Essential Workers movement gains momentum

Virtual Caring Force rally to take place via Zoom on May 14

Take a drive across Massachusetts and you’ll likely have an opportunity to pass by a billboard thanking the state’s essential human services workers who fill more than 180,000 jobs.

The Caring Force is proudly sharing the message along major roadways in seven communities so far: Billerica, Boston, Brockton, Framingham, Peabody, Springfield and Worcester.

There are also nearly 3,200 blue yard signs dotting lawns across the state, as well as “thank you” public service announcements featuring Gov. Charlie Baker and EOHHS Secretary Mary Lou Sudders airing on stations from Boston to Pittsfield.

“Our sector’s leaders are enormously proud of our essential workers and their numerous acts of heroism during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Council President & CEO Michael Weekes. “Please join us in thanking them in your local community.”

Recently, Council members have sent nearly 1,200 emails to legislators as part of TCF’s ongoing e-advocacy campaign, an initiative urging legislators to co-sponsor bills of great importance to human services organizations.

The Council introduced four bills in mid-February — two in the House and two in the Senate — that would create a student loan repayment program for human services workers and eliminate the pay disparity between state workers and those employed by community-based human services nonprofits who do similar work.

Applications for Council’s Suffolk University graduate certificate program now open

Deadline May 28 for online and in-person options

Applications are now open for the Providers’ Council’s Certificate in Nonprofit Human Service Management program, which will begin this fall.

More than 600 mid-career human services professionals have completed this year-long, graduate-level program, which is designed to help future leaders in the sector strengthen their management skills and learn in specialized classes with peers from other human service agencies.

The program, offered in partnership with Suffolk University in Boston, will be offered this year with both online-only and in-person options. The in-person cohort will begin online, and transition to the classroom once it becomes safe to do so per university COVID-19 regulations.

The Certificate is composed of five mandatory blocks of classes that begin in September 2021 and end in May 2022. Classes typically meet on Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Courses include: Alternative Revenue Strategies for Nonprofits; Human Services Nonprofit Management; Nonprofit Financial Management; Human Resource Management; Legal & Ethical Issues for Nonprofits; and Information-Based Management.

The curriculum is designed to build skills and knowledge in these areas.

Marathoner Dick Hoyt, inspired many parents, athletes with disabilities

The Council remembers Dick Hoyt, who inspired thousands of runners, parents and athletes with disabilities by pushing his son, Rick, in a wheelchair in 32 runnings of the Boston Marathon and hundreds of other races. Hoyt died on March 17 at age 80 at his home in Holland, Mass., of natural causes, his family said. At right: Hoyt was the keynote speaker at the Council’s 38th Annual Convention & Expo: Champions for Change, in 2013.

ARP brings relief to sector

The massive federal American Rescue Plan, signed into law last month by President Joe Biden, has important benefits and considerations for Massachusetts human services nonprofits.

In addition to direct payments to taxpayers, expansion of child tax credits, new food and housing assistance to families, and COVID-19 testing and vaccination supports, the new law also extends the tax credit for nonprofits and other employers that voluntarily provide paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave through Sept. 30, 2021.

It also expands the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and federal unemployment coverage, among other programs that may benefit Council members.

The law adds $7.25 billion to the PPP program and expands eligibility to nonprofits with more than 500 employees that operate at multiple locations, as long as no more than 500 employees work at any one location.

The latest COVID relief package also extends various federal benefits for unemployed workers through Sept. 6, nonprofit organizations also benefit as the law extends a credit for organizations that self-insure for unemployment and increases it from 50 to 70%.

ASEA, see page 7

Terri & Michael Deisler

The Newspaper of the Providers’ Council

Vol. 42 - No. 4
April 2021

THE PROVIDER
Regina Marshall named Advocates COO

Advocates, Inc. has appointed Regina Marshall as Chief Operating Officer.

Marshall has served as senior vice president of administrative operations. Prior to joining Advocates, Marshall was director of the Massachusetts Mental Health Center. Marshall is active in the community as chair of the MetroWest Health Foundation’s Racial and Ethnic Disparities Workgroup. She serves on the Providers’ Council Race, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and MetroWest YMCA Board of Directors. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Simmons College and a law degree from Northeastern University.

VOAMASS appoints Rejoyce Owusu as HR director

Volunteers of America of Massachusetts has named Rejoyce Owusu its director of human resources.

Owusu will oversee all aspects of the agency’s human resources activities. Prior to joining VOAMASS, she was HR Director at ideaMA-CHINE Studio, a Brooklyn-based video production service, and previously worked in talent acquisition at Prudential Financial. Owusu, a Bronx, NY native, earned bachelor’s degree from SUNY Geneseo and a master’s degree in management from Nazareth College.

Western Mass. Council members receive Baystate Health grants

Springfield-based Baystate Health recently announced that it granted more than $1.2 million to 16 western Massachusetts nonprofits to support projects related to reducing social isolation, social support for youth, building connectedness to community for low-income adults and social justice.

Among Council members receiving grants were Community Adolescent Resource and Education (CARE) Center and Mental Health Association (MHA).

SouthCoast Community Foundation awards $1.27m to 20 nonprofits for COVID relief

The SouthCoast Community Foundation has awarded $1.27 million to 20 nonprofit organizations helping to alleviate impacts stemming from the coronavirus pandemic for residents in southeastern Massachusetts. Among the Council members receiving grants were RAMBI, Immigrants Assistance Center and Old Colony YMCA.

Central Mass. Council members receive grants for health access and food insecurity

The Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts in Fitchburg and the Greater Lowell Community Foundation in Lowell recently announced they jointly awarded $174,898 to 15 nonprofits working to eliminate food insecurity and severe economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gandara and New North Citizens Council given grants to assist immigrants during pandemic

The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts recently awarded $859,560 to 18 nonprofit organizations in the region providing direct financial assistance and support to immigrant and non-English speaking individuals and families experiencing severe economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council members Gandara Mental Health Center and New North Citizens Council were among those chosen.

2021 Black Excellence on the Hill ceremony honors Regina Marshall and Council’s Michael Weekes

Regina Marshall, chief operating officer of Advocates, Inc. (photo and recent appointment in top left announcement) and Michael Weekes, the Council president and CEO were recognized during the recent 2021 Black Excellence on the Hill honors from the Massachusetts Black & Latino Legislative Caucus.

The event celebrates Black community leaders and trailblazers. Marshall was nominated by Senate President Karen Spilka and Weekes was nominated by Sen. Eric

Amego to build six new student residences

Amego, Inc. will build and equip six new residential facilities on a 52-acre parcel in Franklin that will house 47 students ages eight through 22 who are attending the nearby Amego School. The project, financed by a MassDevelopment $30 million tax-exempt bond, will range in size from 2,800-3,600 square feet. Each building will house seven bedrooms, at least three bathrooms, office space, medication administration space, as well as learning and recreation spaces.

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PAGE 2 ■ THE PROVIDER ■ APRIL 2021
Pathways staff committed to ‘changing the world’ for survivors

Pathways for Change, Inc’s staff, interns and volunteers embody the spirit of this well-known quote by Margaret Mead. “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

A commitment to the mission of Pathways for Change and to providing quality and holistic services to survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence is the driving force that energizes and inspires the team to end the cycle of violence. They do so by turning to survivors for feedback, learning from experiences and strengthening the pathways to a safe and healthy future.

The Pathways team provides skills in English, Spanish, Portuguese and American Sign Language and to all survivors — regardless of gender — with compassion and empathy. They recognize the need to build the capacity of direct support professionals, including within medical and legal settings.

Pathways staff with a graduate degree in education earned their degree geared to providing personalized community experiences to Thriver. One survivor recently shared: “I feel so fortunate… I feel empowered and I have so many more emotional tools in my toolbox. Thank you Pathways for Change!”

The Pathways team also provides violence prevention education for youth and young adults across central Massachusetts. This impact can be powerful, as demonstrated by a case worker at another youth serving organization who attended a Pathways training. She then invited survivors to lead the training for other survivors. She reflected: “The survivors who led the training were so knowledgeable, and they connected. I was inspired.”

The Pathways team members have been with the agency from as little as six months to more than 20 years. Regardless of the length of their tenure, they all bond in their roles as community health educators, support counselors, prevention educators and networkers, and are social justice “champions for change” and are therefore uniquely qualified for this work, Dawkins said.

“Tirelessly continue to support survivors and their loved ones,” says Mead’s quote. “…a small group of thoughtful committed people, changing the world.”
A

As we prepare to recognize the month of May as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, perhaps it’s also an opportune time to begin riding our national consciousness of the offensive characterization and treatment of people as “the other.”

Congress, in honoring the many people of Asian descent that helped to build this nation, increased the length of recognition in 1992 from a weeklong designation to a month. It is a time when America recognizes the role Asian Americans, and in particular, Chinese immigrants, had in helping to construct this nation’s transcontinental railroad and their many other achievements.

Yet, they were badly mistreated then, and today this nation continues to fail to satisfactorily address its racist behavior and actions against Asian American and Pacific Islanders and, relatedly, BIPOC communities.

Fortunately our AAPI brothers and sisters, like our Black, Indigenous and people of color, are not fleeing this nation out of fear. In fact, the fastest growing demographic group in the United States is AAPI.

While numbers alone won’t determine progress in racial equity, there is stronger emerging leadership that could lead to more effective policies and laws. And there remains hope that in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. ’s words “a dream…that will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed…that all men are created equal.” What makes that creed and those of a different hue so difficult for many to accept?

For those who are woke, a reminder is not needed that America seems too comfortable dehumanizing those who may look, worship or speak differently. The tragedy in Atlanta, on March 16 exemplifies the intersectionality of our nation’s obsession with xenophobia, misogyny and abject racism of those categorized as the “other.” It was another tragic reflection of this nation’s struggle with equality as six of the eight people murdered in Atlanta were women of Asian descent. They were killed by a white male who claimed it was a result of his “sex addiction.” Surprisingly, some police officials refused to term the killings hate crimes and brightened his assertion on his illness, with one official remarking that the killer had a “bad day.”

Really?

The Pew Research Center stated that since the pandemic took root in the U.S., nearly three-in-ten Asian Americans reported being subject to racial slurs or jokes. According to the administration, Stop AAPI Hate, from March 19, 2020 to February 28, 2021, 3,795 occurrences of verbal harassment, physical confrontations and other acts of hatred occurred here. It’s believed that nearly half were in California, with Massachusetts ranking sixth in reported cases. Asian women were reportedly more than twice as likely as men to experience this mistreatment. And New York City police investigated 28 attacks on Asian Americans in 2020, nine times more than what occurred in 2019. Will we ever change those from thinking of difference as “the other?” Which, in most aspects, connotes less than.

Paul Watanabe, a Japanese American, directs UMass Boston’s Institute for Asian American Studies spoke recently on the “other” in a radio interview with WBUR. He said of the omnipresent anti-Asian sentiment in the United States: “Asian Americans have been in some ways treated in this fashion as the other, as perpetual foreigners.”

“Perpetual foreigners” who have helped to build this nation from the railroads to the cotton fields to Wall Street. So what is “the other?”

According to The Ethics Centre, the other is a term that gives comfort to racial and ethnic bigotry, classism and a nod to indifference and xenophobia.

“One denotation of The Other is a term used to capture the ways other people are different from us. It’s also used to describe the people who we keep distant from us because we decide they’re not like us. The process of Othering occurs when we turn fellow humans into abstract entities we can distance ourselves from or treat as less-than-human,” the Centre said.

We must recognize that otherness and alterity have become convenient terms to rationalize or disguise racism and oppression. Words do matter.

So what can we do? First and foremost, we can speak up to bigotry and all forms of racism when the conversations describe “the other.” The truth is that all of us — other than Native Americans — arrived on this nation’s shores, some involuntarily.

We now aspire this nation to live its creed of equality and work toward creating “a more perfect Union.” But it will take more actions from all of us to end the hatred of “the other.” In my view, to have allegiance with American ideals is to denounce othering.

For more information about actions to fight AAPI hate, visit the website of Stop AAPI Hate at www.stoppaapihate.org/actnow.

Let Erica know: 508.599.2245 or enoonan@providers.org

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End the notion of “the other”
There is no vaccine for mental health. It takes a village.

By Rebekah Roulier

As we know, the unrelenting pandemic and economic and racial strife of the past year have vastly impacted people—and our professionals. "Hybrid" has become a way of life, with encouragement with vaccines rolling out and online learning and virtual settings. We need to keep working to be done on the mental health front given the fallout that we know will endure.

Most unfortunately, the effects on mental health among youth have become alarming. Mental Health America’s annual State of Mental Health in America report released last fall shows that approximately 10 percent of U.S. youth have severe depression. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the period from April to October children’s emergency department visits related to mental health increased by 5-11 and 31 percent among adolescents aged 12-17 and younger, respectively. There is also an increased likelihood of suicide attempts.

We recognize the need for support and education. The work of community organizations and teachers, coaches, and clinicians, such as those through the Champions Network™ online training portal launched last September. It provides guidance on fundamental and evidence-based mental health training that leverage the sport-and-community-based therapies. The skills support work of community organizations and individuals around the world, such as youth advocates, coaches, and parents, and the curriculum includes a sport-based therapy credentialing program for professionals and specialized trainings such as Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth Sport.

We are all so busy doing the work we do, supporting people over the coming years after such a challenging one will also require the help of nonprofessionals or “the village.” Some members of the community, with fundamental training, are incredibly well-positioned to help, such as coaches.

With more than 45 million youth playing sports in the U.S., coaches can provide support, whether its teaching their athletes necessary coping and strength skills or spotting signs and symptoms when someone is struggling with mental health issues. And fortunately, the escalating crisis is starting to take steps to address it, among them em- ploying and universities that are host- ing workshops and summits that focus on self-care.

Traditional mental health care and counseling will always be part of the support spectrum, as well as leveraging new technologies and approaches. While the crises of last year have been tragic and difficult, there are sil- ver linings. Students with special health needs are being spotlighted like never before, and awareness is increasing on how vital it is to overall health and wel- being.

For that reason, it is an incredibly opportune time to engage people and organizations to ensure those who re- quire support receive it. Equipping educators with a part of the curriculum, we can work together to help students build a foundation that supports mental health and supports the community. The Bridge Training Institute has provided over a decade worth of trainings to mental health and school pro- fessionals, traditionally offered in a hybrid or virtual learning environment. Just like with any other course, educators have had to pivot to virtual methods to connect, so too has the neurotypical and autism awareness.

Start of the year has been traumatic for the entire community. While we tend to frame trauma as individual experiences, responses to trauma is no different for systemic and small but impactful. Autism awareness means that people will have the opportunity to provide education and training to others on what autism is and its effects on children and families. By giving parents and professionals the knowledge is power, and in addition to building awareness with these experts. Fran Kuehn even cre- ated a virtual classroom to manage the current landscape of virtual or hybrid learning and how to prepare for the re- turn of students to physical class- rooms as the state lifted pandemic subsides. When asked about the impor- tance of understanding social-emotional health of students, Fran Kuehn said, "There’s no learning without relation- ships. The schools that will be successful in navigating virtual learning and bring- ing students back into the classrooms will be the ones who focus on building strong, trusting relationships. These workshops will provide schools with evidence-based practices and resourc- es to establish these relationships: teacher to peer, child to peer, school to community.

Karen Serra is director of Autism Con- nections, a program of Pathlight.

By Suzy Langevin

If there’s one lesson we can take away from the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on children and families, it is how essential it is to maintain a partner in maintaining kids’ mental health.

Since the pandemic necessitated a shift to hybrid or virtual learning mod- els, many have reported increased in stress, depression and anxiety among students, alongside decreased motivation to engage in learning. The principles of trauma-informed practice tell us why this is true: to learn re- quires safety, and safety requires stability, predictability and trust. We’re living through a period as uncertain as the past year has been, these items are in short supply — for educators, students and families. Sys- temic inequities make these effects even more pronounced in communities of color.

There are many of us in the mental health provider community with the question: what can we do to support schools and their kids when they need it? At The Bridge Training Institute, a program of Open Sky in Connecticut, we have reoccurring thought leadership pieces for our virtual student mental health.

From 2021 to 2024, The Bridge Training Institute has a mission of delivering Dialectical Behavior Therapy in educational settings, this year, we broadened those efforts into the Bridge to Behavior Institute. 

By partnering with experts in the field, Fran Kuehn, LICSW, and Dr. Sharon Saline, PsyD, the Bridge Institute is scheduled to deliver four full-day workshops from February to May, covering topics like social-emotional learning, trauma informed care, and understanding the neurobiology that im- pacts children.

The Bridge Training Institute has provided over a decade worth of trainings to mental health and school profes- sionals, traditionally offered in a hybrid or virtual learning environment. The Bridge Training Institute has provided over a decade worth of trainings to mental health and school profession- al, including the Champions Network™ online training portal. It is an incredibly opportune time to engage people and organizations to ensure those who require support receive it. Equipping educators with a part of the curriculum, we can work together to help students build a foundation that supports mental health and supports the community.

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Suzy Langevin, LICSW, LADC, is the di- rector of Training & professional develop- ment at Open Sky Community Services.
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**A VIEW FROM THE HILL**

A commentary from a legislator on human services

**The time is right to improve Mass. transportation for all**

By Rep. Sally Kerans

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If you’ve ever driven past the mall in Danvers on the north shore, you’ve likely seen a few large, empty buses. These MBTA buses bring people to our malls, but come through the center of town, often empty, even well before COVID-19 hit.

The three bus lines that go through Danvers - the 465, the 436, and the 435 - largely take passengers between the North Shore Mall and the Liberty Tree Mall. While some people can’t take you to North Shore Community College. They cannot take you directly to the Salem Depot or the Beverly Depot. Just recently, the MBTA made the decision to suspend the 465 bus altogether, saying the T’s financial situation requires such cuts. This is in dispute. The town of Danvers pays the MBTA well over $500,000 each year, and in exchange, we get services that fall short.

As a legislator for Danvers residents, I have watched these often completely empty buses roll across my town for years and thought that there must be a way to finally create bus routes that best serve the current riders, our town and its residents. I don’t want to eliminate these routes; rather, I want to make them work for everyone. It’s time to think more creatively and to re-configure our bus routes. We need to make these routes work for our residents as well as for those coming to Danvers.

Strategic transportation policy decisions charge our economy and support our small businesses. It has been my priority since being elected last November to work with the MBTA to craft routes that serve riders’ needs, including Danvers residents.

In November 2020, just after I was elected, I spoke at a public forum urging the MBTA to consider making changes to bus routes. Later this month, I will meet with the MBTA’s Bus Network Redesign Task Force to continue to push for these changes, keeping in mind that if there are people who depend on these buses to get to Danvers to work, we must find a way to meet their needs while also getting people directly to a train depot. I am hopeful that these discussions will lead to routes that better serve our community.

Re-configuring these bus routes will improve the quality of life and commute for many of our workers, particularly the many human service and health workers who live and work in our town.

This re-configuration must also take into account the needs of our community and aspire to a greater vision. Why can’t our buses bring riders directly to a train, so that rather than facing the arduous commute into Boston, riders could instead enjoy a more predictable and smooth journey?

Why can’t our buses bring students to North Shore Community College, so that more of our residents can access the programs that do not currently connect to any public transit service?

Why can’t we provide a more reliable service for those who rely on public transportation to get to work?

These changes would help spur our local economy and would lead to greater ridership, so that more of our community could use and take advantage of public transportation. I will also ensure that those who truly depend on the services in their current form will not be left out in the cold, and I will continue to speak for them, too.

While this particular issue may impact my district, the broader theme of better, more strategic transportation policy impacts us all. Reimagining our transportation system to be fairer, greener, more accessible, and more flexible should be a top priority of the state, especially given the urgency of addressing climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Now is the time to undertake this effort. Our state will have access to funds from the American Rescue Plan, and we must begin to fully invest in our transportation system. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated many of these problems, and we now find ourselves at a crossroads where we are forced to re-evaluate our broader transportation policy.

We have an opportunity to fundamentally transform our transportation system into a tool that will not only spur our economy but will help us combat climate change and create a fairer, more equitable Commonwealth. What began as a cost-cutting measure by the MBTA has opened up an opportunity for our district and the people who live here to gain access to effective public transportation.

Rep. Sally Kerans represents the 13th Essex District

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The opinions expressed in A View from the Hill and Viewpoints from Across the State are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Providers’ Council or its members.

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**A Viewpoints from Across the State**

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RESCUE: Federal plan offers more PPP options, UI extensions and employee retention credits for nonprofits

Continued from Page 1

percent to 75 percent. The new law also provides continued coverage for self-employed workers and staff of religious and very small nonprofits.

Those types of nonprofits are also eligible for up to $10 million in the first draw of PPP and would be eligible for the second draw if they meet revenue decline criteria and slightly smaller employment thresholds of 300 at a particular location. To be eligible for the second draw of the PPP, organizations must show a 25 percent reduction in revenue compared to the same quarter a year ago.

Nonprofits that are newly eligible for the second draw of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) will have an additional two months to apply for the relief funds, through the end of May 2021, federal officials said.

The PPP deadline extension was vitally important, according to David Thompson, vice president of public policy at the National Council of Nonprofits.

In wake of Atlanta attacks, Council issues statement urging anti-racist actions and training

In the wake of recent tragic and violent killings of members of the Asian community in Atlanta, The Providers’ Council denounced the violence against members of the Asian community and on behalf of the community-based human services sector in Massachusetts.

The Council also called for a renewed commitment to anti-racist practices, education and policies. The Council’s Call to Action on Racial Equity, developed last year by its Race, Diversity & Inclusion Committee and supported by more than 80 member agencies, said: “As members of the human service community, an integral part of our nation, it is essential to have equity and justice for all people of color and for all people in need of support. We call on all providers, their staff members and supporters of the human services sector to action in working against oppression, being antiracist and bringing justice to our communities.”

“As change leaders we ask you to not only speak against racism, but also to be antiracist and actively work to combat racism and systemic inequality. It’s up to us to lead efforts to bring about social justice. We must act now.

We don’t have any more time to wait.”

And as the Council commended the recent Boston Arts Commission’s approval advancing King Boston’s Embrace Memorial on the Boston Common, we must demand that racial respect, equity and justice remains an incontrovertible cornerstone of our humanity, said Council President & CEO Michael Weekes.

“We join together with President Biden and Vice President Harris and the many other Americans who stand in support of our sisters and brothers of Asian descent.”

We can’t afford to wait. We can’t afford to do anything else. We must act now.

SUFFOLK: Apply by May 28

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS • SPRING 2021

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<td>Wednesday, April 7</td>
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<td>Tuesday, April 20 to June 22</td>
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Followed by: Untapped Talent: Panel Discussion on Supporting Career Development Needs of the BIPOC and Foreign-Born Workforce from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Panelists:
- Emmanuel Owusu, Executive Director, African Bridge Network
- Jule Gomes Nowack, President and CEO, HMEA
- Peter Obour-Mensah, Manager, Baycove Housing Support Program
- Evans Chijombe, Senior Program Director, Victory Human Services
- Hillary Bradburn, Education Manager, International Institute of New England
- Moderated by Pam Sampson, Chief Program Officer, Venture Community Services

Cost: $25 minimum donation to support graduate scholarship fund for a foreign-born professional within the human services sector

### Free, Members-Only Webinar: Success Planning Requires Succession Planning

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<th>What:</th>
<th>Free, Members-Only Northern Massachusetts University Roundtable</th>
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<td>Wednesday, April 14</td>
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Trainers:
- David Harris, Managing Partner, Interim Executive Solutions
- Demetrious Russell, Chief Executive Officer, Venn Diagram Partners LLC

Pre-registration for these events required unless otherwise noted.

Visit www.provider.org/events to learn more and register.

Questions? Contact Eliza Adams at 508.598.9700 or eadams@providers.org

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