

August 2020

abcd INSIGHT

Monthly News & Updates

Head Start Welcomes Children Back to the Classroom

In a year of converging crises, Head Start never stopped.

When Governor Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency in March to address the escalating coronavirus pandemic, ABCD Head Start and Early Head Start centers may have closed, but the organization mobilized. ABCD ensured that Head Start children had enough to eat and provided families with essentials like diapers, formula, and PPE.



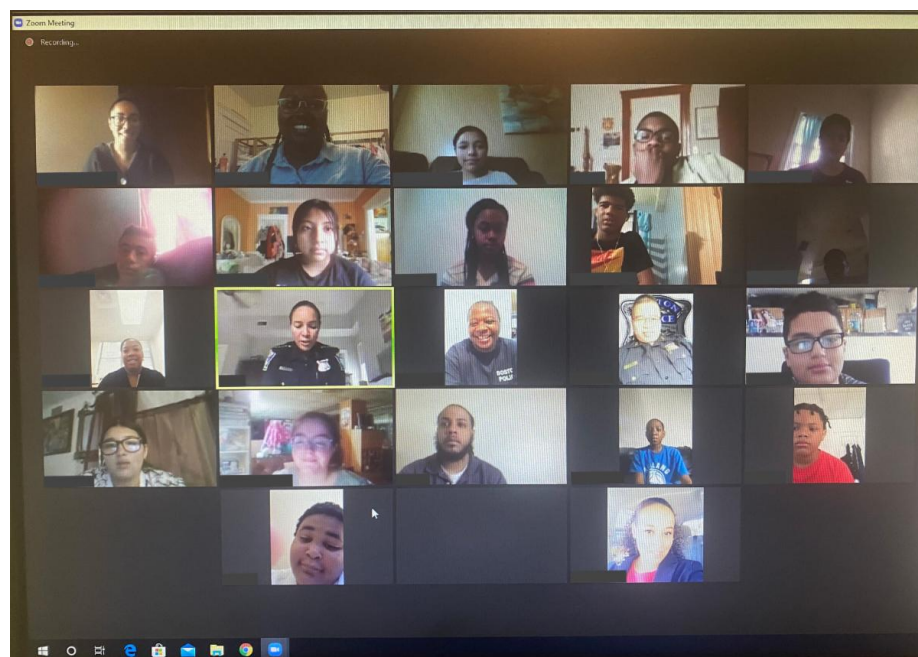
In short order, Head Start educators and staff adapted to a newly “contactless” world by delivering the comprehensive services that distinguish this lauded early education and care program virtually. They connected with parents by phone and email, never losing sight of the importance of family engagement.

In accordance with very strict guidelines from the Office of Head Start, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, Governor Baker and other officials, the program has implemented policies, procedures, and practices to make learning experiences and environments as safe as possible for children, families and staff.

“These are difficult times, and, as always, we are listening to the parents. Many want their children back in the classroom while others prefer to continue with virtual learning,” said Yvette Rodriguez, vice president of ABCD Head Start & Children’s Services. Currently, 145 children are back in class while 118 are accessing the program virtually, and Rodriguez said that by September, “we expect to be able to serve all of our families, accommodating their preferences for face-to-face, virtual, or hybrid interaction.”

Learn more about ABCD Head Start & Early Head Start [here](#).

YEA! Program Introduces 13-Year-Olds to Civic Engagement, Financial Literacy, Leadership



In past years, ABCD’s YEA! program -- Youth Engaged in Action -- enrolled 100 13-year-olds in a three-week session featuring workshops, guest speakers, and trips to the Massachusetts State House and Boston and Malden city halls. This year, ABCD modified the program, offering a one-week online intensive that packed in a lot of learning, connecting, dreaming, and planning.

From August 14 - 21, motivated youngsters participated in Zoom meetings with Boston City Councilors Ricardo Arroyo and Kenzie Bok, and with Boston Police Department Bureau of Community Engagement Superintendent Nora Baston. They learned about cyber-bullying and staying safe online, financial literacy, job readiness, and entrepreneurship; they explored community service and living a life of purpose, and in this pivotal election year, they learned about voting.

What kind of impact does YEA! have? Participant Francisco E. captured it this way: “I learned that if I want to start a business, I can do it! If I make a mistake, I can fix it and learn from it.”

Learn more about this unique program at bostonabcd.org/yea.

Spotlight

Grocery Gift Cards Help Hungry Families in Mystic Valley



As it is, Jamie worries constantly about how to keep her family fed. Then the refrigerator died, and they lost all the food they had. “You do not want to tell your child that you do not have food,” she said.

Jamie turned to ABCD’s Mystic Valley Opportunity Center (MVOC), which serves residents of Malden, Medford, and Everett.

The grateful recipient of two grants from the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund,

ABCD purchased Stop & Shop gift cards for people experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic. [The Boston Foundation](#) managed the Relief Fund distribution of a \$40,000 grant for Malden and Everett, and the [Cambridge Community Foundation](#) managed the distribution of a \$25,000 grant for Medford.

“Food insecurity” describes a household’s inability to provide enough food for every person to live an active, healthy life. According to Feeding America, 1 in 9 people in this country struggles with hunger.

There are other ways to address hunger including SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, a.k.a. food stamps) and food pantries. However, using a grocery gift card offers the shopper more choices than they’d find at a food pantry as well as the option to have groceries delivered, in the case of Stop & Shop gift cards through Peapod. That’s ideal for anyone who would rather not go shopping and risk exposure to the coronavirus.

ABCD Mystic Valley Operations Manager Nephthalie Dehoux said that many clients have lost their jobs due to the pandemic and are in distress. If they buy groceries, they might not be able to cover rent or the electric bill. “Giving them the Stop & Shop gift cards, whose value ranges from \$80 - \$100, helps immensely,” she said.

Jamie is proof positive that a little support can make all the difference. “There have been nights that I’ve sat here crying, wondering how we would make it through. The Stop & Shop gift card came just when we needed it. I really appreciate the help.”

Learn more about the Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund at MACovid19ReliefFund.org.

ABCD Staff Pics

ABCD Staff at Work!

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, ABCD was deemed an essential service, so many colleagues were at the frontlines distributing food, hygiene kits, diapers, formula and more. Many staff members worked remotely in the early months, but many have now returned to their offices, conference rooms, neighborhood centers, and Head Start classrooms.

Here they are, putting the “action” in Action for Boston Community Development.

[Recognize any of these faces?](#)



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ABCD Allston/Brighton Food Pantry

Staff, volunteers, and partners work together to get food to neighbors who are most in need. Here's a typical day at the ABCD Allston/Brighton Neighborhood Opportunity Center.



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ABCD Modifies Buildings and Workspaces for Enhanced Health and Safety



the work.

When a state of emergency was declared in Massachusetts due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, most ABCD employees worked from home. As the number of cases went down and the state began the slow and methodical process of reopening, ABCD went to great lengths to renovate and modify our buildings to create the safest, healthiest environments possible. [Here's a glimpse](#) of some of

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More Information

September 1st is Primary Day

Primary Day is next Tuesday, September 1st and The November 3rd general election is just around the corner.

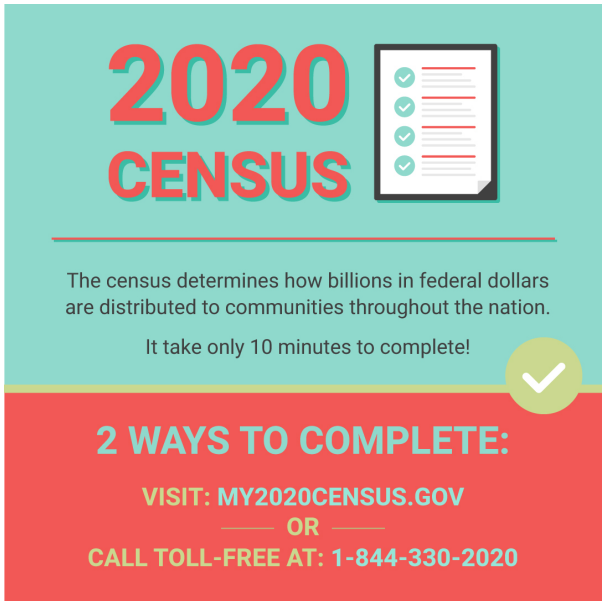
Cast your vote – safely. Voting is a right – for many of us, a hard-won right. When you make your voice heard, you help democracy thrive.

Visit the [Massachusetts Secretary of State's Elections Division](#) webpage to find your polling place and information about registering, early voting, voting by mail, and more.

Complete the 2020 Census Today

The 2020 Census is a way to directly increase community power. It will impact our daily

lives for the next 10 years. Many of our communities are at risk of an undercount. We need a complete and accurate count because all of our communities deserve to be seen, heard, and invested in.



Visit my2020census.gov to complete the 2020 Census today.

What are the community’s greatest needs? Watch for our 3-minute survey.

How have our community’s needs changed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic? ABCD has developed a brief community needs survey in order to provide our neighbors who are struggling most with the resources that will help the most. To protect everyone’s health and safety, the survey will be available online only. Your responses will help us gauge emerging issues.

Keep an eye out for **ABCD's Community Needs Assessment survey** on our social media pages between September 8 – 16th. You'll find more information and a link to this brief questionnaire. Thank you!

Give Today.

The ABCD COVID-19 Relief Fund supports individuals and families with urgent needs for food, baby formula, diapers and wipes, cleaning supplies, rental assistance, transportation and more. We hope you will consider making a donation today so that ABCD can continue and expand this essential work.

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