

2023

# Together @ BMCHS

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

### Year in Review



Boston Medical Center  
**HEALTH SYSTEM**



DEI is in the fabric of the culture here. We enable, invite, and nurture the perspectives of everyone. This is proof of what happens with intentionality. We are not afraid to be bold and do something people think can't be done. And we're not done yet.

– Thea James, MD, MPH, MBA

Vice President of Mission, Associate Chief Medical Officer  
& Co-Executive Director of the Health Equity Accelerator

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## Reflections from Alastair Bell, MD

At Boston Medical Center Health System, our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is anchored by people working together to effect real change. We're truly modeling a new kind of excellence in healthcare — one focused on expert care and driven by an unwavering commitment to health equity. This commitment drives our everyday actions, inspires our DEI efforts, and requires us to consistently look into root causes of inequities and dismantle them so everyone — our employees, our patients, and our communities — can thrive.

I joined Boston Medical Center in 2012 because I believed deeply in our mission. Today, in my new role as president & CEO of Boston Medical Center Health System, I still deeply believe in empowering our employees, patients, members, and communities to flourish.

From creating innovative programs that address economic mobility and career advancement among our communities and staff to implementing cultural responsiveness and equity trainings that ensure an inclusive patient and member experience, we should be very proud of what we've accomplished together. I'm incredibly inspired by the impact our work across the health system is having and look forward to what we'll continue to do together in the years ahead.

Thank you for your partnership and engagement as, *Together @ BMCHS*, we continue to create a vibrant, inclusive, and diverse workplace and rewrite healthcare for our patients, for our members, and for Boston and beyond.

Alastair Bell, MD  
President & CEO  
Boston Medical Center Health System



## A Letter from Lisa Kelly-Croswell, MA

It is my absolute honor to be part of a team that consistently brings a sense of shared humanity to providing exceptional care. Our Boston Medical Center Health System (BMCHS) team lives our culture code day in and day out. We are powered by empathy, move mountains, and at our core, *live* inclusion always. We take actions much more seriously than words — the hallmark of why we are here and what we stand for.

Our 2023 *Together @ BMCHS* report showcases only a sample of the many ways that inclusion lives in our organization and contributes to measurable change. My deepest appreciation extends to an amazing group of talented and capable individuals who, beyond demographics, bring to bear unique experiences and backgrounds. At BMCHS, we leverage our

common values in our collective quest for excellence in the health and welfare of our patients, members, and each other. It is what makes us unique. It is what helps us thrive.

Thank you all for your collective efforts to compel real change. I am so proud of what we have been able to do together... *everyone, every day.*

Lisa Kelly-Croswell, MA  
SVP & Chief Human Resources Officer  
Boston Medical Center Health System



# Our Core Values

Our three core values drive our pursuit to deliver exceptional care and guide our beliefs, behaviors, and decision-making along the way.

Built on respect  
powered by empathy

Above all, care.  
What matters to you.

Move mountains

Make it happen.  
We ask why. We ask why not.


Many faces create  
our greatness

Inclusion always.  
Diversity is our heart and soul.

Employees celebrating their milestone anniversaries at this year's Service Awards.







► Megan O'Brien, RN, manager, OBGYN Clinical Programs, discusses advancing equity in pregnancy throughout the health system.

# Empower and Enable Everyday Action

At BMCHS, we work relentlessly together every day to create a more inclusive environment for our staff, patients, and members. Empowering our employees with the resources and support they need to advance our mission enables our team members, organization, and communities to thrive.



# Empower and Enable Everyday Action

## Nothing About Me Without Me: Grayken Center Partners To Fight Addiction Disparities

A dedicated team within BMC’s Grayken Center for Addiction is actively engaging with and learning from community members to examine the “why” behind addiction and care disparities in the Black community. Through a major research project, the team aims to redesign care to make addiction treatment more appealing, effective, and equitable for Black patients.

### Following the data

The death toll from drug overdoses, particularly opioid overdoses, continues to rise in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and in recent years, the overdose death rate for Black people has increased more than that of any other racial or ethnic group. Last year, at least 2,310 people died from opioid-related overdoses in Massachusetts, according to state health department figures — and the overdose death rate among non-Hispanic Black residents showed the largest increase over the previous year of any demographic group, at a staggering 42% increase. At the same time, research from a JAMA study shows that Black patients are far less likely than white patients to be prescribed medication for opioid use disorder, a known and effective treatment.

Grayken Center researchers are now undertaking a **major research focus** to examine the “why” of addiction care disparities and rethink and redesign substance use disorder (SUD) care to answer this question: How can we make addiction treatment more appealing, effective, and equitable for Black patients?

### Engaging and including people with lived experience of addiction

The Grayken team invited Black people living with SUD in Boston to participate in a series of conferences to explore four major topics in addiction care disparities: provider factors, the impact of trauma, systemic factors, and patient factors. Nine participants from a preceding focus group agreed to join a new Council of Experts in Patient Experience (CEPE) and joined local and national addiction experts to have honest discussions about what’s needed to attract people of color to SUD treatment and how to keep them there.

“

The Grayken Center was intentional about this research, going into the community and bringing people onto the team who reflect the community, that have value in the community, and that have a commitment to advancing and improving the health and wealth of Black folks—Black Bostonians. And that, for me, is groundbreaking.

- **Phillip Reason, MSW, MPH**, co-investigator of the grant-funded project “Embracing Anti-Racism in Addiction Treatment, Research and Policy: Engaging Black People with Lived Experience of SUDs”

### Next steps to change addiction care for Black patients

The Grayken team will soon publish their initial findings as well as develop and implement action items. This includes a commitment to hiring more Black staff members in the addiction space and educating all staff on the history of anti-Black racism and the ways that it shows up in addiction and addiction treatment so that staff has a better understanding of their Black patients’ experiences. Longer term, Grayken will continue to collaborate with the members of the Council of Experts in Patient Experience to research and develop best practices and policies that directly affect Black patients in residential addiction programs.

“This project doesn’t end here. We will continue digging deeper into areas that are important but require more research,” says Daneiris Heredia-Perez, MSPM, a senior research project manager supporting this project at Grayken.

“More importantly, we will honor the stories and recommendations we heard from the Council of Experts in Patient Experience by encouraging providers and community members to implement these action items. There is an opportunity here to have a major impact, and we are going to take it.”



The Grayken Center for Addiction project team (left to right from back): Daneiris Heredia-Perez, Sheila Chapman, Craig McClay, Phillip Reason, Miriam Komaromy, Joseph Eubanks Jr., Tayla Weeden, Loren Scott-Cruz, Corinne Beaugard, and Raquel Silveira.



Positive Patient Experiences Begin with Our Environmental Services Team

Made up of more than 200 individuals from across the globe, the Environmental Services (EVS) team consistently prioritizes and celebrates diversity as a key focus in their work. The team comprises members representing 12 countries and speaking seven different languages. Because of their diverse backgrounds and regular exposure to topics that celebrate diversity, they are able to better connect with patients on a personal level.

The EVS team features DEI as a regular discussion point each month during their team meeting when they explore various DEI topics ranging from women’s equality to learning the origins of religious holidays.

“This team is very committed to our mission and is critical to ensuring a positive experience for our patients and staff — the hospital could not function without the support of the EVS team. Embedding our DEI efforts into our daily work is one way we ensure this team feels engaged, energized, and supported. It has resulted in appreciating each other’s differences and using these differences to strengthen our bond and commitment to each other and the patient community, ultimately making us a stronger team.

– Dave Maffeo, Senior Director of Support Services

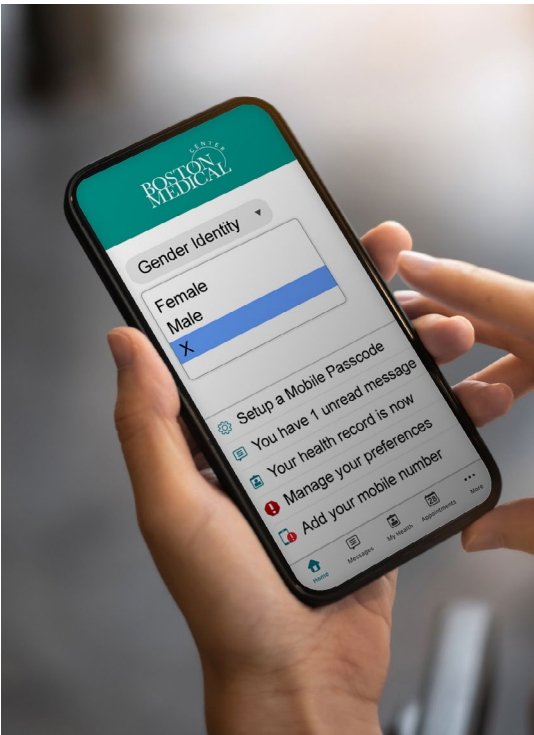
By keeping DEI at the forefront each day, the team is inspired to take action and create a more inclusive and diverse working environment.



Gender X Option Supports Transgender and Gender-Diverse Patients

The Transgender Task Force, established in 2015, brings together a multidisciplinary group to work on clinical issues, education and training needs, and policies and procedures that impact BMC’s transgender and gender-diverse community. This year, the task force committed to enhancing the patient experience for gender-diverse persons by introducing a new affirming gender option in recordkeeping. BMC patients now have the option to use the legal gender marker “X” in their medical records, and BMC is improving the patient experience by providing a gender-neutral choice for people.

In addition, the task force has taken several actions in recent years that have helped strengthen our health system’s ability to support our transgender and gender-diverse patients and staff. Task force members assisted HR in creating a Transgender & Allyship Guide, antidiscrimination and harassment policies, and a workplace gender transition policy. The task force also continued to provide sexual orientation/gender identity education in clinical settings across BMC, including at the annual Nursing and Certified Nursing Assistant Competency Day.



Supply Chain Team Leads the Way with Focus on Diverse Partners

The Supply Chain Operations team continues to advance its support of local, women-owned, minority-owned, and veteran-owned businesses and other groups often underrepresented in corporate spending. One business that BMC is proud to partner with is City Fresh, a local, minority-owned prepared foods company that was founded on a belief in local empowerment. The company, with which BMC spent more than \$200,000 this year, intentionally employs many people from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, and 93 out of their 120 employees live in the City of Boston.

By working with diverse local vendors like City Fresh, BMC is helping to support economic development and strengthen the quality of life for our neighborhoods, people, and communities. In 2024, the Supply Chain Operations team will continue to pursue its goals of increasing the number of diverse partners.



For the past five years, the Supply Chain team has worked hard to increase the number of diverse vendors that partner with BMC. In 2023, BMC spent more than \$40M with DEI vendors, an increase of nearly \$20M since 2020.

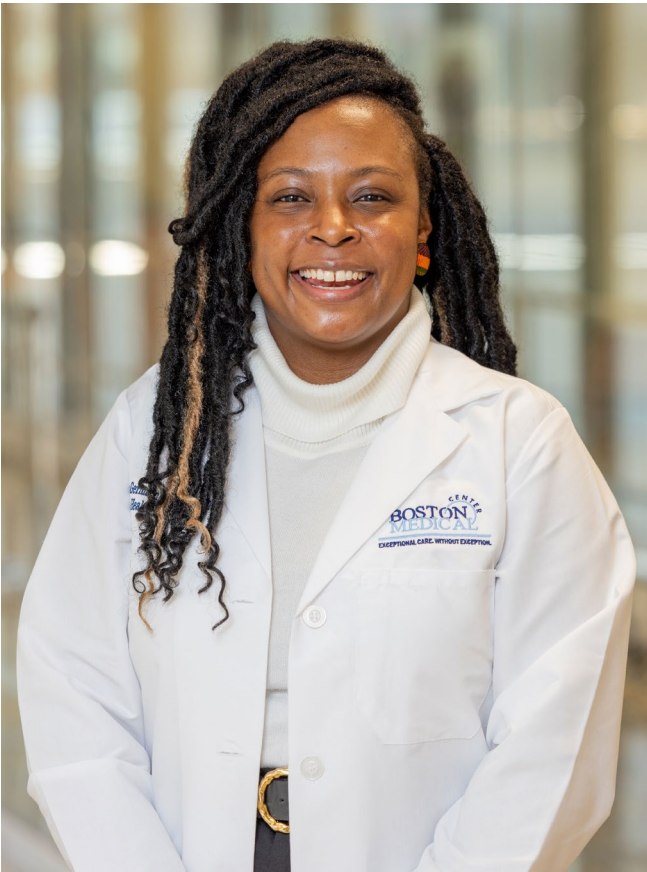
Health Equity Fellow Tackles Diversity in Nursing

According to the 2020 National Nursing Workforce Survey, only 6% of the RN workforce identify as Black. It’s just one reason why Monica Germain, BSN, RN, CCRN, launched the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Nursing Council at BMC: to increase diversity in nursing.

Germain is serving as the first nurse health equity fellow for the Ravin Davidoff Health Equity Fellowship at BMC. Her work with the council includes talking with the nursing community to gain valuable insights on ideas such as streamlining the interview process to reduce the risk of bias and including more questions about how Boston Medical Center’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is woven into the Boston community. She believes that incorporating DEI into nursing practice can improve outcomes not only for historically marginalized patients, but for all patients.

“Seeing all the health inequities or racial inequities for patients in the ICU or patients with COVID-19 drove me to want to make a change or find a way to contribute to making healthcare better as a whole,” said Germain.

Germain’s goal is to create a safer and more inclusive environment for all staff and to support DEI as integral to the care of BMC nursing staff, hospital colleagues, patients, and their families.



To hear more from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Nursing Council, scan the QR code or visit <http://bit.ly/3SPXHld>.

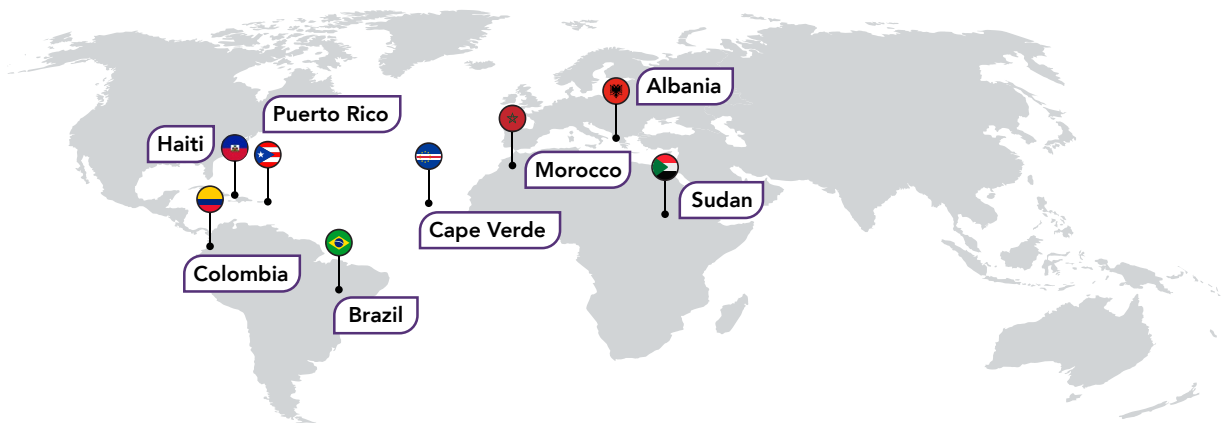


ESOL Course Empowers Employees from Around the Globe

The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program at BMC is designed to support career mobility. In many roles across the hospital, especially patient-facing roles, strong English skills can help enhance the patient experience as well as the job performance of team members as they collaborate with English-only colleagues to support the patient. The long-standing program, which runs twice annually, in the fall and spring, covers topics including greetings and introductions, idioms, parts of speech, writing sentences, and healthcare conversations.

“ I know you can’t imagine it, but I need you to know how important this class is to us. To come from a different country, speak other languages, and now start to learn another one. It’s hard.

Countries of Origin for 2023 Graduates:



Primary Languages Spoken by 2023 Graduates:



Oldest and Most Extensive Hospital Interpreter Services Program Expands Capabilities

In 2023, the Interpreter Services department, known as the oldest and most extensive interpreter services program in New England, completed more than 900,000 interpretations in more than 150 languages. To expand its capabilities, this year the department partnered with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to coordinate two training sessions open to all hospital staff on how to effectively work with deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. With 33% of BMC patients considered Limited English Proficient (LEP), BMC’s Interpreter Services department plays a critical role in ensuring a smooth patient experience by bridging the language gap and enabling effective and supportive communication between patients and staff.

700,000 INTERPRETATIONS in more than 150 LANGUAGES, including AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Cultivate and Support Model Leadership

BMCHS is dedicated to empowering our employees to thrive through leadership development and to providing the resources needed to excel and inspire. By investing in our workforce, we enhance employee engagement and decision-making that benefits our patients and members while also helping future leaders move our organization forward.



# Cultivate and Support Model Leadership

## Creating a More Inclusive and Welcoming Environment for Patients Through DEI Cultural Responsiveness Training

Understanding and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values is critical to the delivery of safe and comprehensive patient care. With a focus on health equity, BMC expanded its commitment to cultural competence by launching our hands-on DEI Cultural Responsiveness training this year that provides patient-facing employees, Boston Accountable Care Organization (BACO) employees, and community health center employees with the framework and tools necessary to provide even better care to our patients.

In this training, employees reflected on how their patient interactions should be informed by cultural identities. Through small group activities and personal reflections, participants practiced applying cultural competence and cultural humility to patient care. They learned how these two factors are needed for cultural responsiveness — which is integral to our mission of providing exceptional care.

### Hearing from participants

Altogether, 91% of participants reported that the training helped them be more prepared to connect with patients of various backgrounds. The training is designed to help employees deliver more patient-centered care, resulting in more positive experiences, which led to improved health outcomes. Having team members formally trained in cultural responsiveness plays a significant role in fostering trust, understanding, and respect between BMC employees and their patients.

### Cultural Responsiveness Framework



“It was nice to talk to peers about our experiences and hear different ways we could face our own cultural bias.

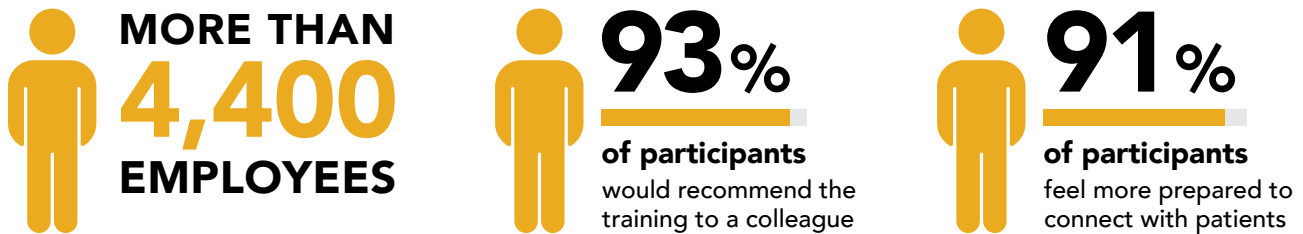
– A training participant



Understanding my bias and a patient’s culture helps me to deliver care that is comprehensive, truly designed to fit the patient’s need, and will set them up for success.

– A training participant

### By the Numbers



BMC’s patient-facing employees attending DEI Cultural Responsiveness training.



Paving Paths to Educational and Career Advancement

BMC is proud to offer resources to our employees that help advance their careers by providing access to education and professional development opportunities. In August, BMC hosted a College Fair where employees had the opportunity to connect with nearly 10 local community colleges while learning about the tuition-free model at the local and state level. Employees learned more about medical certificate programs and associate degrees, with some registering for programs of interest on the spot.

Employees are also encouraged to take advantage of our Educational Reimbursement Program, which offers partial financial repayment for tuition expenses and continuing education activities, and can be combined with tuition reduction programs at partnering colleges.

The program is inspiring. Especially for someone like me who is eager for more education, but worried about tuition and finances. The program provides a path to continue my education.

– Yolanda Hollins, Certified Financial Counselor at BMC

BMC continues to build and deepen partnerships with local colleges as part of a commitment to deliver, support, and grow economic mobility opportunities that have the potential to advance the trajectory of employees' careers — and their family lives.



Leadership Acceleration Program Increases Representation Across BMCHS

With its fifth cohort of 23 graduates completing the program in June, Pathways, a leadership acceleration program for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) employees, continues to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion across BMCHS. Over a five-month period, participants attend expert-led training and skill-building sessions on leadership-related topics, create career development plans, and complete stretch assignments.

The Pathways Program has been integral to my personal and professional development. The dynamic curriculum offered by the program has helped me to identify and refine key leadership skills.

– Christopher Fagbote, Clinical Pharmacy Specialist, Complex Care Management



80 alumni have graduated since 2019. We have an impressive 80% retention rate for our Pathways participants. 30% of Pathways alumni have earned promotions, and that number continues to grow.

LEAP Program Propels Careers in Ambulatory

In 2020, data revealed there were more opportunities to improve diversity among ambulatory team members at the manager and director level. As a result, the Ambulatory Operations DEI Council developed the Ambulatory Leadership Acceleration Program (LEAP) aimed at providing BMC employees from underrepresented backgrounds with the opportunity to strengthen leadership skills and gain experience.



Earlier this year, BMC's second cohort graduated from the program. Edwina Chauvet, an OBGYN charge nurse, was one of the graduates. She joined BMC in 2005. The native of Haiti said she developed core leadership skills during the six-month LEAP program. Throughout the program, she not only learned how to collaborate more effectively with colleagues but also gained the skills to analyze data and create innovative solutions to address care challenges.

The program helped me unlock my potential.

– Edwina Chauvet, an OBGYN charge nurse and one of the graduates.

Creating Resilient Equity Leadership

Leaders working tirelessly to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in medicine and healthcare can often face burnout and lack of support and recognition for the important work they do. This trend was recently recognized by the Office of Equity, Vitality, and Inclusion (EVI) within the Boston University Medical Group and Boston Medical Center's Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Addiction Medicine (IDEAAA) program.

This year, the two groups began working together to find ways leaders throughout BMC Health System could learn from and support each other in their efforts. This collaboration evolved into a half-day conference on wellness, self-care, and community care for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) leaders and staff members.

The synergy of this event is bringing people together to have those community connections, conversations, and networking so that we can really work toward developing a more resilient DEIA workforce and space on the medical campus.

– Jules Canfield, MPH, IDEAAA program manager







► BMCHS employees participating in this year's Boston Pride Parade.

# Bridging the Community

Through innovative partnerships, we're working to improve health outcomes and drive economic mobility in our communities. Our approach involves interrogating the root causes of inequities and connecting patients and families to groundbreaking programs that support healthier communities.



# Bridging the Community

## Rewriting Healthcare

BMC is redefining patients' experiences with health through a new brand campaign — Rewriting Healthcare — that creatively shares long-standing ideas from patients and then flips them on their heads. “Community input is undervalued,” one message reads. Through the messaging, BMC is underscoring its caregivers' focus on all aspects of health, from preventive care to care for chronic conditions to programs that address the root causes of medical issues and long-standing inequities.

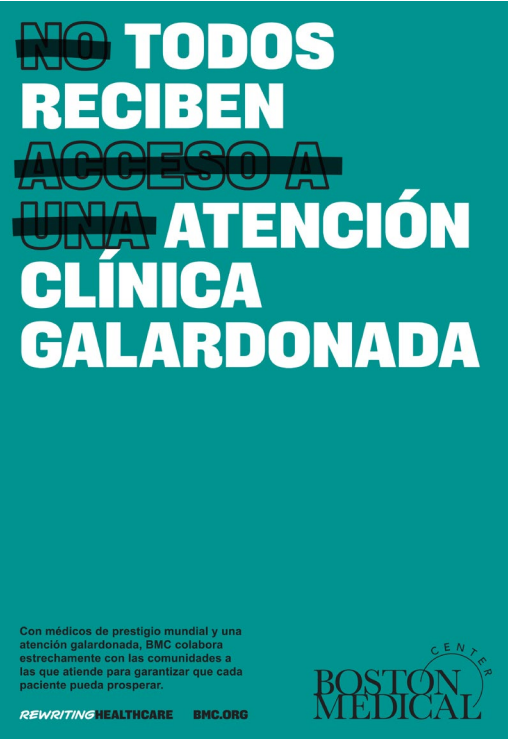
The Rewriting Healthcare campaign is the first step in communicating to our community that BMC represents a new kind of excellence in healthcare: one that empowers patients to be part of their healthcare, offers equitable and expert care to all, and speaks the languages of our patients. The campaign, which was based on the results of extensive focus groups and research, showcases BMC’s commitment to finding innovative approaches to care, and illustrates that we are as diverse as the population we serve.

“

Rewriting Healthcare is designed to speak directly to our current and future patients and let them know that we hear them. Our providers and researchers are here to break traditional medical boundaries and provide the holistic care that we all deserve.

– Rachel Felix, Chief Marketing & Growth Officer

The highly visible campaign has been running across the city, focusing on areas where BMC patients live, from Downtown Crossing station to print ads in newspapers such as the *Bay State Banner* and *Dorchester Reporter*. To further reach BMC patients, the campaign is also running in Spanish in outlets such as *El Mundo* and *El Planeta*. Other rewritten phrases include “Access to award-winning clinical care is ~~not~~ available for everyone,” and “Doctors who ~~don’t~~ get you.”





■ **Evolving with the Changing Needs of Patients: Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery is Now GenderCare Center**

At BMCHS, focusing on the whole person and adapting to the changing needs of our patients and communities are core to our mission. In recent years, conversations around gender care have grown more nuanced, with some states in the U.S. banning gender-affirming care, expressions of gender fluidity, and gender diversity. In support of patient needs, the Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery, which was founded in 2016, changed its name to the GenderCare Center (GCC) this year. The name change better encompasses the diversity of the gender experience and the breadth of care the Center provides, which includes recognizing the whole person.

One of the founders, Nurse Liaison Pam Klein, RN, MSN, said the original name was no longer comprehensive enough.

“It was too focused on medicine and surgery and excluded behavioral health and other crucial aspects,” said Klein.

Further, being transgender or gender diverse does not necessarily mean medicine or surgery is needed or wanted.

The GenderCare team of cross-functional experts will continue to adapt to the changing needs of our patients and communities and ensure gender care is accessible to anyone who needs it.



■ **Proud To Be: BMCHS Celebrates Our LGBTQIA+ Community**

BMCHS is proud to celebrate our LGBTQIA+ team members and their contributions to the exceptional care we provide our patients and communities every day. This pride was on full display at the Boston Pride Parade in June when colleagues from across the health system joined together in celebration. We are grateful for the invaluable perspectives, experiences, and talents our LGBTQIA+ community brings to BMCHS.



■ **Aspiring High School Students Inspire BMC’s Patients**

Nearly 40 high school juniors from Boston neighborhoods and beyond got a “taste” of a career in healthcare through the Junior Summer Volunteer Program, and left a lasting impression on BMC’s youngest patients in the process. The teens helped patients find their way around the hospital, assisted in the food pantry, and spent time playing with pediatric patients.

BMC is deeply committed to helping shape and inspire the next generation to become our future healthcare leaders.

“You don’t get this kind of experience at school,” said graduate Catherine Mechael. “I learned about different jobs and also how important the patient experience is at BMC.”

Karlie Bittrich, Certified Child Life Specialist and Volunteer Supervisor, said the junior volunteers were consistently engaged with her pediatric patients. “They showed consistent professionalism, problem-solving skills, and maturity,” said Bittrich.

“When kids leave their appointments and ask their caregivers if they can stay an extra 10 minutes so they can go back to the waiting room to ‘keep playing’ rather than go home, that shows the value of the program.”

 **VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED**  
**1,053** collective hours of service.

 **VOLUNTEERS HELPED NEARLY**  
**2,000** patients.



■ **From High School to Employment: Students Gain Hands-on Experience in Pharmacy and Phlebotomy**

The Codman Square Health Center internship program provides high school students with real-world, hands-on healthcare experience and education that will help them start their careers. And the program is working to provide jobs and education access. In the past year alone, four employment offers went out to Dorchester’s Codman Square Academy students, and we are thrilled to have such talented employees choose to work at BMC.

As the only high school in the U.S. located inside a health center, Codman Square Academy is committed to workforce development. Through the program with BMC, students spend more than 200 hours over seven weeks training as a pharmacy technician or a pathology/lab assistant. This provides students, who otherwise wouldn’t have this opportunity, with enriching professional work experience while completing their high school educations.





**Inspiring Healthcare Careers at Madison Park Vocational High School**

BMC has been working with Madison Park Technical Vocational High School (MPVHS) for years to provide job training and educational programs for students. Students are offered hands-on training in medical assistant and support services roles at BMC, and can apply for jobs at the hospital at the end of the academic year.

One of those students, Lourdjinia Louis, is the MPVHS class valedictorian and will be the first in her family to graduate high school. She came to the U.S. from Haiti five-and-a-half years ago. Louis is now working part time at BMC, where she takes patients’ vital signs, collects samples for testing, and helps conduct electrocardiograms.

“She has a bright future ahead of her. She knows what she wants, and she’s going to accomplish it,” said Dorangie Manso Alvarez, one of Louis’s teachers.

The impact has been transformative, and this summer, eight co-op students from the class of 2023 joined BMC as Medical Assistants.



Lourdjinia Louis, a student from Madison Park High and current part-time BMC employee through The Possible Project partnership.

**BMC Models Community Action at NAACP National Convention**

Each year, delegates from the nation’s largest and most widely recognized civil rights organization gather to vote on policy platforms and attend talks by political leaders and artists. With the 114th National NAACP Convention in Boston this year, attendees joined together in a standing ovation for BMC’s VP of Mission, Dr. Thea James, who inspired the crowd. Dr. James shared how BMC is rewriting healthcare by interrogating racial disparities and delivering innovative solutions that empower people in our communities to thrive.

NAACP Chair Leon Russell urged other professionals in the audience to also rewrite healthcare across the country, saying, “BMC has given you a model. This is a model that you should talk about. That you should commit to. It’s work that can make a difference in your communities.”



Dr. Thea James with Petrina Martin Cherry, VP of Community Engagement and External Affairs.

**BMC Brockton Behavioral Health Center Sets the Standard for Culturally Responsive, Equitable Behavioral Healthcare**

Like much of the country, Massachusetts is grappling with an addiction and behavioral health crisis. As part of our mission to provide culturally responsive, comprehensive, and equitable care to all, BMC opened the Brockton Behavioral Health Center in the fall of 2022. From the beginning, representation — from hiring a diverse staff to hiring locally — was intentional and impactful.

With more than 70% of people in Brockton and the surrounding area identifying as non-white and non-Hispanic, it was important to the center to reflect the makeup of the community.

“We’re always thinking about how we can be more culturally aware and sensitive to the patients we serve and the colleagues we work with. It’s all about making our employees more aware of the environment in which we work and in which we serve,” said Tracey Weeden, Executive Director.

Sixty-six percent of Brockton’s employees are from neighboring communities, and more than 55% identify as people of color. More than 70% of the center’s staff identify as BIPOC, and many are fluent in languages other than English, including Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean.

And the team is working to expand this further. With the help of a novel grant from the Behavioral Health Workforce Initiative (BHWI), the center is further engaging diverse communities and growing their mental health workforce. The intention of the grant is to engage people of color from Brockton and surrounding areas, with or without formal college education, who are interested in the mental health field. BHWI provides training and certification for Brockton-area residents to become entry-level behavioral health professionals at Brockton Behavioral Health Center and elsewhere. The center is currently running its third cohort with six participants.



BMC Brockton Behavioral Health Center employees celebrate the completion of their trainings.



## **Breaking Barriers: BMC's Commitment to Economic Mobility Supports Black Entrepreneurship, Feeding the Soul of Roxbury**

When Nubian Markets opened in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood in May 2023 with support from BMC, it marked the attainment of an idea that had been in the making for more than a decade. The result: a grocery store, café, halal butcher, and community gathering space that provides healthy and ethnically diverse food while supporting and uplifting Black entrepreneurs and, most notably, economic mobility and access to healthy options within the community.

Although co-owners Ismail Samad and Yusuf Yassin were confident in their vision from the start, like many other entrepreneurs of color, they faced many barriers in attempting to access business financing for their project. It didn't help that many potential funders believed Roxbury couldn't support a grocery store economically and that the venture was too risky. However, the Nubian Markets project was a perfect match for BMC.

As part of our commitment to addressing social determinants of health (SDoH) in the community, BMC provided \$1.9 million for the construction and opening of the market through no-interest loans and grants, partly from the hospital's community health investment that was approved by the state Department of Public Health for our campus redesign that was completed in 2018. BMC leadership understood that supporting a Black-owned and operated business offering healthy food options, hiring from the community, and supporting racially and ethnically diverse food producers would provide Roxbury with the essential components it needs to thrive.

Now that Nubian Markets is up and running, it's proving to be a bustling marketplace that is a source of pride for the neighborhood — and also serves as a model for economic mobility for other Black businesses. BMC is incredibly proud to be part of the venture and will continue to look at innovative ways to support the growth of small businesses in our communities.



## **Celebrating Our Community: BMCHS at Haitian Flag Day**

In May, BMCHS sponsored the Haitian Unity Parade in celebration of Haitian Flag Day, offering information tables and sharing BMC and WellSense resources with current and prospective patients and members. Across the health system, we are proud to have a large number of employees, patients, and members of Haitian origin. During the celebration, staff helped mark Haiti's independence and engaged with hundreds of members of the community.



“

BMC has given you a model. This is a model that you should talk about. That you should commit to. It's work that can make a difference in your communities.

– NAACP Chair Leon Russell





# Achieve and Celebrate Breakthrough Performance

We are passionate about providing clinical excellence and equitable access to healthcare. We are always focused on continuous improvement that leads to significant advancements for our patients, our members, and our community. And we consistently celebrate the achievements of our incredible employees and teams.

► Dr. Thea James leading a panel on Black Economic Mobility at EQTY 2023: A Summit for Health Justice.



# Achieve and Celebrate Breakthrough Performance

## Advancing Health Equity: Reducing Life-Threatening Inequities in Pregnancy

### Health Equity Accelerator

In its second year, the Accelerator continued its goal to advance health equity throughout the health system in partnership with a cross-functional team from the OBGYN department. With pregnancy-related mortality rates among Black women more than three times higher than rates for white women in the U.S., one area of focus has been equity in pregnancy. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black women have higher pregnancy mortality rates due to a combination of factors, including socioeconomic disadvantages, limited access to quality healthcare, implicit bias and discrimination within the healthcare system, chronic stress from racial discrimination, higher rates of preexisting health conditions, and certain demographic factors like maternal age and family size. To better understand inequities related to pregnancy and develop a plan for reducing inequities in maternal-infant outcomes, the Accelerator team pored over hundreds of patient interviews, data analyses, and literature reviews.



One of the issues they uncovered was that much of the gap in severe complications between Black patients and white patients is driven by differences in preeclampsia prevalence and treatment. To address this issue, BMC hired five full-time staff members to launch targeted, novel interventions and measure their impact.

These interventions include:

- **Remote blood pressure monitoring:** More than 180 pregnant patients have received remote blood pressure monitoring cuffs that automatically send daily readings of their blood pressure to a dedicated clinical nurse. Capturing blood pressure allows clinicians to start medication as soon as it is necessary, which has led to lower rates of hypertension since the program began.
- **Expansion of Birth Sisters:** This multicultural doula service provides patients who are at risk for poorer pregnancy outcomes with “sister like” support, including prenatal home visits, labor support, and help at home after the baby comes.
- **PregnancyHub:** This includes a culturally relevant patient educational video in five languages, and Prenatal Texting Program, empowering patients with the information and educational tools they need for a healthy pregnancy.

These interventions are already showing promising results, and we hope to grow the program further to give all pregnant patients an equal chance at a healthy pregnancy.

To learn more in our equity in pregnancy video, scan the QR code or visit <https://bit.ly/46nOX8Q>.



## BMC Reinvigorates Health Equity Leaders with National Summit for Health Justice

### Health Equity Accelerator

Three hundred health equity leaders from across the country had a unique chance to share experiences, insights, and innovations in pursuit of making healthcare more equitable at our inaugural EQTY 2023: A Summit for Health Justice in September. In a packed and energized crowd, attendees and leaders from hospitals and community organizations sparked conversation and ideas on how to work together to rewrite healthcare to make it equitable for disenfranchised individuals. The summit, which was spearheaded by the Accelerator, shined a light on key disparities in economic mobility, equity in pregnancy, and equity in diabetes.

Thea James, MD, MPH, MBA, co-executive director of the Accelerator, opened the event with an inspirational welcome.

“It is our sincere hope that every individual in this room is replenished, regenerated, and reinvigorated by today’s series of conversations so that each of us can continue to advance the work that nourishes our Black and Brown communities and addresses health injustice.”

Elena Mendez-Escobar, PhD, MBA, co-executive director of the Accelerator, underscored the impact of the change-makers in the room. “The work that you are doing every day is changing the health trajectory of disenfranchised individuals, marginalized communities, and a nation divided by redlines of inequity. You are the embodiment of optimal outcomes.”

Award-winning medical writer and editor Harriet Washington then took the stage for her keynote address. Through powerful storytelling, Washington provided historically accurate information on “scientific racism” and shed light on race, sex, consent, and the abuse of power within medicine. “The last thing I have to say is reject futility,” Washington said to a standing ovation. “It’s easy to say nothing can get done, and if you say it, nothing will get done. I urge the people who say it can’t be done to get out of the way and let us proceed.”

The Accelerator has already begun planning its second summit for 2024.





## D Dedicated Diabetes Support Addresses Disparities for Patients

### Health Equity Accelerator

Our Health Equity Accelerator is working to transform healthcare and eliminate gaps in life expectancy and quality of life among different races and ethnicities. One of the areas the Accelerator and a **cross-functional team from Endocrinology, Primary Care, Population Health, the Teaching Kitchen, and other departments** are focusing on is helping Black, Hispanic, and Latino patients living with diabetes.

After conducting extensive research, the Accelerator team found that at BMC there was:

- A **2.3 times higher rate of prediabetes** among Black primary care patients than among white patients.
- A **1.4 times higher rate of uncontrolled diabetes** for Black, Hispanic, or Latino patients than among white patients.

To solve these disparities, the Accelerator developed registries where a population health specialist reviews the list and determines what patients need. This includes reminder calls, standardized surveys, and visits with clinical pharmacists. Patients were also able to receive continuous glucose monitors to better control their sugar levels.

“We’re connecting the patients to services that otherwise they probably wouldn’t have access to,” said Catalina Sanchez, Population Health specialist.

Since the Accelerator started working with these patients, more than a third of enrolled patients have already reduced their A1C to below an initial goal of 9% within the first six months of the program.

To learn more in our equity in diabetes video scan the QR code or visit <https://bit.ly/3QP8tFA>.



## D Refugee Women’s Health Clinic Moves Mountains for Patients

Over the past year, the Refugee Women’s Health Clinic faced a surge in women seeking asylum and care, including many families fleeing unrest in Haiti. The team provided equitable and expert care to hundreds of new patients — there were more than **1,000 visits, a 400 percent increase** over last year. Many of these patients were in the late stages of pregnancy and had not received any prenatal care, which could have resulted in issues for both mother and baby.

To meet the enormous increase in patients needing care, the team swiftly built systems, expanded their numbers, and formed strong collaborations across the hospital. Their efforts ensured accessible care for everyone and helped welcome many healthy babies. Because of its unparalleled level of compassion and impact, the team was honored with a 2023 Be Exceptional award, a peer-nominated award that recognizes the work of teams advancing our core values.



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The work that we are doing every day is changing the health trajectory of disenfranchised individuals and marginalized communities.

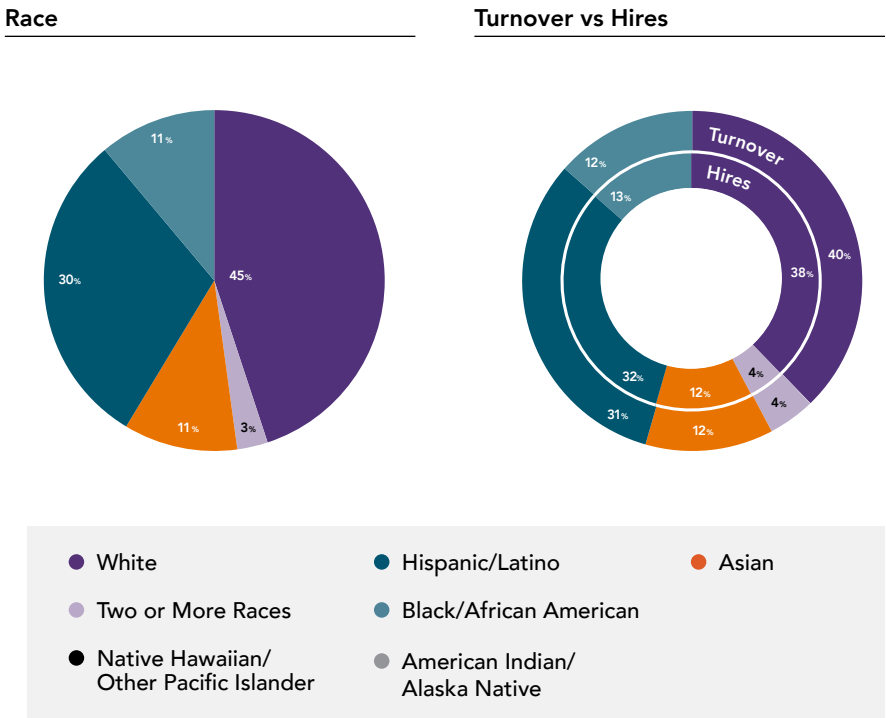
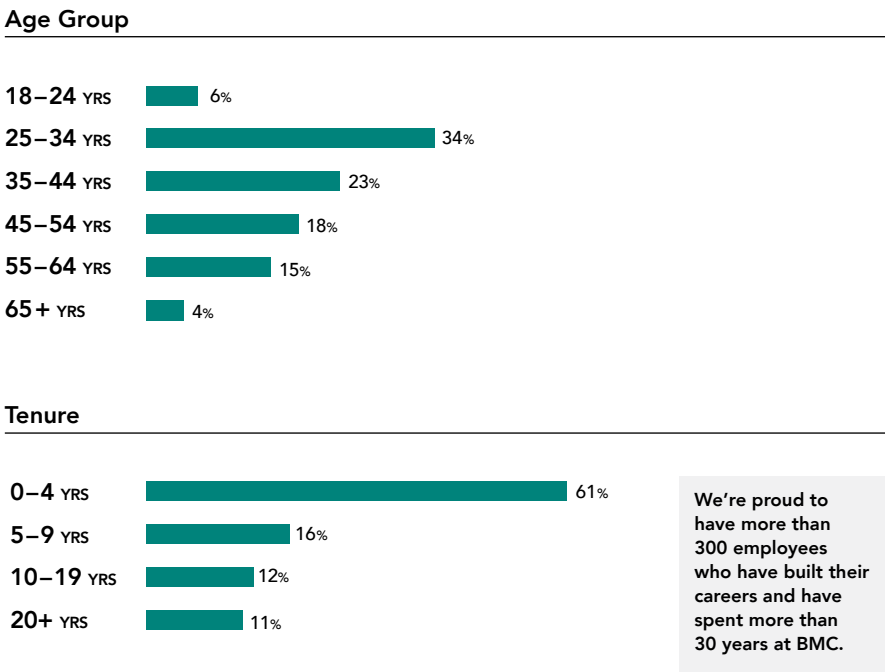
– Elena Mendez-Escobar, PhD, MBA  
Co-Executive Director of the Health Equity Accelerator,  
Executive Director of Strategy



8,747  
EMPLOYEES

\* 75%  
FEMALE  
25%  
MALE

4%  
Self-Identify have/had  
DISABILITY  
1%  
Self-Identify as  
VETERAN

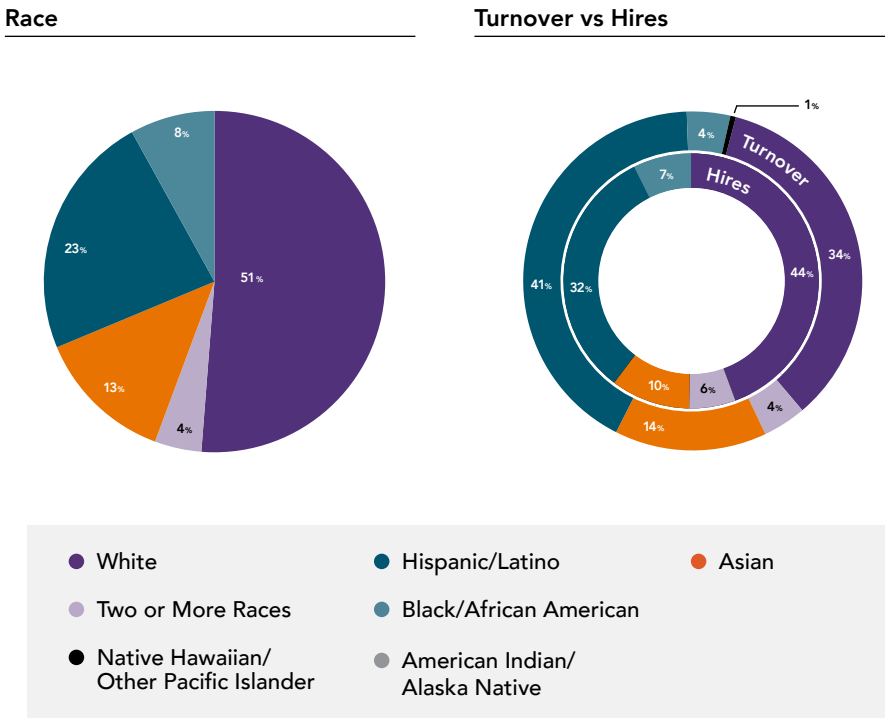
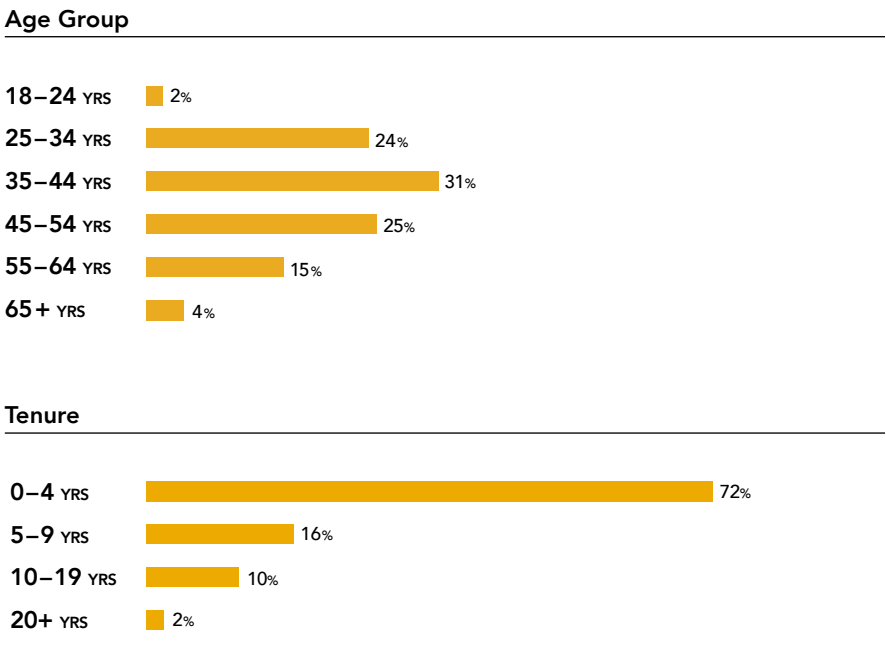


\* We recognized that sex assigned at birth does not encompass the full spectrum of gender identity. As of this year, employees are now able to select their pronouns in Workday.

1,062  
EMPLOYEES

\* 80%  
FEMALE  
20%  
MALE

1%  
Self-Identify have/had  
DISABILITY  
3%  
Self-Identify as  
VETERAN



\* We recognized that sex assigned at birth does not encompass the full spectrum of gender identity. As of this year, employees are now able to select their pronouns in Workday.



# DEI at WellSense

## Centering the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mission

WellSense has long prioritized diversity, equity, and inclusion, having first created an employee council devoted to these principles more than a decade ago. To further expand this effort, in 2023 WellSense established the position of director of Health Equity Strategy to design, execute, and lead a health equity plan in partnership with BMC Health System initiatives and programs; Daniel Sanchez currently serves in that role. Under Sanchez’s leadership, WellSense launched the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO) with a goal of enacting health equity and organizational inclusion strategies and deliverables that support employees, members, and our business strategy.

The EIO is rooted in four equity pillars, known as the 4-Cs: Culture, Careers, Community, and Consumers (members). The 4-Cs support WellSense’s five corporate goals: Member Centric, Employee Driven, Brilliant at the Basics, Growing Wisely, and Financially Strong. This intentional approach to DEI helps foster an inclusive environment while investing in our people, building external relationships, and promoting growth and a greater competitive edge.

## Survey Scores Demonstrate WellSense’s Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In the WellSense Employee Engagement Survey conducted this past summer, the two highest-scoring questions were:



This organization values employees from different backgrounds



This organization demonstrates a commitment to workforce diversity

## New Training Program Promotes Diversity, Inclusion, and Sensitivity

In 2023, WellSense introduced a multiyear, all-employee series of trainings; one of the key goals is to help drive better outcomes for members by supporting their right to a tailored healthcare and health coverage experience that considers the entirety of their identity and health background.

“Diversity, Inclusion, and Sensitivity in Healthcare” was the first module in what eventually will be a suite of trainings that encompass topics related to how we serve our members, work together, and treat others as we diminish implicit bias, promote anti-racism, and embed equity in all we do. As of this fall, more than 90% of member-facing employees completed the training. We focused on these teams first because they are in a position to have the most positive impact on members, and we will continue rolling out the training to all employees in the coming years.

## Business Resource Groups Foster Inclusive Culture

One result of WellSense’s Employee Engagement Program that is garnering widespread appreciation and enthusiasm has been the launch of our business resource groups (BRGs). The BRGs, which are voluntary, employee led, and executive sponsored, enable colleagues to support each other while aligning with the organization’s objective of member and employee advocacy.

Currently, three resource groups have formed and convene monthly: Pride for members of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies; BIPOC for Black Indigenous and People of Color; and the Women’s Forum. Twenty percent of WellSense employees belong to at least one BRG, and additional groups are planned for the future.

BRGs support personal and career development and provide a safe space to build and strengthen relationships. In addition, the BRGs may be called on to support strategic business initiatives. For example, members of the Pride BRG served as subject matter experts and thought leaders on the WellSense Transgender, Gender Diverse Advisory Council. Other activities included:

- Hosting a Hispanic Heritage Month interactive session
- Celebrating Pride Month
- Publishing relevant articles for employees
- Raising awareness on a variety of topics to expand employees’ exposure to DEI issues, and contributing to a culture of equity at WellSense

Several hundred employees have participated in BRG events.



## BMC Health System Works Together To Reach Our Communities

From joining forces at the Haitian Flag Day parade (see page 26) to marching in the Pride parade to sharing resources with the community at the Caribbean Festival, WellSense and BMC are proud to collaborate to better reach our members and patients in the community.

*Pictured here, WellSense team members share information and resources to engage local residents at the Mary Ellen McCormack Unity Day 2023 in South Boston.*





► Employees at our annual Be Exceptional employee recognition event.

“

It's easy to say nothing can get done, and if you say it, nothing will get done. I urge the people who say it can't be done to get out of the way and let us proceed.

– Harriet A. Washington

Award-winning medical writer and editor

*These words were shared at the  
BMCHS inaugural EQTY 2023: A Summit for Health Justice*



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