



2024 NASW-MA Annual Report

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MEET THE TEAM



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MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The year 2024 is perhaps best summed up as a time of polarization, with pockets of hope. In fact, Miriam Webster's word of the year 2024 was polarization, defining it as "a state in which the opinions, beliefs, or interests of a group or society no longer range along a continuum but become concentrated at opposing extremes." We have seen this truth play out in federal politics and in our state level politics this year, too. Yet, in the midst of this, it is amazing when accomplishments toward the greater good can be achieved. And there were such accomplishments in 2024.

Of particular importance was the announcement by the Healey administration at the end of 2024, with programmatic spending of the \$200M Behavioral Health Trust Fund. This large trust fund was created in 2021, when the state received federal ARPA funds in the midst of the pandemic. In order to help determine how the funds should be spent to support the workforce, NASW-MA was an appointed member of the Behavioral Health Trust Fund Advisory Commission, making recommendations based on the experiences of our members and the challenges faced getting into and staying in the profession. The commission adopted all of our recommendations. Then, in the FY24 state budget, the legislature adopted these recommendations, as well, passing them into law. **I'm thrilled to share that as a result of this, in 2025 there will be a new paid practicum placement program through the schools of social work, a behavioral health supervisor stipend program, continuation of the fee waiver for new licensees, loan forgiveness, and a scholarship program to promote cultural and linguistic diversity in the field.**

Seeing these dollars now roll out has been truly inspiring. Our members made this possible by vesting us with the authority and capacity to be the strongest voice for the profession in legislative advocacy, on key commissions, and in the State House halls.

As we leave 2024 behind and head into the New Year, and indeed a more uncertain time ahead, NASW-MA will continue to do this work in earnest. We will never shy away from the fight for justice, equity, fairness, and having the backs of social workers no matter where they work, live, or practice.

In Solidarity,



Therapy Matcher has been providing an essential and unique service to the public for over 40 years. Funding from the state budget over the past 4 years has allowed our program to offer low rates for NASW members to join the network. **In 2024, there was a record total of 410 private practitioner members, including 155 new members.** Over the course of the year, Therapy Matcher staff responded to over 8800 inquiries, helping to match many of them with therapists to fit their needs.

NASW-MA CHAPTER BOARD

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Southeast Region
- **Abdul Haseeb Hamza**
MSW Student Representative
- **Raymond Robles**
BSW Student Representative

NASW-MA EVENTS

MLK Jr. Forum on Racial Justice January 17 | 6 - 8pm | Virtual on Zoom

The theme for our annual MLK Jr. Forum on Racial Justice 2024 was "Achieving Healthcare Equity for BIPOC Communities." With a focus on addressing barriers to accessing healthcare for Black and brown communities, this FREE forum encouraged social workers to come together to learn strategies for engaging in advocacy that addresses this crisis. Expert panelists shared key findings and personal experience. The event drew hundreds of social workers from across Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Symposium

April 25 + 26 | Full 2-Day | Virtual on Zoom

This year we hosted our now annual two-day conference featuring over 75 workshops and guest speakers and over 23 CEUs for practicing social workers. Our attendees had the opportunity to connect with experts in the field and gain new skills and knowledge. Symposium was held virtually with the theme Reaching Across the Divide: Opportunities for Hope. We are proud this event is one of the largest gatherings of social workers, mental health professionals, and community leaders across the Commonwealth and New England.



Legislative Education and Advocacy Day March 26 | 9a - 12p | Virtual on Zoom

The 2024 LEAD event offered students a unique chance to take a direct approach with advocacy by using hands-on tactics to uplift issues they are passionate about. This year, we had 450+ social workers meet virtually for our annual event with a focus on four bills: 1) The SUPER Act, 2) Treatment, Not Imprisonment, 3) Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool Program, and 4) Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty.

NASW-MA Annual Awards Event

October 17 | 6p - 8pm | In Person at La Cantina

Each year, NASW-MA's Awards Committee selects nominees from across the Commonwealth for our chapter awards. **This year's honorees:**

- Lifetime Achievement: **Steve O'Neill**
- Greatest Contribution to Social Work Practice: **Gary Bailey**
- Emerging Leader: **Joel Stevenson**
- Beverly Ross Fliegel Social Policy and Change: **Kathy Lopes**
- Public Citizen of the Year: **Patricia Baker**
- Promising Practitioner Award - MSW: **Monica Montalvo-Perez**
- Promising Practitioner Award - BSW: **Makena Shea**

OUR YEAR BY THE NUMBERS

88

Total Continuing Education Credits offered in 2024

12

Timely action opportunities sent to our Legislative Alert Network

155

New Therapy Matcher members

55

Social workers providing testimony, in support of our legislative priorities

120

Graduation cords distributed to graduating social work student and faculty members

18

Free CEU opportunities for members

853

Social workers assisted with exam prep

18

Candidates endorsed by MA PACE committee that support social work values

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

An Act relative to Social Work Uplifting Practices and Exam Removal, The SUPER Act

This bill has three basic components that would increase the number of mental health providers in Massachusetts, remove barriers to licensure, and bolster the social work profession. The three components are relevant to supervision towards CE requirements, eliminating the licensing exam for an LCSW (Master's level), and securing funding for paid field placements for MSW students

An Act relative to healthy youth

Ensures school districts providing sex education and giving comprehensive, accurate, age-appropriate, and LGBTQ+-inclusive, with emphasis on educating on informed consent to prevent sexual violence.

An Act relative to treatment, not imprisonment

Would allow a person on temporary release or probation to receive treatment for SUD, but disallows punitive punishment for instances of relapse if they are actively engaged in treatment.

An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults (“Raise the Age”)

Would gradually raise the age juvenile jurisdiction to include youth ages 18-20, gradually reducing recidivism by offering treatment, education, and other options rather than imprisonment

An Act establishing a jail and prison construction moratorium

Would establish a five-year moratorium on new prison and jail construction in MA

An Act to Lift Kids out of deep poverty

Sets a minimum for financial assistance at 50% of the federal poverty level - \$1036 a month for a family of three. It would increase financial assistance by 25% a year until grants reach 50% of the federal poverty level.

An Act prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth

Would prohibit the use of Native American mascots in MA public schools. Presently, about 25-30 schools use such mascots.

LEGISLATIVE WINS ★★★★★

Creating and implementing a Massachusetts Flexible Supportive Housing Subsidy Pool Program

Streamlines public and private funding to provide flexible, responsive funding for housing subsidies as well as tenancy stabilization and support. Delivers resources that improve the efficiency of housing placement, centralizes the housing and service coordination function, and reduces the time it takes to achieve long-term housing stability.

Updated Sex Education Curriculum

The MA Board of Elementary and Secondary Education unanimously voted to adopt an updated sex education framework for the first time since 1999. This curriculum will cover topics related to mental and physical health, healthy relationships, consent and bodily autonomy, and inclusive representation of LGBTQ+ health and relationships.

Progress Towards Lifting Kids Out of Deep Poverty

The MA legislature approved a 10% increase in cash assistance in the FY25 budget set to go into effect starting April 2025. The grant will now go from \$783/month to \$861/month for a family of three. Although this is a win, these grants are still far below half of the federal poverty level.



SIG SPOTLIGHT

NASW-MA offers a variety of member-led Shared Interest Groups, Committees, and Commissions that are bound to spark your interest. Find more info at our website!



LGBTQ+ SIG

This SIG aims to create a supportive network for queer-identifying NASW-MA members. We hope to provide a space for peer support, where members can connect and share their experiences through storytelling and resource sharing. Utilizing member-driven meetings, we will strive to build a strong, inclusive community that empowers and uplifts its members.

Committee Advocating for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

Our Committee thrives on issues both in facilities as well as around peoples' needs while living in the community. We meet the third Thursday of each month at 6:30pm via Zoom. Whether you are a geriatric social worker, a person working with people with disabilities, a caregiver, a clinician, a macro social worker, or just interested in learning something new, we welcome you to join us.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder SIG

We would like to invite all NASW members dedicated to Harm Reduction, Housing First, Social Justice and the dignity and worth of all people to collaborate in strengths-based advocacy and action guided by evidence, lived experience and the neurobiological impact of attachment & trauma on substance use and mental health, to create meaningful and socially just change in the realms of Mental Health and Substance Use for social work clients, students, and practitioner's in Massachusetts.



naswma.org/page/membergroups

MEMBER TESTIMONIALS

"Massachusetts includes 13 Schools of Social Work and thousands of individual social workers, all benefitting from NASW-MA Chapter's advocacy. Confidence in the Chapter leadership for nearly 50 years has been central to my uninterrupted membership and active participation and with the Therapy Matcher commission. With complexities only increasing, NASW-MA provides the guidance and information necessary to practice with confidence."

--Charles G. Martel, LICSW

"I think being a member of NASW is not only worth the investment but that it's important to support one's professional organization... NASW works for us... It may be helpful to know that NASW may fulfill many of [your] needs. Being a member of NASW gives you access to a collegial, caring, and warm meeting of other private practice therapists who ask questions, share resources, network, and support each other."

--Beth Rontal, LICSW

"I enjoy my membership in NASW because it provides me with a wealth of practical resources and networking opportunities that can further my professional development as a social worker and advocate for social justice. NASW's advocacy for social workers and clients aligns with my values and ambitions."

--Charmaine Burrell, BSW

