it all. With help and support from ABCD, however, the Mattapan mother of two has hope for a better future.

Eunika’s family was traumatized when her brother was shot in 2010. Her mother never recovered emotionally, and she lost her job.

Eunika’s family then lost their home.
Eunika became addicted to the opioid she was prescribed after a car accident. Her life spiraled down, and she went in and out of homeless shelters.

She found her way to ABCD temporary housing. With ABCD advocating on her behalf, she’s in recovery, and well on her way to getting her GED. She wants to become a substance abuse counselor to help others going through the hardships she has overcome.

“I am ready to move on and am working with ABCD to get my life back. I owe it to myself and my family not to give up.”
Building assets is hard—but crucial to long-term security.

Basic financial tools—a bank account, good credit, savings for an emergency—can make the difference between upward mobility and continued crisis.

But too many households are “unbanked”—and many have no credit or poor credit.

The gap in assets created by long-term racial discrimination means that the average wealth for white households is $247,500; for black households, it is $8.

**ABCD helps households take the first step.**

The federal Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is a starting point. In the past year more than 5,190 individuals got free tax assistance at ABCD, receiving over $10 million in refunds. More than 134 VITA volunteers made a critical difference—helping families capture the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), set up bank accounts, and establish savings plans.
Nothing is more basic than warmth. In New England, we can’t take it for granted.

Winter can be a dangerous time. But with ABCD’s help, thousands of families in Massachusetts are able to stay warm and safe.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which ABCD manages in Greater Boston, helps pay fuel bills for more than 17,000 households.

Conservation programs reduce costs by upgrading heating systems, weatherizing, and improving energy efficiency for more than 25,000 households across the state. ABCD’s energy programs are national models, partnering with public utilities to introduce innovative new technologies—and to save households thousands of dollars in energy annually.

“Having a warm home keeps them, my parents, in good shape. Keeps them alive.”
— Nicholas, ABCD Heating & Fuel Assistance client
Torina, a single mother of two disabled children who require around the clock care, wonders what would have happened if she hadn’t called ABCD.
She was laid off from her job, struggling to support her family on $276 in weekly unemployment checks. All three gas furnaces in the triple decker she owned were breaking down and required costly maintenance.

Thanks to ABCD’s energy programs, Torina and her low-income tenants got the help they needed.

ABCD weatherized her Dorchester home with new insulation and installed new gas furnaces and water heaters in all three units in her apartment building.

Torina’s house was transformed into an energy-efficient home, providing crucial year-round savings for all its residents.

And all that came at no cost to Torina or her tenants.

Torina and her tenants are no longer in a desperate situation, as she’s taking courses to become a hospital administrator.

“Thank God I called ABCD, or who knows. I might have lost everything.”
Building healthy communities requires community leadership.

Dramatic health disparities affect low-income communities across Greater Boston. Chronic disease, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections, infant mortality and violence take a heavy toll. To make progress, communities not only need effective health care—they need the tools of information, skill-building and leadership development which help combat the impacts of poverty and racism.

**ABCD provides information, support and care for lifelong health.**

In 2019, the **ABCD Family Planning Partnership** brought together 20 primary care providers—hospitals, school clinics, and neighborhood health centers—at over 40 sites to ensure access to comprehensive, affordable sexual and reproductive health services for **24,840 individuals**.

In addition, ABCD provided community-based AIDS/HIV prevention services.
Elders are the backbone of our communities—sources of wisdom and resiliency.

Our communities are aging—projections suggest that by 2030 more than 120,000 seniors will live in Boston. But too often our communities are not elder-friendly.

A recent study found that more than 61 percent of Massachusetts elders can’t make ends meet. Too many are isolated; more than 38 percent live alone.

Nevertheless, the contributions of the elderly are crucial.

ABCD helps generations support each other.
ABCD’s Elder Service programs focus on promoting connection, health, and meaningful work for the aged.

The Foster Grandparents—a Senior Corps volunteer program—engaged 161 elders in work with children and youth. In 2019, participants volunteered 148,127 hours at 53 ABCD sites.
ELDERS AND CHILDREN SHARE WISDOM AND JOY

“Grandpa! Grandpa!”
“Abuelo! Abuelo!”

The joyful voices of children ages 2 to 5 echo in the hallways of ABCD’s Hyde Park Head Start when they spot their favorite Foster Grandparents—Mark Onwumere and Hermon Lindsay.
Hermon is a youthful 92 year old. At 77, Mark embodies dignity and confidence. They put their retirements on hold to bring support to the Head Start staff and loving attention to the children in their classrooms.

Hermon, a native of Jamaica and a former security guard, has been in the ABCD program for 15 years. Mark, a native of Nigeria, where he held a number of government jobs before immigrating to the U.S, has been a Foster Grandparent since 2012.

Hermon and Mark clearly love what they do. They are the first to arrive every day when school starts in the morning.

And thanks to ABCD’s Foster Grandparents program, Hermon, Mark, and the children share their wisdom and joy with each other, creating a unique bond.

“Some of the children here don’t have a mother. Some don’t have a father. Many come from very sad situations. So I give them the love they need.”
— Hermon Lindsay

“Some days I might have a headache, and then I see the children and I don’t remember what it was that bothered me.”
— Mark Onwumere
Hope starts in the neighborhood.

Decades of research have shown that some of the most powerful ways to fight poverty are right next door.

Common sense also tells us that more people can benefit from help when it is easy to reach—and when it is provided in a friendly, safe and comfortable setting.

That’s why ABCD has built a Neighborhood Network of service centers in every community.
ABCD opens the door to opportunity at dozens of local centers every day.

Each ABCD neighborhood site provides access to all ABCD services to foster long-term stability and seize previously inaccessible opportunities.

Neighborhood sites use the innovative **Front Door** program, which lets clients access and maximize all the ABCD programs and services they are eligible for.
It takes courage—and many helping hands—to come to a new country, learn a new language, and build a new life.

Boston is a city proudly built on the aspirations of its immigrants. What do immigrants seek? Quality education. Decent-paying job. The freedom to raise a family without fear. To have a better life.

**ABCD helps newcomers bring their gifts to the table.**

In 2019 ABCD helped more than 440 individuals with the naturalization process.

**ABCD’s English as a Second Language (ESOL) program** helped more than 200 students improve their English skills, setting the path for a more successful life in their new country.
Family-sustaining jobs require new approaches.

Employers are hiring, but despite a booming economy, too many working households are struggling. One reason: the jobs most people can get with a high school diploma just won’t pay the bills.

**ABCD provides the comprehensive support needed to build careers with a future.**

**ABCD’s GATE program (Generations Advancing Together through Education)** provides training in high-demand fields including Banking & Finance, Healthcare, and Information Technology. Specific career paths include Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), Dental Assistant, Information Technology (IT) Support, Hospital Central Services Technician, Medical Assistant, Medical Office Administration, and Pharmacy Technician. The program also offers specialized career support for immigrants with college degrees and professional backgrounds from their native countries.

GATE also provides individualized child care and transportation support—making training and work accessible. More than 140 participants have benefited from this uniquely holistic approach, including 55 in 2019.

**ABCD’s First Steps into Child Care** demonstrates how creative approaches can work for both employers and jobseekers who are looking for a pathway into this growing industry.
Wealth and income inequality continue to grow across the country, including in the Massachusetts 7th Congressional District. For too long the status quo has contributed to the oppression and exclusion of our low-income neighbors. But we know that people do not live in checked boxes—our health and wellbeing includes clean, safe, and affordable housing, rapid, reliable, and accessible transportation, and healthcare justice. Our challenges are intersectional and demand holistic solutions.

The most lasting and sustainable solutions come from engaging the people closest to the pain and leveraging their expertise.

**ABCD has not only been a partner in policy change, but they have stood in the gap in addressing the critical challenges people face every day.**

I am grateful for their continued partnership and recommit to breaking cycles of poverty by mobilizing, organizing, and legislating with those closest to the pain. We can end poverty, and together we will.

*U.S. Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley
Massachusetts, 7th District*
When I look back over the past year, I am reminded that ABCD is both an organization and an idea.

ABCD—the organization—is always evolving. Every year, ABCD responds to new challenges. In 2019, we navigated waves of policy change in health care and immigration. Every year, ABCD drives innovation. In 2019, we opened new early childhood education centers, launched new partnerships to serve homeless families and individuals, and expanded workforce training that leads to family-sustaining jobs. And every year, ABCD’s energy is renewed by the new colleagues who join us—as staff members, as Board members, as community partners, and as participants in our programs.

In contrast, the idea of ABCD stays steady. In a nutshell, it’s the principle that the very people who have the least access to economic and educational advancement can—and must—be a critical part of solving the problems caused by poverty. We need to remember that this inclusive approach works. Poverty in America was briefly cut in half between 1959 and 1973. Many factors contributed to this accomplishment. But one crucial element was the activism of the people who were impacted the most.

Can we do it again? I think we can. In a country with historic levels of income inequality, one where the average job won’t support a family, it’s crucial that we build communities of opportunity. ABCD—as organization and idea—remains committed to that goal.

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.
Executive Vice President / COO
Action for Boston Community Development
ABCD couldn’t do what it does without its volunteers.

ABCD’s efforts are bolstered by its devoted community volunteers.

Between Oct. 1, 2018 and Sept. 30, 2019, ABCD’s 2,847 volunteers who worked in Head Start, Elder Services, Youth Services ESOL, Immigration Services, Tax Assistance and Food Pantries alone contributed 158,081 hours.

**Volunteer Highlights**

**Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program**
75 volunteers contributed 2,542 hours and assisted low-income residents claim over $10 million in tax deductions.

**Pegasystems Toy Initiative**
For the fifth year, Pegasystems employees donated and sorted toys for ABCD’s Winter Fund. All told, over 60 employees have contributed more than 200 hours, providing children with the joy of toys—and knowing they’re loved—during the holiday season.

**Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences Nursing Internship**
Over 100 MCPHS nursing students served more than 2,300 ABCD Head Start & Early Head Start students while gaining experience working in a community setting and supporting child and family health.
As a federally recognized Community Action Agency, ABCD has a tripartite Board of Directors. One third are democratically selected representatives of low-income communities. One third are elected officials or their representatives. The remaining board members represent business, labor, religious, law enforcement, education, and other major groups and interests.
ABCD WELCOMES ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE’S WELLNESS WAGGIN’

Recognizing the emotional value pets bring to people who struggle to get by, ABCD announced a groundbreaking partnership with the Animal Rescue League of Boston to bring high-quality, low-cost pet wellness care to residents of Dorchester, Roxbury and Mattapan with a state-of-the-art mobile veterinarian van.

BOSTON MAYOR ANNOUNCES EARLY-CHILDCARE EDUCATION INITIATIVE

At the ABCD Walnut Grove Head Start in Dorchester, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh announced the city’s investment of $15 million to establish the “Quality Pre-K Fund,” which will guarantee equitable access to free, high-quality pre-kindergarten (pre-K) for all 4-year-olds living in Boston within five years. ABCD Head Start & Children’s Services is honored to be among the select group of early education partners in this model initiative.
HEAD START RIBBON-CUTTING AND REDEDICATION AT SAVIN STREET

Mayor Martin J. Walsh, Office of Head Start Regional Program Manager Marina Winkler, and Massachusetts Early Education and Care Commissioner Samantha Aigner-Treworgy participated in the ribbon-cutting and rededication of ABCD Head Start at Savin Street in Roxbury. Thanks to the generous support of the George Robert White Fund and its trustees, including Mayor Walsh, and an Early Education Out of School Time Capital Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, ABCD renovated and rededicated the state of the art center in memory of civil rights leader Mrs. Rosa Parks.

FAITH-BASED PARTNERSHIP EXPANDS SERVICES TO HOMELESS

To expand services for the poorest of the poor—homeless individuals living on the streets of Boston and surrounding towns—ABCD launched the StreetLevel initiative, a new partnership with faith-based groups. StreetLevel will expand grassroots outreach services, winter warming center operations, transportation to shelter, and referral to services including substance abuse treatment.
Along with honoring 22 extraordinary community volunteers, ABCD’s annual gala in November also recognized five organizations that have been represented on its Board of Directors for 50 years. These extraordinary supporters are Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Boston Public Schools, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, Greater Boston Labor Council & Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and the NAACP, Boston Branch. More than 1,000 attendees were treated to an intimate conversation with six-time Tony®, Grammy® and Emmy® Award winner Audra McDonald, hosted by celebrated director DeMane Davis, and an unforgettable performance by Ms. McDonald.
FIELD OF DREAMS

ABCD’s iconic annual benefit softball tournament at Fenway Park in June featured a moving memorial to long-time supporter and former ABCD Board Chair Mark Nuccio. The event raised $240,000 for the SummerWorks youth program. ABCD welcomed William F. Kennedy, partner at Nutter law firm, as event co-chair in 2019. He joined Lew Eisenberg, partner at Cosgrove, Eisenberg & Kiley, P.C., who has co-chaired since the first ABCD Field of Dreams 22 years ago.
With TD Garden undergoing renovations, ABCD held its singular annual basketball tournament at the Auerbach Center, the Boston Celtics’ state-of-the-art practice facility in Allston. Hosted by NBA coaches Doc Rivers and Brad Stevens, along with Boston sports writing icon Bob Ryan, who conducted a fun and informative Q-A with the two most recent Celtic coaches, the event raised $100,000 for ABCD’s youth programs.
HEAD START FAMILY CELEBRATION

Thousands of children and their families who benefit from the nationally renowned early childcare education program celebrated on the Boston Common in June.

HEAD START WELCOME BACK

Staff heard from newly-appointed Boston Public Schools Superintendent Brenda Cassellius at the annual Head Start Welcome Back event.

BUONA SERA

ABCD’s North End/West End Neighborhood Service Center joined friends at Buona Sera in October. The event raised nearly $40,000 to aid low-income and elderly residents of the North End and West End.
Thank you donors

Your generous donations allow ABCD to fulfill our mission of supporting the Boston and Greater Boston community.

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The Boston Foundation
Brazonics, Inc.
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TD Garden
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Santander Bank
Project Bread
Hemenway & Barnes LLP
Aetna Inc.
South Boston Community Development Foundation, Inc.
Northeastern University
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Berkshire Bank Foundation, Inc
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Ultiplay Parks & Playgrounds, Inc.
Shelia Violette
Erica Woolich
Linda Zukowski
99% of AB CD revenue in FY-19 was program specific.

Payments made on behalf of program participants were 51% of total revenue.

Contributions to AB CD in FY-19 totaled $4,848,676.

Administrative costs for AB CD FY-19 made up 3% of total costs.

Sources of Funds

- Federal Funding – Direct: 19%
- Federal Funding – Through State & Other: 38%
- Utility Companies: 26%
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts: 11%
- Other/Local grants: 2%
- Other Revenue: 2%
- Contributions: 2%

Total revenue for Fiscal Year 2019 was $203,642,279.

Uses of Funds

- Regional Child Care Resources and Referrals: 29%
- Energy Efficiency Programs: 28%
- Head Start & Child Care Services: 24%
- Crisis Intervention/Fuel Assistance: 7%
- Community Services: 3%
- Other Programs: 3%
- Health Programs: 2%
- Housing & Homelessness: 1%
- Youth Programs: 1%
- Alternative High Schools: 1%
- Career Development: 1%