



**150 YEARS**  
OF ADVANCING  
**PUBLIC**  
**HEALTH**

# Massachusetts Department of Public Health

## **Making Your Communities Accessible: Disability Justice, the CHII, and the NICIP**

Kimberley Warsett, Health and Disability  
Program Coordinator

October 27, 2022

# Learning Objectives

Understand:

- Disability justice
- The role of the Health and Disability Program
- Why municipal leaders need to know about disability
- The NICIP and the CHII
- The mini-grant opportunity
- Belchertown's use of the CHII

# What is the CHII Mini-Grant Opportunity?

- This is an opportunity for municipalities to receive around \$12,000 to make your municipality more accessible to people with mobility limitations
- Past projects have included making trails accessible, making beach areas accessible, and making streets easier to navigate for people who use wheelchairs
- You use the Community Health Inclusion Index (a survey) to determine how you can make your community easier to navigate for people with disabilities

# What is Disability Justice?

- A framework looking at ableism as it relates to other forms of oppression.
- It involves seeing the whole person in their context and working on disrupting the many systems of oppression people with disabilities may face.
- Principles include intersectionality, leadership of those most impacted, cross-movement solidarity, recognizing wholeness, sustainability, commitment to cross-disability solidarity, interdependence, collective access, and collective liberation.

# How the Mini-Grants Advance Disability Justice

- Mini-grant recipients work with people with disabilities to shape their projects
- Mini-grant recipients consider multiple sources of oppression in designing their assessments/policy or built environment implementations
- Mini-grant recipients are encouraged to develop their knowledge of the disability community and disability justice

# Health and Disability Program Mission

**As a program of the Office of Health Equity, we:**

- promote the health and well-being of people with disabilities in Massachusetts and prevent secondary conditions **by transforming public-health systems and sharing power with the disability community.**

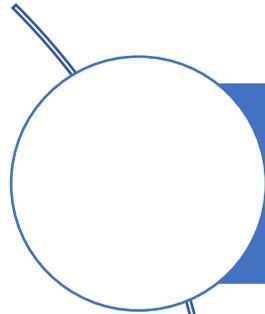
# Health and Disability Program – history

- Founded in the 1980's, continuously funded by CDC
- Specific program efforts shift with the times, but have included:
  - Accessible mammography project
  - Municipal partnerships to promote accessible local public health and recreation
  - Extensive training and technical assistance to all other DPH programs
  - Disability Community Health Needs Assessment (2013)
  - Presentations on health data and how to act on it at SILC and MRC Consumer Conferences

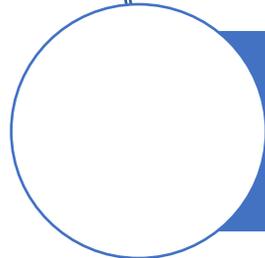
# Health and Disability Program – Partners

- The Health and Disability Program has many partners it works with throughout the mini-grant process.
- NCHPAD is a National Center on Health Promotion for people with disabilities. They have developed the Community Health Inclusion Index (CHII) as part of their NCHPAD Inclusive Community Implementation Process (NICIP)
- MHOA provides administrative support and assists with recruitment. Local municipalities are encouraged to apply.
- Mass in Motion contributes to community check-ins about the project and Mass in Motion grantees are encouraged to apply.
- The Office of Local and Regional Health assists throughout the grant cycle.
- The Root Cause Solutions Exchange assists with funding.

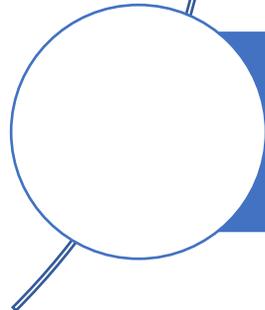
# Why do ALL municipal leaders need to know about disability ?



People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by health disparities, including physical activity



People with disabilities experience higher rates of social isolation and may have decreased access to healthy living resources



People are living longer-- anyone who lives long enough will likely experience one or more disabilities in their lifetime

# Who lives with disability in Massachusetts?

- 1 out of 4 adults report having one or more physical or cognitive disabilities across the country (with similar numbers of people or slightly less in MA)
- Among adults reporting a disability, 1 in 10 require assistance with personal care or routine activities.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2018/p0816-disability.html>,  
<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/p70-152.pdf>



# Health needs for people with disabilities in MA

In 2013 the first statewide health needs assessment of people with disabilities was conducted to identify “Big Problems” (*top 10 listed below*)

*Snowball sampling method resulting in 865 responses;  
over 5 times the expected response rate*

1. Affordable housing (77%)	6. Communication supports (large print, Braille, CART readers) (52%);
2. Adequate dental care (64%)	7. Managing chronic conditions (50%);
3. Adequate mental health services (62%)	8. Paying for prescription meds (48%);
4. Finding a doctor who is sensitive to disability issues (55%)	9. Finding a doctor who accepts public health insurance (48%); and
5. Transportation to MDs appt (54%)	10. Finding accessible gyms (45%)

# Self-Reported Health Status Inequities

- **Diabetes:** Ever told by a doctor they had diabetes  
16% of adults with disabilities VS. 9% those without
- **Mental Health:** 15 or more days of poor mental health  
22% of adults with disabilities/7% people without disabilities
- **Depression:** ever having had depression  
33% of adults with disabilities/12% those without disabilities
- **History of Sexual Violence:** Ever experienced sexual violence  
7% of adult men with disabilities/4% of adult men without  
24% of adult women with disabilities/19% of adult women without

# NCHPAD's Inclusive Community Implementation Process



# Plan for Inclusion

- Mobilize an inclusive health coalition:

Bring together stakeholders that can make decisions together and guide the process

- Conduct community assessments:

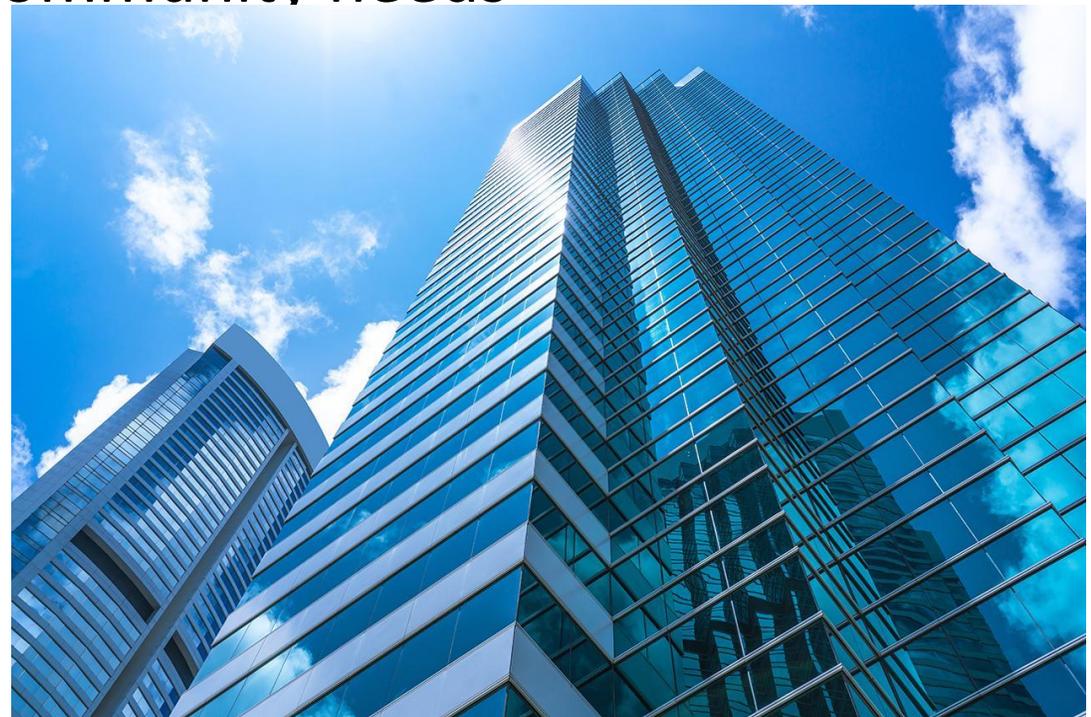
Gather data about your community's needs and analyze what you can do to improve them

- Select inclusion solutions:

Select and prioritize what you need to do to address gaps in the data

# Align inclusion solutions

- Invite community feedback
- Identify challenges to implementing solutions
- Revise inclusion solutions to fit community needs



# What is the CHII?

- A set of surveys that helps identify healthy living resources in a community and if people with disabilities can use them
- This is a multi-level instrument that can be used across a variety of settings in the community
- Each city completes an online assessment of the area they wish to improve and then is given feedback on that area's accessibility.



# What does the CHII cover?

- Multi-level: Macro-community, organizational, onsite
- Schools, workplaces, community institutions, healthcare, the outdoors, the community at-large
- It addresses physical activity, healthy eating, and community design and access to those for people with disabilities
- It looks at the built environment equipment, program, staff, and policy
  
- You choose what you want to focus on for your CHII project and then assess that site.
- It's an easy-to-use survey!



# Why the CHII? Municipal Accessibility Improvements

- **Need:**

- Massachusetts adults with disabilities lack exercise spaces and access to the built environment:
  - 48% do not meet CDC guidelines for aerobic *or* strength-building exercise;
  - 45% name inaccessibility of exercise spaces as a major health concern.

- **Intervention:**

- Mini-grants to Massachusetts communities
  - Phase 1: use Community Health Inclusion Index (CHII) to measure accessibility of physical activity infrastructure.
  - Phase 2: make policy and environmental changes based on CHII results.

# Municipal Accessibility Improvements

- **Outcomes and Impact:**

- Fourteen cities/towns participated in one or both phases of the project.
- Projects included improvements to:
  - hiking trails;
  - walking routes to schools/civic buildings;
  - community gardens;
  - swimming areas;
  - downtown shopping/strolling areas.
- Policy changes include:
  - reorganizing ADA Coordinator's office to make it more prominent and responsive to residents' needs.



A raised garden bed

# Macro Assessment

- Involves speaking with community representatives that know about public transportation, community design policies, or community health promotion coalitions
- This assessment looks at the big picture in your municipality or area.
- You may involve new partners like transportation agencies, city planning departments, social service agencies, and other community groups.



# Organizational Assessment

- You would look at an organization's programs, staff training, and policies.
- Is the organization's work accessible to people with disabilities?
- Are staff educated about working with people with disabilities?
- If it is a physical activity program, does it have options for people with disabilities?
- If it is a nutrition program, do people with disabilities have access?



# On-site Assessment

- Looks at the external environment and/or the internal environment.
- Looks at venues for healthy eating, physical activity, and healthcare.
- You would take measurements of the site to assess accessibility.



# Technical Assistance You will be Provided

- You will work with an independent living center with disability experts
- The Health and Disability Program will conduct 3 check-ins with you and be there whenever you have a need
- For questions about the CHII, you will have a training with NCHPAD
- You will also be invited to a seminar on racial justice and a seminar on disability justice
- Many people join the check-ins to provide you with feedback as your project is going along and address any questions you may have.

# CHII RFP for this year

## Plan:

- 7 communities will receive CHII mini-grants
- These grants will be for \$12,000
- Funds will be used in 2023 from January-June
- Participants will work with people with disabilities through the project cycle
- Check-ins and trainings on disability justice and racial justice will be held
- Applicants are encouraged to use both the CHII as well as other NICIP tools
- Q and A: November 14<sup>th</sup> from 2-3 contact [Kimberley.Warsett@mass.gov](mailto:Kimberley.Warsett@mass.gov)

# Selection of Grantees

## Plan:

- The RFP will guide you to easily complete the application.
- A group of DPH employees involved in the work will score applications.
- A scoresheet is listed at the end of the RFP that will tell you how applications will be scored.
- Communities will be notified in December if their project will be funded.
- In the past, we have had about the same number of applicants as slots.
- We've had many applicants who have returned to further enhance their projects.
- We encourage you to ask questions of us and apply!



**150 YEARS**  
OF ADVANCING  
**PUBLIC**  
**HEALTH**

# Massachusetts Department of Public Health

## Thank You!

[Kimberley.Warsett@mass.gov](mailto:Kimberley.Warsett@mass.gov)

[Nassira.D.Nicola@mass.gov](mailto:Nassira.D.Nicola@mass.gov)