

CONNECTING
care

EXPANDING
impact



Boston Children's Hospital
Family Services

Annual Report
2025



Dear Reader,

As we reflect on the past year, we are reminded of the resilience, compassion, and dedication that define our work in Family Services.

Every day, more than 40 team members come together with a shared purpose: to create space and experiences where families feel supported, understood, and cared for during some of the most challenging moments of their lives.

We believe that every family deserves a comforting and inclusive environment as they navigate their loved one's medical journey. This belief guides our actions and fuels our commitment to strengthening the systems, relationships, and services that surround them. Through collaboration across departments and thoughtful innovation, we continue to build bridges that connect families to the care and resources they need—when they need it most.

This year's theme, **Connecting Care, Expanding Impact**, reflects the spirit of our work. From celebrating the Hale Family Center for Families' 10th anniversary to enhancing caregiver wellness schedule efficiencies, preparing for a facility dog, and expanding events and programming, Fiscal Year 2025 has been a year of meaningful work. We've unified systems and deepened partnerships—all to elevate the experience of every family who walks through our doors.

In the words of Brene Brown, "Connection is the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship." We are deeply grateful for your continued support and collaboration.

Together, we are creating a more connected, compassionate experience for the families we serve.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miranda Day".

Miranda Day, MS, MBA, CCLS
Senior Director, Family and Volunteer Services





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Teen Advisory Committee

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2025 Hale Family Center for Families



PROGRAM MANAGER: Kristine Flaherty

PROGRAM TEAM: Annie Banks, Lynn Belkin, Natalia Capriles, Erin Connelly, Carmen Fuentes-Smith, Elise Gottesman, Abdel Guessas, Kathleen Hong, Saffiyah Karageh, Ilyes Kheznadji, Josue Mendez, Devon Moos, Jill Twomey-McLaughlin, Intissar Rhandour, Maria Rocha, and Milagro Vargas



2025 Highlights HALE FAMILY CENTER FOR FAMILIES

+16,900
families supported

often referred to as the
“living room”
of the hospital



... NEW! ...
PARTNERSHIP with The Boston Public Library
+ story time for patients and families

... Having a sick child is
heartbreaking and scary but
community can make it easier
and more bearable. ...

— Lea, mom of a patient and two-year old sibling



...
10th Anniversary of
the Hale Family Center
for Families



...celebrates 10 years!

Amid a series of snowstorms in January 2015, the Hale Family Center for Families prepared to open its doors in the lobby of the main hospital. **Through the generosity of the Hale Family**, The Hale Family Center for Families celebrated its 10th anniversary this year in an expanded footprint with enhanced programming we know today - serving as a vital hub of support, connection, and comfort for families navigating the hospital. Designed to meet everyday needs, the Center offers a welcoming space where families can find respite, access practical resources, and receive compassionate guidance. Whether visiting to print forms, request medical records, or simply find their way through hospital systems, visitors are met with personalized assistance that helps ease the stress of medical visits.

Often referred to as the “living room of the hospital,” the Center has a team of Child Life Specialists, Social Workers, Nurses, Wellness experts, and Multilingual staff to offer immediate, on-site support.

This multidisciplinary presence allows families to access emotional, psychological, and practical guidance in one place, strengthening the web of support that surrounds them during challenging times.

In FY25, the Center supported more than **16,900 families** (in person or via phone) and responded to **27,722 unique requests**. These ranged from basic needs (food, clothing, housing) to business needs (conference rooms, computers, notary services, bill pay) to hospital resources (medical records, patient portal, patient relations) to connecting with their clinical team, wayfinding and more.



warm & welcoming COMMUNITY



“From the moment I arrived in Boston pregnant at 36 weeks, the Hale Family Center for Families was so warm and welcome and the community I really needed to feel safe and comfortable at Boston Children’s.

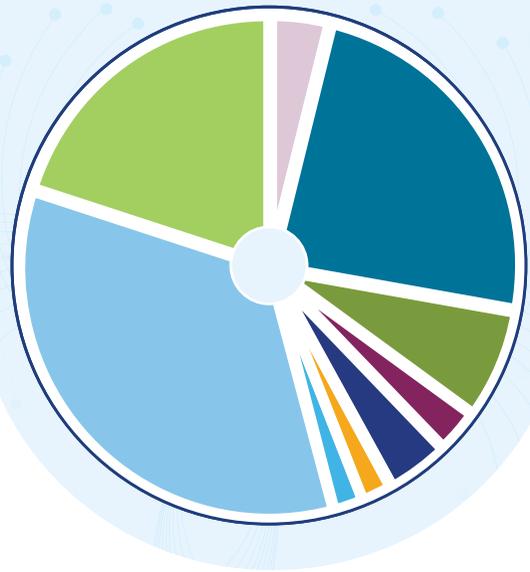
Jill (*Child Life Specialist*) always went above and beyond to make my 2 1/2 year-old daughter feel welcome and special (*and me as well*). Even before we were inpatient, the Hale Family Center for Families welcomed us with open arms. Annie (*Social Worker*) even let me join in on a caregiver painting night with Hole In the Wall Gang Camp. For 2 months the Hale Family Center for Families acted as a home away from home for my daughter and being a few weeks home now, she still asks for Jill.

Having a sick child is heartbreaking and scary but community can make it easier and more bearable. Knowing the Hale Family Center for Families is there for us, it made it easier.

Thank you all!”

— Lea, mom of a patient and a two-year-old sibling

2025 Center Requests



- Parking: 34%
- Basic Needs: 24%
- Visitor: 20%
- Business Needs: 7%
- Wayfinding: 4%
- Programs/Activities: 4%
- Hospital Requests: 3%
- Connect with Clinical Team: 2%
- Language Support: 2%

While total requests saw a slight decrease from the prior year, the team continued to focus on creating a welcoming environment while adding thoughtful enhancements. The Center introduced fresh fruit alongside the ever-popular **Dunkin** coffee and tea station and launched a partnership with the Boston Public Library team, which added a regularly scheduled story and craft time for patients and families. The Center also saw an expansion of Movie events, with nearly 70 movies events occurring across the Monday Movies series, along with an array of movie premieres and seasonal viewing events throughout the year.

This year, the Hale Family Center for Families continued to offer caregiver events, such as haircuts and paint nights. Through partnerships with local salons, inpatient caregivers were provided with an opportunity to receive a haircut, blowout, or styling services. One caregiver shared, **“Great conversation and so nice being able to take a break for some self-care. Really appreciate it!”**

Bimonthly Paint Nights for caregivers, offered in collaboration with Social Work and The Hole in the Wall Gang Hospital Outreach Program (HOP), provided opportunities to paint together in the Center

or participate virtually from hospital rooms. These two-hour sessions offered a moment of respite in otherwise stressful times.

Additionally, two inpatient Caregiver coffee hours were hosted weekly by the Center staff– one in English and one in Spanish. Referrals to this program are made by care teams throughout the hospital. These coffee hours allow for the opportunity to connect with other caregivers, recharge, and learn about hospital services.

Extensive renovation planning occurred this year, with work scheduled for early next year. Looking ahead, these renovations will ensure the Center remains a comfortable and functional space for families to relax and work for years to come.



2025 Cultural Connections



Concierge Program & Latino Support Program



2025 Highlights CULTURAL CONNECTIONS



539

Concierge requests offering guidance on travel, lodging and essential business needs

SPANISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT GROUPS : **ENGAGEMENT INCREASE**

↑ 238%

showing the power of referrals from the Epilepsy Social Worker, Chaplaincy, and peers

NEW!

The hospital's first advisory group for Spanish-language families is established — **Consejo de Familias Latinas**



92

families joined the bi-weekly caregiver group:

Fuente de Luz
a 28% increase

This space has not only contributed to my personal development but has also had a positive impact on my family and, above all, on the quality of life of my son with limited abilities.

— Ricarda Alvarado,
Consejo de Familias Latinas participant

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Concierge Program



The Hale Family Center for Families, in partnership with Global Services, offers a dedicated Concierge Program as a cornerstone of compassionate, connected care for international families seeking treatment at Boston Children's Hospital. With a multilingual team of Program Coordinators, the program provides personalized support before families even arrive—helping them prepare for their journey—and remains a steady resource throughout their stay.

In FY25, the Concierge Program responded to **539 front desk requests**, offering guidance on travel, lodging, and essential business needs. This work happens through collaboration across departments, including the UAE Travel Program, Global Services, and Parking and Commuter Services—to ensure families receive seamless, coordinated support.

The team **assisted 41 families with 141 I-539 visa extensions**, helping caregivers focus on their child's health while the team managed complex logistics.

One mom from the Dominican Republic was a week away from her and her child's visa expiring. She was referred to a lawyer for help, but she couldn't afford that. Thankfully, she walked into the Hale Family Center for Families and was helped immediately. Through tears of gratitude, she hugged our staff and said,

"I am so glad I found you."

PROGRAM LEADERS: Abdelkader Guessas, Saffiyah Karageh, and Ilyes Kheznadji



Although the number of international families traveling for medical care decreased this year, the program's value remains unwavering—providing valuable logistical and emotional support. The UAE Travel Program exemplifies its commitment to meeting the needs of families traveling for care. From airport pickups to long-term and short-term housing arrangements to transportation for hospital visits and bill payment support, the team strives to reduce stress and alleviate logistical concerns. These services allow families to concentrate on what matters most: their loved one's healing journey.

Beyond logistics, the Concierge Program fosters a sense of belonging, honoring traditions and culture.

Their annual Eid al-Fitr celebration, co-hosted with the Hale Family Center for Families Child Life Specialist and the rest of the Center staff, is a beautiful example of how the team honors cultural traditions and creates an inclusive space for patients and families to celebrate.

These moments of connection remind them that healing is not only medical—it's emotional, communal, and deeply human.



CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Latino Support Program



The Latino Support Program team is proud to support the unique needs of families from diverse backgrounds by offering culturally responsive and language-specific support. The team, made up of a Social Worker and a Parent Navigator, help shape the Latino Support Program into a vital resource for Spanish-speaking families across Boston Children's Hospital. By fostering meaningful relationships, providing tailored resources, and creating pathways for community connection, caregivers feel seen, supported, and empowered throughout their child's healthcare journey.

• Fuente de Luz: Bi-weekly Caregiver Group •

In partnership with the Office of Experience, the Fuente de Luz caregiver group continued to provide meaningful support to families navigating complex medical journeys. A total of 92 families participated, with some families involving both parents. This marks a steady increase from 72 families in 2024 and 61 in 2023.

The group met 18 times in FY25 with strong engagement. Fifteen families attended 10 or more meetings, and 19 families attended between 5 and 9 meetings. An impressive 40 families were newly referred this year showcasing the power of connection. Two in-person events were held to celebrate Three Kings Day in January and Mother's Day in May.

This year's topics/presenters included: Interpreter Services, Personal Goals, Know Your Rights, North East Arc (PCA Services), DPH Catastrophic Fund, Social Security (SSI), Family Support Overview, DPH Care Coordination, Emily Davidson Respite Network, CCM (MassHealth in-home nursing program), Federation for Children with Special Needs and Transition, and informal peer connection activities such as Paint Night and 'Getting to Know Each Other'.

PROGRAM LEADERS: Elise Gottesman and Esterlina MacInnes

fostering meaningful RELATIONSHIPS



"During my time of participation [in Fuente de Luz], I have been able to significantly increase my knowledge and skills thanks to the topics shared, the experiences of other mothers, and the presentations by professionals in various fields. Each session has been a source of learning, motivation, and strength, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

This space has not only contributed to my personal development but has also had a positive impact on my family and, above all, on the quality of life of my son with limited abilities. Through the knowledge I have acquired, I have learned to better understand his needs, to handle everyday situations with greater empathy and patience, and to promote a healthier and more harmonious family environment."

- Ricarda Alvarado, participating mother

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Latino Support Program



• Spanish Language Support Groups •

Two Spanish language support groups are offered monthly for caregiver education and access to subject matter experts. The Epilepsy Group is co-facilitated by Elise Gottesman and bilingual neurologist Dr. Christina Briscoe. Sessions included psycho-educational presentations on medications, seizure first aid, genetic testing, and SUDEP as well as a presentation from the Epilepsy Foundation. FY25 was a year of significant engagement more than doubling in size to 31 participating families compared to 13 the previous year. This growth shows the power of referrals from the Epilepsy Social Worker, Chaplaincy, and peers.

The Autism Support Group featured external presenters each month. Topics included ABA Services, Autism Resource Center (North East Arc), IEPs and Special Education, Feeding and Nutrition, Parenting a Child with Autism, and Understanding the Autism Diagnosis. This year 27 families participated, which included 12 new referrals. The group is well-integrated into the Autism Center's workflows for newly diagnosed patients.

• Cafecito - Inpatient Coffee Hour •

Held weekly, the Inpatient Coffee Hour offers a drop-in format for inpatient caregivers. The connections built between attendees decrease isolation and loneliness. Attendance increased from 2–6 participants in FY24 to 5–8 participants weekly in FY25.

Co-facilitated with Chaplaincy, themes addressed included grief, loss, coping, parental mental health, discharge planning, communication with care teams, and immigration concerns. In addition, some coffee hours included art activities in collaboration with the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp.

These coffee hours provide caregivers space for storytelling, peer support, and an opportunity for relaxation. Many families continue their connections post-discharge through Fuente de Luz, forming lasting support networks.



I want to emphasize how important the “Coffee Hour” has been for me. That moment of sharing has been truly uplifting; it has helped me open my heart, tell my story, and find comfort and strength in listening to the experiences of other mothers who, like me, face their challenges with courage and love. It is a special time full of learning, empathy, and hope. ❖❖

- Nurys Mercedes Mejia Corcino, patient mother

• Consejo de Familias Latinas - *NEW* •

In partnership with the Office of Experience and the Hale Family Center for Families, Consejo was established as the hospital's first Spanish-language family advisory group. The group works to ensure caregiver voices directly inform institutional improvements, even if English is not their first language. In this inaugural year, 10 members were selected and participated in 5 meetings. All meetings were supported by Interpreter Services for seamless simultaneous interpretation for both the presenters and members.

The group provided feedback on hospital services including digital access, interpretation, and patient communication. Members report this being a rewarding experience and value their role as a parent advocate.



From advisory groups to tailored support, the efforts of the Latino Support Program embody what it means to deliver necessary support that is **inclusive, equitable, and deeply human.**

2025 Patient Family Housing Program



PROGRAM TEAM: Sharon Healey, Jennifer Mahoney, Toufik Ibegdiden, Ilyes Kheznadji, Janis Fonseca, Matthew Toy, Elizabeth Solorzano



2025 Highlights PATIENT FAMILY HOUSING PROGRAM

3,018
RESERVATIONS
=1,724 families
(8% INCREASE FROM 2024)



GUESTS FROM
48/50
STATES
*as well as Puerto Rico
and DC*

43% of all reservations were repeat families



14,525
NIGHTS OF LODGING
(82% OCCUPANCY RATE)

GUESTS FROM
29
COUNTRIES

*across Europe, Asia,
South America, North America,
Central America and Africa*

the program has grown into
“a trusted
sanctuary”
helping to ease
emotional & logistical
burdens of hospital life.



... proven value & demand

Since its inception in June 2004, the Patient Family Housing Program continues to serve as a vital lifeline for families navigating medical challenges far from home. The program has grown into a trusted sanctuary—offering not just a place to stay, but a network of support that eases the emotional and logistical burdens of hospital life.

In FY25, the program provided 14,525 nights of lodging with an 82% occupancy rate, reflecting both its enduring value and the increasing demand for family-centered accommodations.

Families traveled from 48 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and 29 countries across six continents—underscoring the program’s national and global reach. **This year, there were 3,018 reservations supporting 1,724 families and a total of 8,754 guests, representing an 8% increase from the previous year for both guests and reservations.**

This two-property program offers apartments with expanded space for larger families, as well as a shared community house in a residential neighborhood—reinforcing the program’s commitment to evolving alongside the needs of those it serves. With 1,294 families returning for repeat reservations this year, the program’s reputation for reliability and compassion continues to grow.

To enhance the guest experience, welcome bags were introduced containing essentials like water, a local map, and a notepad—small touches that help families feel grounded from the moment they arrive. Through generous support from **Dunkin’ Joyful Spaces** and other donors, amenity spaces at the Yawkey Family Inn were refreshed, and toiletry caddies were added to bathrooms to improve convenience and comfort for families.



Beyond lodging, the program fostered meaningful connections through community partnerships and volunteer engagement. Weekly breakfast gatherings at both housing sites created spaces for families to connect and recharge. A newly added Reservation Concierge helped streamline services, including house tours, volunteer coordination and newsletter creation. In FY25, **volunteers provided 256 meals and 325 activities,** enriching the daily lives of guests during their stay.

Thanks to the generosity of **the Broadway Sam Fund, 915 guests were able to enjoy outings to local attractions** such as the Aquarium, Boston Children’s Museum, Kings Bowling, and the movies—offering moments of joy and normalcy during difficult times.

To better understand and respond to family needs, the program transitioned to a Smartsheet feedback system, resulting in 243 completed forms. This shift enabled more timely insights and continuous improvements to the housing experience.

Families consistently express how impactful the program is during their hospital journey. One caregiver shared, **“It has been so lovely to stay here. I couldn’t imagine a better place. Everyone is so nice, kind. The other guests were lovely. The room is great. I can’t say enough good things.”**

Another reflected, **“It seems the program has thought of everything families might need during their stay. Thank you!”**

These sentiments speak to the program’s deep commitment to creating a space where families feel supported, seen, and cared for—every step of the way. They underscore how housing serves as a cornerstone of connected care and expands impact by creating spaces of comfort and community.

PATIENT FAMILY HOUSING PROGRAM



...proven value & demand

• Housing Partners •

Meeting the housing needs of families traveling for medical care requires more than space—it demands collaboration, flexibility, and a shared commitment to easing the burdens families face. Since expanding our offerings to the Bon, we have accommodated more reservations year after year, with nightly capacity for up to 50 families.



Ultimately, the demand outpaced our available space. This year alone, 699 reservation requests could not be filled due to capacity limitations.

This is where our housing partners make a profound difference. These partnerships allow the Patient Family Housing Program to extend care beyond its walls, offering families safe, welcoming accommodations tailored to their unique needs. The team is deeply grateful to the Boston House, Hospitality Homes, Homewood Suites, the Inn at Longwood, Live 4 Evan Foundation, and Ronald McDonald House Charities of New England for their continued commitment to Boston Children’s Hospital families traveling for care.

Medical housing programs in the greater Boston area meet regularly to exchange ideas and share best practices—strengthening the network of support that surrounds families during their most vulnerable moments.

These connections among organizations foster a resilient, responsive community that helps support families in their time of need.

FY26 focus Building what families need

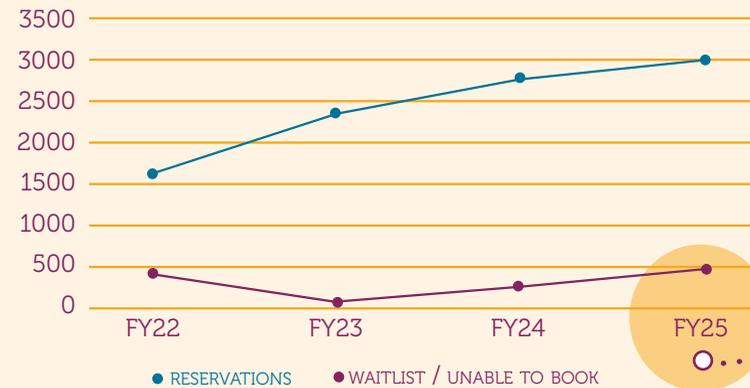


In FY26, the Patient Family Housing Program is focused on turning readiness into reality. Key priorities include advancing a planned housing expansion, strengthening strategic partnerships, and engaging supporters who share our commitment to ensuring families can remain close to care—without added burden. We are deeply grateful to Boston Children’s Hospital’s Real Estate Planning & Development team and the **Corey Griffin Foundation** for their steadfast partnership and shared vision for growing our healthcare housing community.

As Boston Children’s Hospital expands to Needham and our partnership with Franciscan Children’s Hospital continues to grow, **the demand for patient family housing increases.**

This year marks a pivotal moment—an opportunity to align vision, community, and compassion to meet families where they are, when they need it most.

Reservation vs. Unable to Book



2025 Family Wellness Program



PROGRAM MANAGER: Victoria Klumpp

PROGRAM TEAM: Annie Banks, Emily Davidson, Susan Janeczek, Maryann Lyons, Shelby Mudarri, Sandra Napoli, Jameillah Newhouse, Em Wilson, Yuan-Chi Lin, Cynthia Tung



2025 Highlights FAMILY WELLNESS PROGRAM

27% increase
in **TOTAL WELLNESS
REFERRALS** =
**IMPORTANCE OF A
HOLISTIC APPROACH**

After 6 weeks I have found the only time I take for myself are these short breaks for Reiki or a chair massage and they have helped immensely to give me a short break I need but would otherwise not take.

— patient mom

1,034
PATIENT
REIKI SESSIONS



**PARENT/CAREGIVER
SELF-SCHEDULING**

**PATIENT WELLNESS
referrals increase**

40%

**cultivating a responsive
and nurturing environment
for healing through a
holistic experience.**



... providing holistic care

In Fiscal Year 2025, Boston Children’s Hospital continued to advance its commitment to holistic healing through the robust and responsive Family Wellness Program. Designed to support families, patients, and staff, these offerings reflect the belief that healing is not only clinical—it is emotional, physical, and deeply personal. By strengthening connections across departments and streamlining access to care, the Family Wellness Program has become a vital part of the hospital’s ecosystem, ensuring that every individual navigating the hospital experience feels supported and empowered.

This year, the program saw significant growth in referrals/interventions offered.

A record 27% increase in referrals — underscoring the importance of such a holistic approach to care.

Therapeutic Interventions



• Parent/Caregiver Wellness •

This year marked a period of meaningful growth in caregiver wellness. Recognizing the importance of accessible self-care, the program expanded its use of Microsoft Bookings to simplify scheduling for massage and Reiki services. The bilingual platform (English and Spanish), enables caregivers to self-schedule appointments, receive reminders, and prioritize their well-being with ease from their child’s bedside.

Participation in services increased notably this year: **Reiki sessions rose by 5%** (455 visits compared to 432 last year), and **massage services grew by 8%** (1,072 visits compared to 990). These offerings are more than moments of relief—they are intentional acts of care that connect caregivers to the hospital community and reinforce their role as essential partners in the healing process.

Caregivers shared powerful reflections on the impact of these services. One noted,

After 6 weeks I have found the only time I take for myself are these short breaks for Reiki or a chair massage and they have helped immensely to give me a short break I need but would otherwise not take."

Another expressed, **"Thank you so much. It’s been a really rough 11 days for me being here with a newborn. This massage has made a difference. I truly appreciate it."**

With stress scores dropping from an average of 8.10/10 before services to 3.57/10 after, these wellness offerings continue to expand their reach and deepen their impact—ensuring caregivers feel seen, supported, and restored.



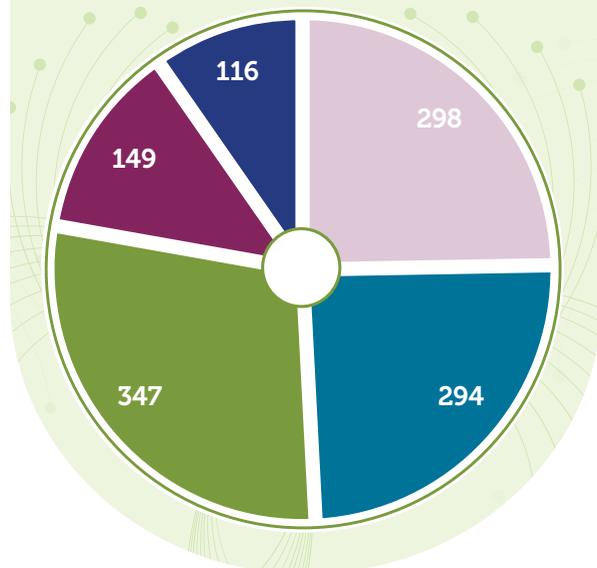
• Patient Wellness •

Patient wellness services grew significantly in FY25, offering integrative therapies that promote comfort, reduce anxiety, and support recovery.

Patient referrals increased by 40%, originating from both care teams and caregivers. This rise in referrals underscores that access to wellness interventions is embedded throughout the hospital experience, creating a responsive and nurturing environment for healing.

This year **Reiki sessions increased by 25%** (1,034 compared to 826 prior year), **massage services—including both medical and relaxation massage—rose by 9%** (386 compared to 354), and **acupuncture increased by 4%** (49 compared to 47). Additional offerings included aromatherapy and yoga, each contributing to a more comprehensive, holistic care experience.

TOP REFERRALS BY UNIT:
Patient Wellness
Interventions



- Inpatient Surgery/Neurology
- Medical Surgical Intensive Care Unit
- Inpatient General Medicine
- Complex Surgery/Respiratory Care
- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

integrated & meaningful
SUPPORT

These stories illustrate how integrated wellness services expand the impact of clinical care—supporting patients not only physically, but also emotionally & spiritually.



Families shared how these services made a meaningful difference. One caregiver said,

“The Reiki my daughter receives from Susan is the highlight of her week! It calms her down, decreases stress, and helps her to heal. It has been an important part of the recovery process.”

Another reflected,

“Dr. Lin is exceptional and has taught me so much! He has helped to relieve my baby’s pain and distress and shown me and those taking care of her non-pharmacological measures to take. The benefits from her acupuncture/pressure have made a significant and immediate difference.”



• Staff Wellness •

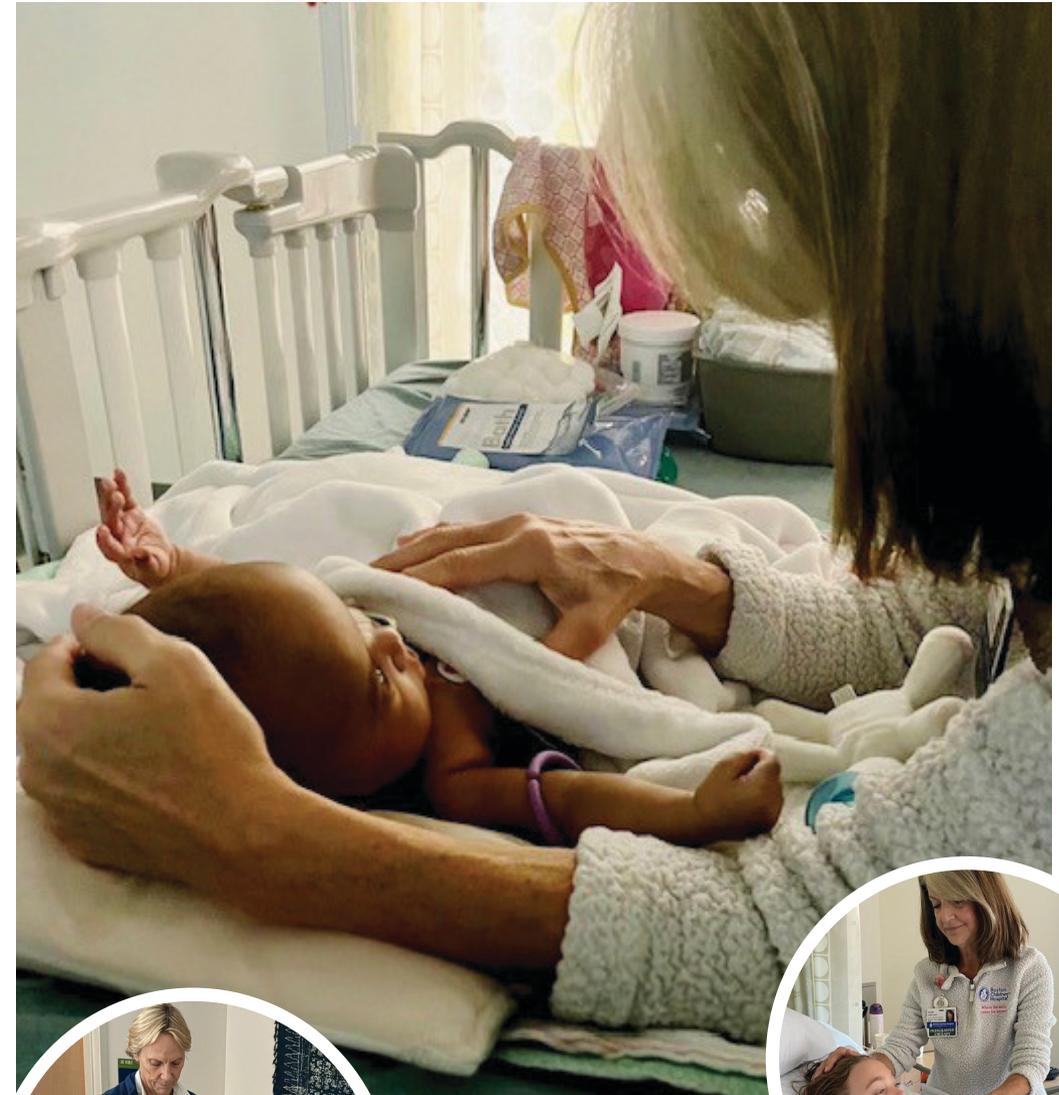
Staff Wellness through the Family Wellness Program focuses on Reiki and Reiki training. In FY25 241 Reiki sessions were provided. While this marks a 21% decrease from last year, it also reflects a strategic rebalancing to meet growing patient and caregiver needs. Additionally, Reiki training workshops were offered four times this year. This training helps staff continue self-care at home and extend the offering to the patients and families they treat.

Staff reported a reduction in stress from 6.89/10 before sessions to 2.45/10 after sessions. These moments of care help sustain resilience and productivity in a demanding healthcare environment.

One staff member shared, **“This service is invaluable. It energizes me and really helps me refocus once I get back to my desk, which has a positive effect on my productivity.”**

Another reflected, **“As a doctoral student who is also working full time, I have been immensely stressed and feeling overwhelmed. This was such a wonderful reset, and I could actively feel my muscles relaxing. This is honestly the most relaxed I have felt in weeks.”**

By caring for caregivers—both familial and professional—we strengthen the entire ecosystem of support at Boston Children’s Hospital. These wellness offerings exemplify connected care and expand impact by nurturing resilience and well-being beyond clinical care.



2025 Pawprints Program



PROGRAM LEADERS: Lynn Belkin, Erin Connelly, Kathleen Hong, and Amy Koel



2025 Highlights PAWPRINTS PROGRAM

71
monthly referrals

New consultation request feature nearly **TRIPLED** monthly referrals—and doubled completed consults from 15 to 34 per month.

+300
PATIENT VISITS
BY 9 THERAPY DOGS

Lemonade, Kintsu, Otis, Bodhi, Flynn, Digby, Bosco & the Golden Girls



7,748
TEAM VISITS
spanning 43
clinical areas
increase

↑ 38%

**Full-time facility
dog program**

**=
40 hours per week of
animal-assisted therapy**



... launches full time facility dog

In FY25, the Pawprints Program continued to grow as a beloved and impactful part of the hospital community—bringing comfort, connection, and joy to patients, families, and staff alike.

This year marked a major milestone: Pawprints received approval to launch a full-time facility dog program, which will add 40 hours per week of dedicated animal-assisted therapy support to patients.

Throughout FY25, the team worked diligently to prepare for this initiative—benchmarking best practices across pediatric facilities, consulting with internal and external veterinarians, and collaborating with hospital teams to develop policies and procedures that ensure the safety and well-being of both patients and the dog. Child Life Specialist Erin Connelly was selected as the first facility dog handler and joined the team in September. Thanks to generous support from **Dunkin' Joy for Dogs Program** and our new partnership with **Dogs for Better Lives**, the team is ready and eagerly awaits the arrival of the new four-legged colleague (expected in November 2025), who will enhance the program's ability to provide consistent, therapeutic support through animal-assisted therapy.

While the facility dog is an exciting addition to the Pawprints Program, the volunteer therapy dog teams continued to bring joy and comfort across the enterprise, now it is twenty-second year. The program increased the number of volunteer dog-and-handler teams to a total of 37 therapy dogs visiting throughout the year. **The teams conducted a total of 7,748 visits—a 38% increase over FY24.** These visits spanned 43 clinical areas across the hospital, with the highest engagement in Weymouth, Waltham Radiology Waiting Room, Acute Cardiac Care Unit, the Hale Family Center for Families/Lobby, and the Peabody Waiting Room.



Nine therapy dogs — Lemonade, Kintsu, Otis, Bodhi, Flynn, Digby, Bosco, and the Golden Girls — each completed **over 300 patient visits**, offering consistent companionship and emotional relief. These trained canines played a vital role not only in patient care but also in staff wellness. Seventeen yappy hours and casual interactions were held during routine rounds accounted for 10% of all visits—providing spontaneous moments of joy and stress relief for hospital staff.

The dedication of our volunteer teams remains unmatched year after year. In 2025, three handlers and their dogs were honored with Volunteer Services Awards for their outstanding commitment.

Congratulations to **Mickey Pescatore and her dog Flynn** (her second dog in the program) for five years of service, and to **Lee Ann Michelson with her dog Charlie** (also her second dog in the program) and **Paul Pierce with his dog Duncan** for reaching an incredible milestone of ten years. These achievements reflect the extraordinary devotion and impact of our volunteer teams.

In collaboration with the EPIC team, Pawprints successfully launched a new consultation request feature within the electronic medical record, enhancing documentation and streamlining referrals for individual animal-assisted visits. This innovation nearly tripled monthly referrals—from an average of 26 to 71—and doubled completed consults from 15 to 34 per month. This workflow represents a cutting-edge advancement for animal visitation programs and will be showcased at the Animal Assisted Services International Conference in 2026. It underscores Pawprints' commitment to integrating therapeutic services into the broader care ecosystem, ensuring emotional support is accessible, trackable, and responsive to evolving needs.

therapeutic & joyful IMPACT



“Thank you so much for helping get a dog out to us for our patient today. Her whole face lit up when the dog was with her, and you could see a visible difference in her anxiety level. We also had five wonderful additional visits, and the staff were thrilled as well.”

— Katie – Child Life Specialist, Outpatient Clinic in Waltham



2025 BEREAVEMENT PROGRAM



PROGRAM LEADERS: SoYun Kwan, along with Fiona Schicho, Eleanor Frechette (PACT), and Sue Morris (DFCI)



2025 Highlights BEREAVEMENT PROGRAM

32 families
came together for
the annual "Keeping
Connections" Grief Conference



Awarded 2025
Parmenter
Foundation Grant

9
support
groups



Grief support groups
increased this year in both
theme, focus and number
of sessions to help support
bereaved families.

"If you want to feel
closer to your child
in a place where you
are not alone, the BCH
bereavement service
offers understanding
and tenderness that
feels like home."

—Anonymous parent



55 families
attended the
"Time to Remember"
memorial service



...finding safe space

The Bereavement Program at Boston Children's Hospital provides compassionate, comprehensive support to families coping with the loss of a child. It offers meaningful resources, connection, and guidance during one of life's most difficult journeys. Through thoughtful outreach and inclusive programming, the Bereavement Program ensures that no family faces grief alone and that every step forward is met with care and understanding. As one caregiver shared, **"If you want to feel closer to your child in a place where you are not alone, the BCH bereavement program offers understanding and tenderness that feels like home."**

This hospital-wide offering is available to all families who have experienced the loss of a child cared for at Boston Children's Hospital. The Bereavement Program team, in partnership with the Pediatric Advanced Care Team, collaborates with clinicians and treating units across the hospital to provide valuable resources and opportunities for families to participate in program offerings as they begin their grieving process. This year, the team streamlined bereavement mailings to ensure consistent content and cadence across the enterprise.

Bereavement offerings this year included:

• Initial bereavement mailings •

207 initial bereavement mailings were sent out in FY25. This includes a condolence letter from the hospital, a guide to grief, and an invitation to groups and workshops.

• The BCH Bereavement Support Facebook Group •

Launched in 2023, this group has grown to 149 members and offers ongoing peer support and connection.

• Group/Workshop series (virtual)•

Offered in collaboration with the BCH Pediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT) and Dana Farber Cancer Institute (DFCI), 9 grief support groups were offered throughout the year to families to provide a safe space for shared experiences. The unique offerings included Oncology, Movement, HOPE, Continuing HOPE, Parenting While Grieving, and When Grief is New. Thanks to the generosity of the **Parmenter Foundation**, groups increased this year in both theme/focus and number of sessions helping to support bereaved families.

• Seasonal Newsletter •

Now in its second year, this quarterly publication provides families with a schedule of upcoming BCH events and group offerings, community programs, and additional bereavement resources. These resources include book recommendations and written reflections shared by other families who have experienced the loss of a child. As of the end of 2025, **332 families receive this newsletter via email.**

• Special Events•

The Bereavement Program collaborates with a multidisciplinary team to provide two in-person events each year. Both events are open to Boston Children's Hospital families coping with the loss of a child within the last two years.

Time to Remember Memorial Service

55 families and 147 individuals attended the "Time to Remember" memorial service, reflecting meaningful

participation. In addition, 105 volunteers, staff members, presenters, and musicians joined to make this event special for families. Included in the volunteers, three Pawprints therapy dog-handler teams were able to attend and provide comfort during this special day of remembrance.



“Keeping Connections” grief conference

A pillar of support, fostering community amongst families dealing with grief. **This year, 32 families, which were made up of 58 parents and 23 siblings, were supported by 28 staff members who volunteered their time to provide a space for shared reflection and healing.**

Families have expressed deep appreciation for these efforts. One caregiver noted the **“opportunity to connect with your grief as a family and reconnect with providers who cared for your child.”** Another shared, **“It was an opportunity to take off the mask and be with other people who truly understand.”** Through these compassionate offerings, the Bereavement Program honors each family’s journey and fosters connection, healing, and hope during life’s most difficult moments.



2025 Advocacy



Caregiver Career Support Program, Embrace-A-Family, Extraordinary Needs, Family Medical Coping Initiative, & Teen Advisory Committee



2025 Highlights ADVOCACY



22,201
parking vouchers for
inpatient families in need

30
fundraising teams
& hundreds of donors worked to
ensure families were able to
celebrate the holidays with dignity
and joy through the program:
Embrace-A-Family



Family Medical Coping Initiative
introduced a new
additional multilingual
instructional guide for
Teens & Adults.

971
patient and family members
supported with emergency clothing
through the **Extraordinary
Needs Program**

••• I joined teen advisory to improve
the experiences of patients in the
hospital after my own stays. •••
— TAC member and patient



The Caregiver Career Support Program, a collaboration between Boston Children’s Hospital (BCH) and Jewish Vocational Services (JVS Boston), continued to serve as a vital resource for caregivers and adult patients throughout FY25. **This year, the program received 68 referrals, with 27 caregivers successfully enrolled in JVS’s personalized services.** Participants accessed one-on-one career navigation, résumé support, interview coaching, and tailored skills training—tools that helped them pursue professional goals while managing the demands of caring for a medically complex child or navigating their own health needs.

Of the 27 caregivers enrolled, six secured full-time jobs ranging from phlebotomist to practice assistant, administrative assistant, and restaurant server. Seven participants enrolled in educational training programs like ESL classes, financial advisor training, culinary certification, and more. The program’s bilingual support—offered in both English and Spanish—ensured equitable access for BCH’s diverse family population. This year’s cohort reflected a balanced mix of English and Spanish speakers: 52% English & 48% Spanish.

These efforts led to several inspiring success stories, including caregiver “Clara.” **Referred by a BCH social worker, Clara sought a flexible full-time job to remain available for her sick child. Facing housing and financial barriers, she received training and financial assistance from JVS. Through her persistence and determination, Clara successfully secured employment.**

The program’s holistic approach extended beyond career coaching, offering caregivers tools for long-term stability and empowerment. For example, one of the longest engaged BCH clients, “Andy,” worked diligently for nearly two years to find work and support their family. “Andy” recently enrolled in and completed the financial advisor training program Support to Succeed. Moreover, they are very close to securing full-time work with a nonprofit they have been consulting for.

While the program is pausing in FY26, BCH remains committed to caregiver empowerment through continued referrals to JVS. The Social Work team will still be able to refer caregivers seeking support to JVS, ensuring that caregivers and patients still have access to these transformative services.



TEAM MEMBERS: Miranda Day, Elise Gottesman, Annie Banks – in partnership with Philip Schuchert, Greg Fain, Michelle Pinto, and Christopher Betancourt from JVS

ADVOCACY

Embrace-A-Family



Embrace-A-Family is a deeply meaningful, hospital-wide, employee-driven, holiday fundraiser that supports Boston Children's Hospital families facing financial hardship. Now in its sixteenth year, the program continues to grow in both reach and impact—embodying the spirit of community. Embrace-A-Family unites staff across departments in a shared mission of generosity and support.

By providing gift cards to accessible stores, Embrace-A-Family helps families celebrate the holidays with dignity and joy. Whether used to purchase groceries for a special meal, decorations for the holiday table, or essentials needed to celebrate a holiday together, these gifts offer more than financial relief—they offer connection, care, and hope.

In FY25, the program received referrals for ambulatory patient families from 87 Social Workers across the enterprise. **A total of 451 families — representing 1,719 individuals—were referred, marking a 40% increase and the highest number of referrals in the program's history.** This surge in need was met with an equally strong response from the hospital community, demonstrating how collective compassion expands our impact in meaningful ways.

To best serve families, the Embrace-A-Family team streamlined the referral and gift delivery process. In close coordination with Social Work, the program transitioned to a direct-to-family, email-based gift card distribution system, reducing wait times and improving efficiency this year, with plans to continue refining the process in the years ahead.

TEAM MEMBERS: Jill Twomey-McLaughlin, Devon Moos, Kristine Flaherty, Monica Sweeney (Trust)

Total financial contributions reached \$85,950, with \$70,861 raised through the generous fundraising efforts of Boston Children's Hospital staff, their families, and friends. The remaining support was provided by a Social Work Fund, ensuring that every family referred received assistance in FY25.

This year, 30 fundraising teams and hundreds of generous donors came together to make Embrace-A-Family possible. A special thank you goes to the top contributing teams in FY25, whose dedication helped expand the reach of this vital program: **The Blood Donor Center, Team Endocrine Department, the Urology Department, the Office of General Counsel, and the Edge Committee.**

Families expressed heartfelt gratitude for this support. As one parent shared, **"I appreciate everything that you all do and have done for me and my kiddos!"**

We are grateful for the staff donations and support, and the ability to brighten the holidays for families in need this year.





Advocacy initiatives demonstrated a strong presence in FY25, with the Extraordinary Needs Fund playing a pivotal role in addressing urgent challenges faced by families during hospitalization. This fund served as a responsive support system, offering essential resources such as parking vouchers, emergency clothing, temporary lodging during emergent situations, laundry detergent, toiletries, and culturally inclusive items like textured hair products. These offerings helped families remain focused on their child’s care by easing the burden of unexpected expenses.

The Clothing Closet supported 971 individuals this year, providing an average of 81 sets of clothing per month—a 15% increase from the previous year. Through the Center’s need-based parking program, **22,201 parking vouchers** were distributed to 2,990 inpatient families. The increase in vouchers, coupled with a decrease in the number of monthly families served, reflects a growing need for sustained support during longer hospital stays.

Additionally, **21 nights of emergency hotel lodging were funded for 15 families facing critical circumstances**, ensuring access to rest and stability during times of acute stress. These efforts illustrate how targeted, compassionate interventions can strengthen the hospital’s ability to meet families’ needs with dignity and care.

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TEAM MEMBERS: Hale Family Center for Families Staff



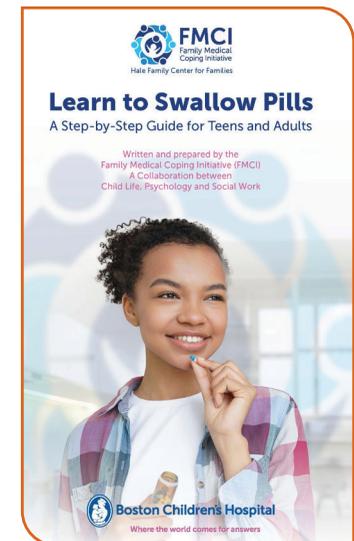
The Family Medical Coping Initiative (FMCI), a collaboration between Psychology, Social Work, and Child Life at Boston Children’s Hospital, continues to strengthen the emotional and psychological resilience of patients and families navigating medical care. Through targeted education, outreach, and resource development, FMCI empowers both families and professionals with tools to support medical coping and reduce stress.

• **Resources and Expanded Access** •

This year, FMCI introduced a new instructional guide: Learn to Swallow Pills: A Step-by-Step Guide for Teens and Adults, available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Adapted from FMCI’s original pediatric guide, this new version addresses a critical gap in care—supporting adolescents and adults who may struggle with pill swallowing but hesitate to disclose it. By placing teens and young adults “in the driver’s seat,” the guide promotes autonomy, adherence, and emotional well-being.

One professional shared, “I have been referred to the pill swallowing information by a colleague for my daughter,” underscoring the guide’s relevance and reach.

● ● ●
TEAM MEMBERS: Elisa Bronfman, Annie Banks, Gail Windmueller





FMCI also expanded its digital offerings, adding two new family-focused webinars to the FMCI playlist on the BCH YouTube Channel, bringing the total to 13 webinars. These new presentations received a combined 452 views in FY25:

- Managing Behavior and Big Feelings During Medical Visits
- Professional Education and Engagement

FMCI hosted six presentations for medical professionals, with a total live attendance of 368 and 56 additional views of recordings—bringing total engagement to 424. Topics included:

- Health Literacy to Support Medical Coping
- Cultivating Everyday Clinical Ethics to Support Families Coping with Medical Illness
- Partnering with Patients: Using Motivational Interviewing (MI) to Promote Behavior Change and Medical Adherence
- Addressing Challenging Child Behavior in a Medical Setting

Two additional presentations were delivered to the Pediatric Physicians' Organization at Children's (PPOC), focusing on preparing families for medical procedures and addressing medically-induced trauma.

FMCI's multidisciplinary approach—featuring presenters from Social Work, Psychology, Child Life, Nursing, Clinical Ethics, and Speech-Language Pathology—is widely praised. One attendee remarked, **"These FMCI presentations have been incredible... always concise, clear, and full of concrete takeaways."** Another shared, **"The presentations by the FMCI team are consistently among the most informative and well created I've attended at BCH!"**

Average live attendance rose by 31% over FY24, with a notable increase in nurse participation, reflecting FMCI's growing influence across disciplines.

• Community Outreach and Inclusion •

FMCI expanded its in-person outreach, distributing multilingual resources and engaging families in medical play at several events:

- Martha Elliot Health Center Health Fair
- BCH Cardiac Neurodevelopmental Family Symposium
- Hale Family Center for Families Open House

These efforts prioritized underserved populations, including teens, individuals with communication differences, and non-English-speaking families—ensuring equitable access to coping support.

FMCI's work continues to resonate with both families and professionals. One participant shared, **"I have some great takeaways from this presentation to use in my practice and everyday life. Thank you!"** These reflections highlight the initiative's ability to translate knowledge into meaningful, real-world support.

Through innovative resources, inclusive outreach, and impactful education, FMCI continues to build a resilient foundation of support—helping families and professionals navigate medical challenges with confidence and care.





The Teen Advisory Committee (TAC) at Boston Children’s Hospital brings together teen patients and siblings to collaborate with hospital departments and programs, sharing their perspectives and providing valuable input to help shape and improve the patient experience for the future.

TAC had 18 committed members who attended monthly two-hour meetings throughout the year, providing an opportunity for teens to share their insights and advocate for improvements that directly impact their experiences and those of their peers. The Teen Advisory Committee gives patients a voice in shaping the quality of care.

“I joined Teen Advisory to improve the experiences of patients in the hospital after my own stays. I want to thank Dr. Warf for taking great care of me my entire life and for recommending me for the Teen Advisory Committee.”

Each month TAC welcomes guest presenters and collaborators to their meetings. This year, TAC was able to advise on:

- **Digital Health** – Presenters Liz Hurley, Digital Health Experience Design Manager, and her colleague, Sam Moyer. Together, they reviewed a brochure explaining what type of information is available on the portal for different user types (patients, parents, and legal guardians).
- **Food Services** – Chefs and Food Services Management reviewed different foods they have available and sought feedback on the menu to make positive changes for patients and families.
- **Social Work Transition Team** – A collaboration being TAC and Social Work to create a transition pilot workshop “Legal Adulthood: What happens when I turn 18?”. The development of the workshop was over 3 meetings.

TEAM MEMBERS: Kristine Flaherty, Jessica Slayback, Jill Twomey-McLaughlin

- **Government Relations** – Available and interested TAC members visited the State House with the Government Relations team promoting awareness and support for meaningful bills/initiatives that impact adolescents across Massachusetts.
- **Office of Experience** – Members participated in a variety of surveys regarding sustainability and actions around follow up care recommendations from providers (like getting a CT scan or a blood draw, or physical therapy).
- **Patient Family Housing Program** – Members hosted a BBQ with Patient Family Housing at the Yawkey Family Inn. This was a fun-filled meeting that allowed TAC members to give back and connect with the patients and families, resulting in a collaborative and rewarding experience.

FY25 was the 19th year that TAC supported its annual education scholarship to current patients at Boston Children’s Hospital. Over 40 scholarships have been awarded during this time to patients/students providing funds for expenses like tuition, books, transportation, and school supplies to help the recipients be successful in their academic pursuits.

The Teen Advisory Committee continues to play a vital role in shaping a more responsive and youth-centered environment at Boston Children’s Hospital. Through thoughtful collaboration, meaningful advocacy, and a strong commitment to improving the patient experience, TAC members ensure that the voices of teen patients and siblings directly influence programs, services, and initiatives across the hospital. Their engagement and leadership help drive lasting, impactful change for current and future patients.



Gratitude for Our Supporters

These programs and services would not be possible without strong collaborations across the hospital, dedicated community partners, and all the incredible donors.

Louie Alan	Corkin Family	Inn at Longwood	Nutrisource
All She Wrote Books	Louis Crane Foundation	Jennings Family	The Parmenter Foundation
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Ash and Opal	Dogs for Better Lives	Knez Family	Phillips Family
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Boston Children's Hospital League	Emmanuel College	Mannheim Family	John Strain
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Compass Cares	Hole in the Wall Gang	Philip Nelson	
Corey Griffin Foundation	Homewood Suites	New England Development	



If you want to learn more about how to get involved...

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2025 was a milestone year

for Boston Children's Hospital Family Services, wherein we strengthened our outreach and impact across multiple key service areas.

CONNECTING *care,*
EXPANDING *impact*

remains not only a theme but a testament to our continuous efforts to unify, innovate, and elevate care within our programs.



Boston Children's Hospital
Family Services