

VOICES OF VINFEN

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Vinfen
Transforming lives together

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

A Letter from Leadership

2

Our Services

6

Year in Review

8

Self-Determination: Every Voice Matters

10

A Home of One's Own, but Never Alone

11

Building Confidence, One Shift at a Time

12

Answering the Call: Vinfen's Mobile Crisis Intervention Team

14

A Harvest of Health and Healing

16

The Vinfen Film Festival: Stories that Spark Connection

18

Donors

20

Financial Disclosures

21

Board Members and Senior Leadership



Dear Friends,

At Vinfen, every voice matters. Whether it is a person taking the next step toward independence, a staff member answering a late-night crisis call, an artist sharing their vision, or a family member planting seeds of wellness, the voices of our community guide everything we do.

The theme of this year's Annual Report, *Voices of Vinfen*, reflects the belief that true transformation begins when people are heard. You will hear it in Jeanette's words as she celebrates her first independent apartment in our new Lowell residence. You will see it in Norma's pride as she thrives at her job with New Balance. You will feel it in Blue's passion for wellness as his garden nourishes both body and spirit. And you will witness it in the courage of those who shared their stories at our 2025 Film Festival, sparking empathy and connection among hundreds of attendees.

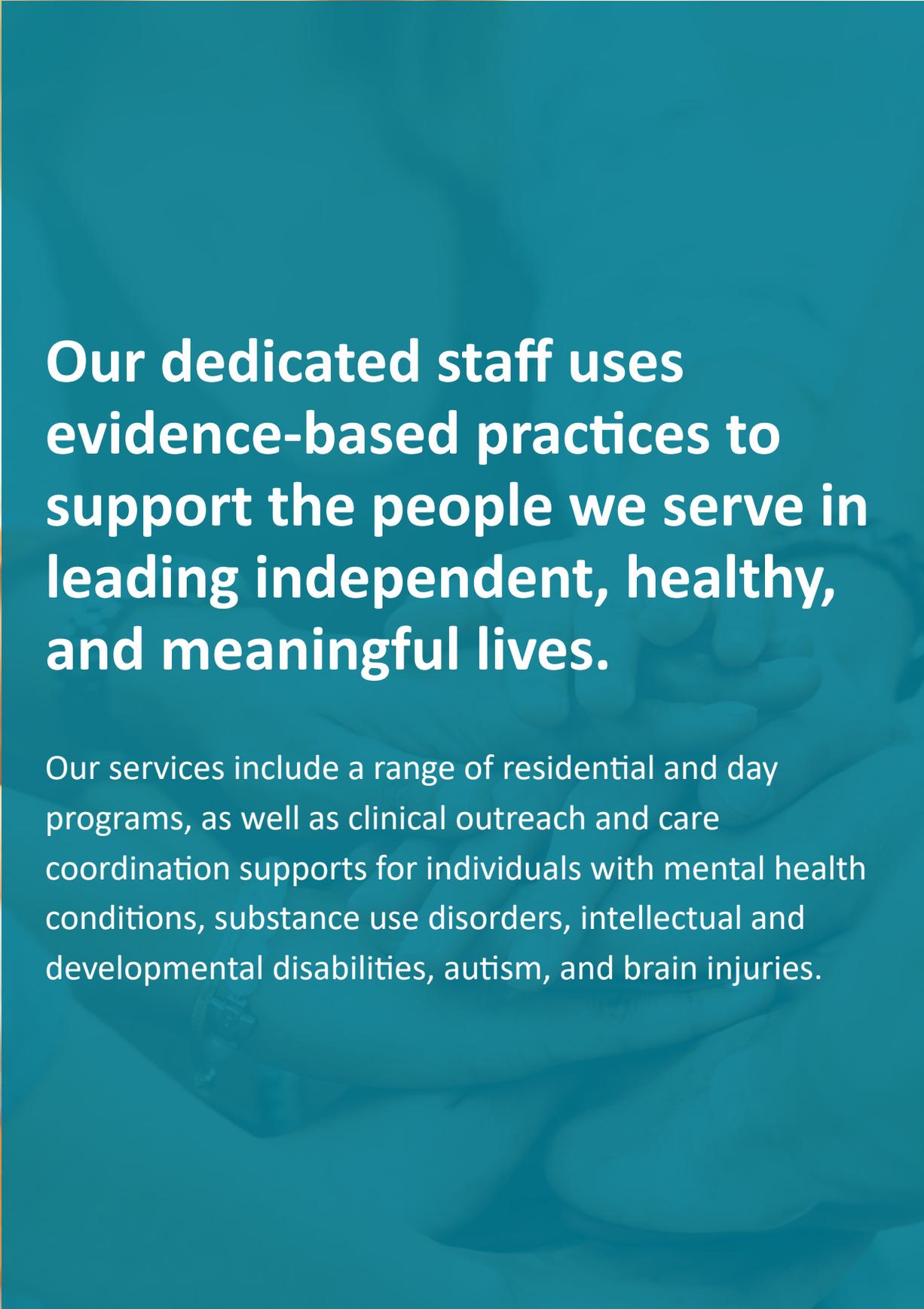
We also deeply value the voices of our extraordinary staff, who bring not only skill but also compassion, cultural diversity, and lived experience to their work. Their commitment is the heartbeat of our mission, helping thousands of individuals and families move forward with dignity and hope.

As you read this report, I hope you see the common thread that unites these stories: partnership. Vinfen is built on the belief that recovery and growth happen when individuals, families, communities, and staff work together. From our Mobile Crisis Intervention team in Lowell, to our Clubhouses where members lead alongside staff, to our boardroom where the voices of those we serve directly influence our strategies, Vinfen is a place where people are empowered to shape their futures.

We are proud of all we accomplished this past year—from raising record support for Run-4-Life, to advancing digital inclusion through the TechConnect initiative, to celebrating creativity at Gateway Arts. These milestones reflect the strength of our community and the unwavering belief that every person has the right to thrive.

Thank you for lending your voice to Vinfen, whether as a partner, supporter, staff member, or advocate. Together, we are not only transforming lives—we are amplifying voices that too often go unheard.

With gratitude,
Jean Yang, President & CEO
Philip A. Mason, Chair, Board of Directors



Our dedicated staff uses evidence-based practices to support the people we serve in leading independent, healthy, and meaningful lives.

Our services include a range of residential and day programs, as well as clinical outreach and care coordination supports for individuals with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, and brain injuries.

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) is a 24/7 comprehensive service for individuals living with long-term mental health and substance use challenges. A multi-disciplinary outreach team offers clinical and rehabilitative interventions, as well as peer and housing support. Housing is an integrated part of the program, with around a quarter of people living in staffed group residences and others living in Vinfen-managed apartments or independently.

Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) delivers highly individualized rehabilitative and clinical services to help individuals with mental health conditions reduce or prevent psychiatric relapses. Specialists in psychiatry, nursing, and vocational rehabilitation collaborate to support each individual's recovery.

Clubhouses are daytime psychosocial rehabilitation programs for people with mental health conditions. Vinfen's seven Clubhouses combine employment and education services with social activities, life skills, arts-based rehabilitation, and advocacy. Members and staff collaborate on all aspects of Clubhouse operations.

The Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC), based in Lowell, offers routine and urgent therapy and medication management services, 24/7 crisis intervention through a mobile team, and 13 short term crisis stabilization beds for adults and youth. Vinfen also operates an outpatient behavioral health center in Lawrence.

Safe Havens are supportive residential programs for individuals just transitioning out of homelessness. Individuals referred to the programs can live there for up to a year, receiving coordinated supports that help them reacclimate to housed living and connect to additional resources that will prepare them for more permanent housing.

The Young Adult Access Centers in Everett, Lawrence, and Lowell are low barrier services to help individuals aged 16-26 transition into adulthood, focusing on personal stability, secure housing, employment, and positive relationships.

Our **Recovery Connection Centers** and **Recovery Learning Centers** are peer-operated drop-in programs that offer support, advocacy, education, and social activities in a sensitive and person-centered manner.

Care Coordination teams connect people to medical providers, behavioral health care services, and in-home support. Our staff can help make appointments, arrange for transportation, and address other health-related social needs.

Digital Inclusion services are offered to everyone who utilizes Vinfen services through our TechConnect program. Services include 1:1 digital tutoring, access to a device (smartphone, tablet, or laptop), and support in accessing low-cost internet programs. For people who need more specialized support, TechConnect offers Assistive Technology services—including an evaluation by an Occupational Therapist, equipment set up, and training for both staff and persons served.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Vinfen provides a comprehensive array of residential and day services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, brain injuries, and autism.

Residential programs offer 24-hour support to individuals who need assistance with daily living tasks such as meal preparation, transportation, and financial management.

In Home Supports help individuals live independently in their own residence with intermittent staff assistance .

Adult Companion Services provide non-medical care, supervision, and socialization for individuals with brain injury, assisting individuals with daily tasks like meal preparation and shopping.

Day Programs offer skill-building opportunities to help individuals achieve personal goals and greater independence. Vinfen offers the following day programs:

- **Day Habilitation** focuses on improving communication, motor skills, and socialization through art, music, and horticulture. Integrated therapies such as occupational, physical, and speech therapy are also available.
- **Community-Based Day Supports** promote personal and vocational growth, offering training in life skills, community access, and independence.
- **Employment Services** provide community-based vocational training and job support, helping individuals develop critical job skills and experience.
- **Gateway Arts** is an internationally recognized studio that provides professional development for over 100 adults with disabilities. Artists are supported in developing their careers through diverse creative processes and venues including Gateway’s own gallery and retail store.
- **Clubhouse 2422** is a psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation program for adults with brain injuries. It provides voluntary, member-driven support to increase community integration and build meaningful work and interpersonal relationships.

The Family Support Center empowers families supporting a loved one with an intellectual or developmental disability by offering education, home visits, training, and access to resources. The center serves as a primary contact for individuals and families, providing parent networking, referral services, and more.



The Autism Support Center provides an array of information and referral services, resources, and supports to children and young adults up to age 22 with autism and their families, including support groups, parent and peer networking and mentoring, and social and recreational activities.



VINFEN CONNECTICUT

In addition to our services in Massachusetts, Vinfen also provides community-based services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health conditions at more than 45 locations throughout Connecticut. Our Connecticut services include residential programs and day services. To learn more about our service offerings in Connecticut, please visit www.vinfenct.org.

YEAR IN REVIEW



OPIOID AWARENESS EVENT

Vinfen joined community partners at Lowell City Hall for the second annual **International Opioid Awareness Day**, sharing stories and raising awareness about the impact of the epidemic.



17TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

This inspiring evening celebrated partnerships among staff, families, and those we serve, featuring moving stories, awards, and a keynote address by Mark and John Cronin.



HOLIDAY CHEER IN ROCKLAND

Thanks to the **Mary and Nancy Costello Fund**, Rockland Day Habilitation participants enjoyed holiday gifts and celebrations for the third year, totaling over \$2,000.

AUGUST

OCTOBER

DECEMBER

SEPTEMBER

NOVEMBER

JANUARY

RUN-4-LIFE

Staff and supporters ran a 200-mile relay, raising over \$20,000 for **Vinfen's Health and Wellness Fund** and increasing awareness of mental health and disability challenges.

PRESTIGIOUS HONORS

Vinfen was recognized as one of *The Boston Globe's* **Top Places to Work** and, under CEO Jean Yang, ranked #40 on The Women's Edge list of **Top 100 Women-Led Businesses in Massachusetts**.

GATEWAY MOVES

More than 200 supporters donned hard hats for **Gateway Arts' "Construction Chic"** fundraiser, raising \$200,000 for the renovation of its new Brookline Village studio.



2024-2025



TECHCONNECT GRANT

Vinfen received a \$50,000 grant from the **Essex County Community Foundation** to expand digital access and training for people with mental health conditions and disabilities.



VINFEN ARTISTS AT THE STATE HOUSE

Artwork by 118 artists from Vinfen programs was showcased at the State House, with an April 9 reception celebrating their creative talents.



NAMI WALKS

Members of the Vinfen community proudly joined 1,600 participants on Boston Common for **NAMI Walks Massachusetts**, supporting mental health advocacy and fighting stigma.

FEBRUARY

APRIL

MAY

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

CLUBHOUSE EMPLOYMENT CELEBRATION

Vinfen joined the **Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition** to honor employers providing meaningful job opportunities to clubhouse members.



LONGWOOD SYMPHONY PARTNERSHIP

Vinfen was honored as a Community Partner for the **Longwood Symphony Orchestra's Healing Art of Music** concert, benefiting Boston nonprofits supporting the medically underserved.



DISABILITY REFRAMED AT GBH

Vinfen sponsored and attended GBH's annual *Disability ReFramed* event, featuring a panel on living with disability and building more supportive communities.



SELF-DETERMINATION: EVERY VOICE MATTERS

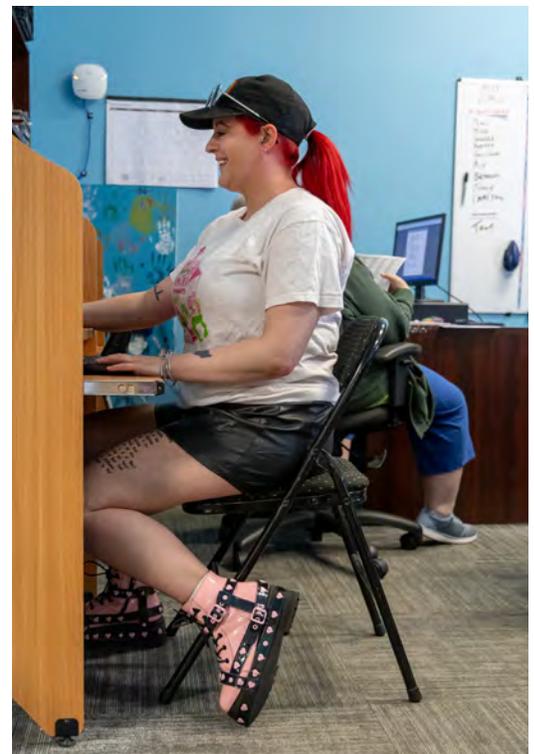
Promoting self-advocacy for the people we serve is one of Vinfen’s core values—and while that can take the form of individuals joining advocacy organizations or sharing their concerns and priorities with their elected officials, it often begins with them having an active role in determining how they receive services. Throughout our various programs, the voices of the individuals we serve are heard loud and clear.

A prime example is found within Vinfen’s seven mental health Clubhouses, all of which are based on a model of close collaboration between members and staff. Both groups work side-by-side to manage all aspects of the Club’s operation and governance, providing members with endless opportunities to contribute in meaningful and significant ways to the success of the Club’s work.

This integration extends to the process of hiring staff, with members called into action to help interview and select new hires. “We’ve done job interviews that have involved up to a dozen members,” says Devon McDonough, program director of Plymouth Bay Clubhouse. “Any candidate that comes in for an interview has already been screened to assure the proper professional qualifications. Where the members come in is deciding whether the candidate is a good fit. If someone wants to have a say, we believe they should have that opportunity.”

Plymouth members say they feel empowered by the chance to ask candidates about issues of personal importance to them—whether that’s longtime member Pat determining “is this someone I will be comfortable confiding in, and are they patient enough to explain things I might need help understanding?” or her clubmate Melissa, who says she values “diversity of backgrounds and interests, and whether they see this job as a stepping stone or someplace they want to stay for awhile.” Chloe—the Club’s recently-hired intake coordinator—recalled her own interview process, saying, “I found it to be a very interesting process—the tiniest bit nerve-wracking. But the questions were very insightful, and I liked how everyone was expressing their own voice and viewpoint—while sharing that common perspective of what’s best for the Club.”

Beyond fostering agency within their individual programs, Vinfen considers it a priority that those we serve can speak directly to leadership about larger issues that affect the entire community. This was the impetus for establishing Vinfen’s **Board of Directors Initiative (BODI)**, a program in which individuals served work with a team of staffers to identify and discuss systemic issues and organization-wide concerns and prepare to present these concerns at board meetings.





“We thought it was critically important that the voice of the individual was represented,” says Rob Crane, vice president and executive director of Vinfen Connecticut, and one of the four-person BODI staff. “The core of our job is to work with the folks served to really help identify the crucial concerns that will benefit the most people, and to help participants present those concerns in a way that represents the entirety of people served.”

As one example of the kinds of topics addressed by BODI, Crane cites staff training. “The training issues started with individuals questioning exactly how new staff were trained, and developed into a push to have people served represented in the training process—including curriculum review,” he says. “Why shouldn’t these individuals have a role in determining what new staff need to know about how best to support them?”

“What makes the Board of Directors Initiative so powerful is that it embodies Vinfen’s commitment to elevating the voice of the individual,” says Flip Mason, chair of the Vinfen board. “This is not just symbolic—it’s true partnership. The individuals who come before the board shape our conversations, influence our decisions, and keep us grounded in the lived experiences of those we serve. Their voices make us stronger as an organization.”

Al, an individual served through Vinfen’s Adult Community Clinical Services, says “My experience working with the board and the senior staff has been quite positive. We do our homework, talk to people being served, and we then bring relevant topics to the board. I feel that they take our opinions very seriously, we have excellent discussions, and that not only are we being heard, but actions have followed and further change and adjustments are coming.”

Charlie, who just joined BODI last December, says he was inspired to participate because his lived experiences have taught him the importance of self-advocacy. “I’ve spent years fighting to get what I needed most in my treatment,” he says. “I know what it’s like to feel like nobody’s there for you, and I wanted to take that experience and direct it toward something that might impact life for the better for myself and others at Vinfen. I feel like we’re putting down a really strong foundation to start pushing positive changes.”

A HOME OF ONE'S OWN, BUT NEVER ALONE

Vinfen is redefining residential care with a diverse range of short- and long-term housing options tailored for individuals with mental health conditions. Our programs meet people where they are in their recovery—supportive, inclusive, and as unique as the people we serve.

This March, we launched a groundbreaking new residence on Andover Street in Lowell—the first of its kind in the region. Designed as a **Supported Independent Environment (SIE)**, it offers a more autonomous setting with less intensive staffing than traditional group homes.

The residents at Andover Street run the gamut, from their mid-20s to their early 60s. Many of them are employed, while others attend a range of day services. Some of the residents have transitioned from group homes, while others are people who lived in solo apartments and felt they could benefit from a supportive community of peers.

“A program like Andover Street provides residents with an opportunity to further develop the skills and supports they need to live independently in the communities of their choice,” says Elizabeth Cella, Vinfen’s senior vice president of community mental health. “These 19 new units have also created more movement within the system of care—as people move into these supported independent environments, that opens up residential program spots for people currently living in state hospitals. This expansion is transformative, providing more residential opportunities for people for decades to come.”

Set in a beautifully restored historic home—once a serene retreat for Catholic priests—the property now blends old-world charm with modern comfort. A new wing brings the total to 19 private studio-style units, each with its own kitchen and bath, offering residents dignity, privacy, and the space to thrive.

“Our residents are very independent,” says Adwoa Briago, the program’s residential director. “Our staff assist with specific things, like administering medication or helping manage each person’s Individual Service Plan. But, at its core, this is really a place for people who are ready for a more self-directed living situation.”

One of those residents, Jeanette, came to Andover Street from a Vinfen group home that had round-the-clock staffing. She says that the idea of a more independent environment was scary at first, but that she felt ready for the next step. “My whole life, basically, I’ve been in hospitals and group homes, but I feel like I’ve grown to a different place in my life,” she says. “I needed to learn how to manage my symptoms, use coping skills, and not have to rely on others to feel safe. And this place is really helping me do that.”

Rebecca Spinale, one of Vinfen’s directors of service for community mental health, regards a program like Andover Street as aspirational for residents and staff alike. “The SIE model really allows us to see people becoming more independent,” she says. “It inspires those we serve to think, ‘That could be me.’ And it’s thrilling for our staff to see people really succeeding in progressing through recovery.”

Living in her new apartment, Jeanette is delighted with her independence. “I can’t believe how great it is. I cook for myself, I go to my own appointments, and I grow flowers in my sunroom,” she says. “When I need support, the staff is here to help. But this is a place where I can make my own decisions, and I finally feel like I have a home of my own. I made the right choice to come here, and I really feel like I’m gonna do great.”



BUILDING CONFIDENCE, ONE SHIFT AT A TIME

Norma has been part of Vinfen’s **Employment Training Center (ETC)** in Somerville for more than a decade, and her journey shows how the right support can unlock independence and growth. “They’ve given me great job opportunities, and they’re always there for me to give support and answer questions,” she says.

Six months ago, Norma started a new job working part-time at New Balance’s Brighton store. Twice a week, she travels from Somerville to the athletic retailer, where she works in the stockroom. “I sort clothing by size—shirts, pants, sweatshirts—and hang things up. I like it a lot—it’s quiet back there, and my co-workers are very nice.”

Norma takes pride in her role. “I’m a hard worker, and I’m super fast at my job,” she says, smiling. “No matter how much I have to do, when my shift is over, everything is done. My managers are very impressed.” She also enjoys the perks of working in a place that values her: “I like my New Balance shirt and my nametag, and I got to pick a free pair of sneakers—I went with black ones because they go with everything.”

For Norma, earning her own paycheck represents far more than money. “I like making my own money and buying what I want. I love the independence it gives me,” she says.

Norma’s supervisor at New Balance, Mary Sheehy, agrees that she is thriving: “Norma is a fantastic employee. She shows up every day ready to work! Her productivity and work ethic are outstanding, and her positive and joyful personality is contagious. She lightens up the stockroom and is a pleasure to work with. She has made the team better since her arrival and we are so happy to have her on our team at New Balance!”



New Balance has partnered with Vinfen for more than 20 years, offering vocational opportunities to individuals served by ETC. “Working with individuals from all backgrounds and skill sets is so important in today’s work environment,” Sheehy explains. “Diversity is essential in all environments, and we are fortunate to be able to provide work to individuals of all abilities. It is a huge part of our core value of teamwork. It has been a wonderful relationship with Vinfen!”

At Vinfen, we believe that employment is critical to achieving equal opportunity, full participation, and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities. Through ETC and partnerships with companies like New Balance, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities gain job skills, confidence, and pathways to independence.

Norma is already looking toward the future. “I definitely want to work more hours—to get my own apartment and be able to pay my own rent. That would be awesome.” And her long-term goal? “I dream of being a yoga instructor,” she says. “I go and do yoga every Saturday, and I want to get certified as a teacher. Yoga makes me feel relaxed and peaceful, and I would love to have a job where I can help other people feel the same way.”

If you are an employer interested in partnering with Vinfen, please visit vinfen.org/partners/partners-in-employment for more information.

ANSWERING THE CALL: VINFEN'S MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM

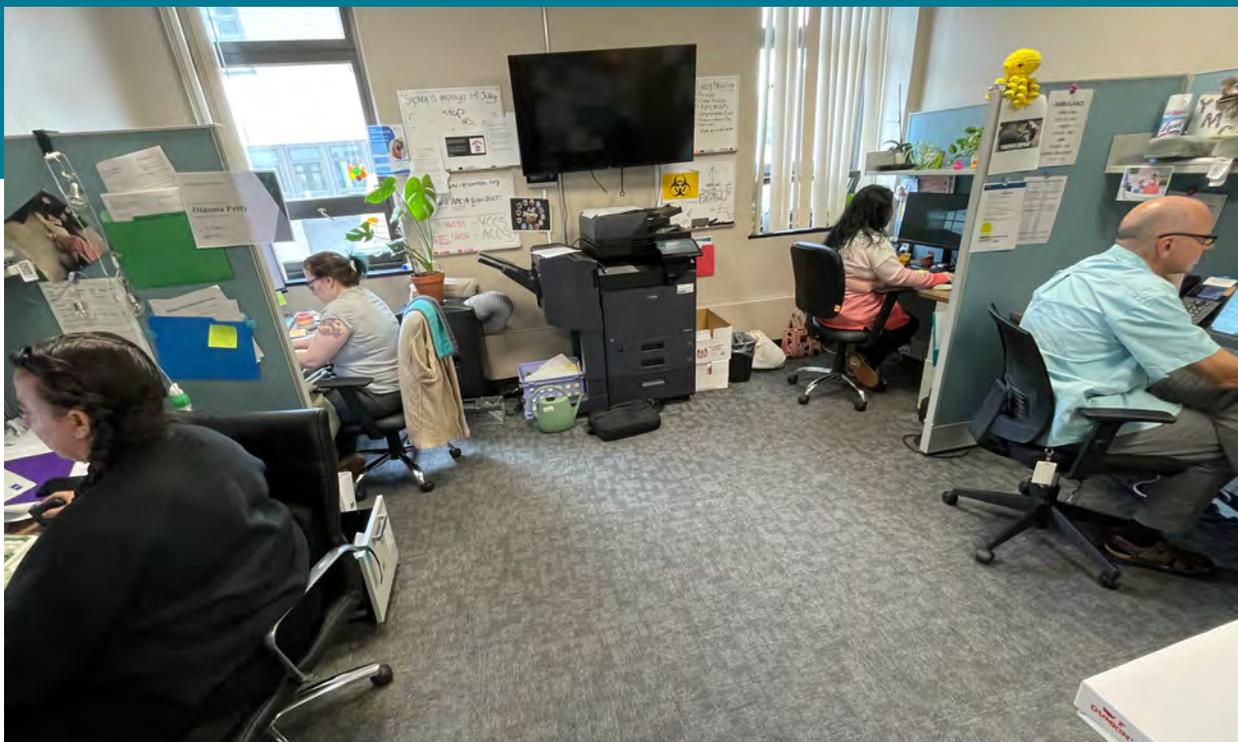
“Mental health conditions can come with periods of acute crisis,” says Dietrich Kulze, as he settles in at his desk at Vinfen’s Varnum Avenue clinic in Lowell. “Around 10 percent of the situations we are called on to support are related to traumatic crisis incidents—the other 90 percent involve supporting the ongoing effects people living with mental health conditions experience.”

Dietrich is a member of Vinfen’s **Mobile Crisis Intervention (MCI)** team, made up of clinicians who provide mobile response in the home, school, workplace, or other community settings for children, youth, and adults experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis—offering an alternative to ER visits.

Vinfen provides MCI services to communities in the Greater Lowell area, including the towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Lowell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford.

“We are a 24/7/365 unit—there is always someone here,” says Kate Bergeron, LICSW, director of service for Vinfen’s Urgent Outpatient & Acute Services. “Our first job is to ensure that the person calling is safe and to de-escalate any crisis situation, and from there we evaluate and assess the person’s needs. This comes through talking to them, as well as family, roommates, police... anyone who can offer more context. And from there we can help them develop a risk management/safety plan, and offer referrals to community supports they need going forward.”

Those services may include Vinfen’s Community Crisis Stabilization program, hospital diversion programs, substance use disorder treatment centers, shelters or housing assistance, food pantries, and more. Additionally, following an intervention, MCI conducts 3-day check-ins to ensure that individuals are connecting to the services they need.





On a recent day at the MCI office, five clinicians sit at their desks reviewing cases from the previous day and setting checklists of the day's tasks. They are rarely off the phones, whether they're conducting follow-ups, or answering new calls from people who need help.

"Yes, I can connect you with the referral for that prescription," one staff member says, calling up the person's record. "How are you feeling today?" says another, checking in with an individual she's encountered before. "You sound kind of tired—have you been getting any sleep?"

Meanwhile, Dietrich gets up from his chair and prepares to head out to a nearby group home that has a resident currently in crisis. It's a flurry of activity.

"There's a predictable unpredictability to this kind of work," Kate says. "Every day is different, and you honestly have to be the type of person who thrives on chaos. Sometimes it's loud and hectic, but the team atmosphere here is really outstanding. There's always someone here to lean on and take support from—what we do for those we serve, we do for each other, too."

That unpredictability exhibits itself in the wide range of people the MCI team is called upon to serve. Narcotic overdoses; persons exhibiting unusual aggression or troubling behavior; individuals with chronic mental health conditions who may need to reassess or reacclimate to medications. "We try to use past behavior to assess future behavior," Kate says. "That can be the difference in whether someone is recommended for hospitalization or continued outpatient care."

As providers of youth crisis services, the team is frequently called by area school systems. "We get called in to work with aggressive kids who won't or can't comply with physical requirements of school—running out of classes, fighting," says Kate. "We respond to threats of violence or self-harm, or even to help students with autism who may not be receiving sufficient supports within their school. We generally don't go in without parental consent—schools have parental consents on file or reach out to them before they call us."

Operating in an ethnically diverse region, the MCI team's work is sometimes complicated by cultural considerations and language barriers. "It adds a level of complexity to our work," says Kate, noting that the team utilizes an interpreter service, and all members of the team carry pocket translators to assist with communication.

While many of the people MCI assists are first-time callers, Kate says that there are plenty of people that are familiar—the 90 percent Dietrich mentioned who experience re-occurring crises. "Even if we do all the right things when we interface with people, we know that our goal can't be to 'cure' them," she says. "For people with chronic conditions, each time we see them, we're hopefully helping them move forward. In time, they come to know us and trust us, they don't fight when we try to help them... we see progress."

The job is demanding, Kate says, and sometimes heartbreaking. But the successes, when they come, can make all the difference. "It's honestly a privilege to sit with someone at their lowest moment," she says. "The chance to help them through that and maybe offer an opportunity for change? That's a gift."

A HARVEST OF HEALTH AND HEALING



At Vinfen, we believe health is about more than medical care—it’s also about creating opportunities for people to thrive in body and mind. That’s why our **Health and Wellness Fund** was established: to support programs that encourage activity, build community, and promote healthy living. One of the most inspiring examples of this mission in action can be found at our Chatham group residence, where a garden has transformed both meals and lives.

The idea started with Blue, a longtime resident and committed vegan. For years, he cooked his own meals apart from his housemates. “A plant-centered diet is beneficial for athleticism and for brain health,” he says. But he wanted something more—a way to share his passion for healthy eating with others. Together with his mother, Diane, Blue proposed creating an organic vegetable and flower garden that could feed the body, mind, and spirit of everyone at the house.

The Chatham residence was awarded a \$2,650 Health and Wellness microgrant—“seed money,” if you will—which paid for raised beds, organic soil, fencing to keep out curious wildlife, and the first round of plants and seeds. Diane brought her background in landscaping and garden design, and Blue devoted himself to planting, watering, and weeding, supported by Program Director Joan Kimball.

Blue, who is 33 and has diagnoses of schizophrenia and high-functioning autism, quickly found that gardening provided much more than fresh vegetables. “As part of his condition, Blue often has a hard time starting tasks and remaining motivated,” Diane explains. “He always wanted to work, but was having a hard time finding the right fit. Gardening was something he knew very well from working with me all his life, and it seemed like the kind of project he would want to devote himself to.”

Soon, a once-bare plot was bursting with cucumbers, tomatoes, lettuce, squash, potatoes, beans, and herbs. “Cayenne, ginger, and turmeric are really healthy,” Blue says. “Lots of antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.” He now cooks alongside staff, creating meals that are as flavorful as they are nourishing.

The benefits have been profound. “Blue’s mental state has been so much improved since we started the garden,” Diane shares. “Having purpose and engagement, as well as a creative outlet, has done wonders. He has not had an in-patient psych stay for more than a year—when Blue is experiencing negative symptoms, he gets outside in the garden and feels so much better. It’s been incredibly empowering, and I’ve watched his quality of life improve.”

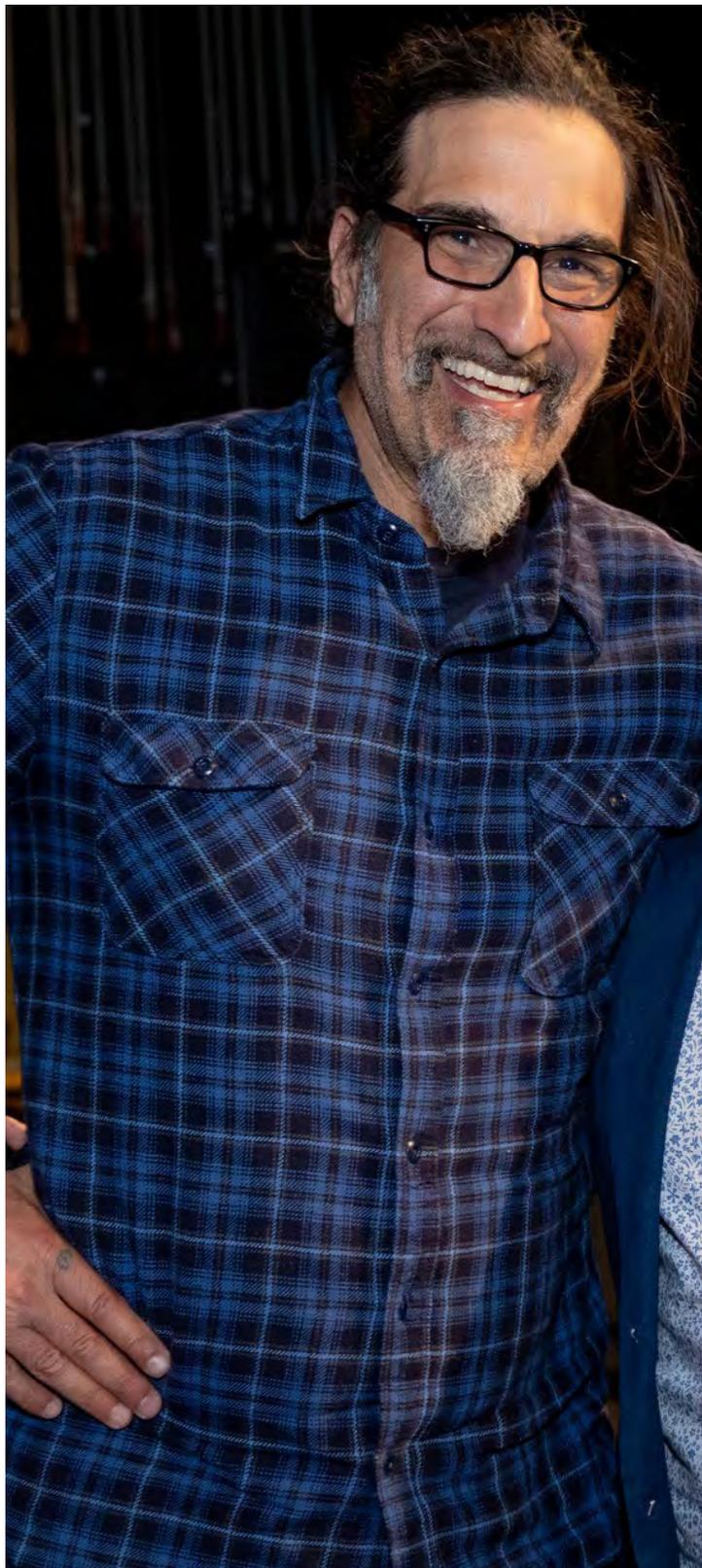
And Blue’s not the only one benefiting. With such an assortment of fresh and healthy food at their fingertips that looks, smells, and tastes so good, Joan finds that the dietary choices that once separated Blue from his housemates are bringing them together. “Other guys in the house will see some of the meals being made—the salads and the stir-frys—and want to try them,” she says, referencing a recent all-organic, Asian-influenced dish that got high marks.

Now, the idea is spreading, with plans to clear more space on the property to gain more planting ground next season. “It’s taken a couple of years, but Blue’s garden has really gotten people onboard with the idea of eating healthy,” Joan says. “We’d love to get folks from other Vinfen houses to learn the value of getting outside, connecting with nature and eating better.”

If you’re interested in supporting Vinfen’s Health and Wellness Fund, please contact Development Manager Adam Schaff at schaffa@vinfen.org.



THE VINFEN FILM FESTIVAL: STORIES THAT SPARK CONNECTION



The room was electric. Comedian Gary Gulman had just finished watching *The Great Depresh*—his raw, funny, and deeply personal account of living with depression—with a sold-out audience at GBH Studios. What happened next was pure Vinfen magic: a conversation that stripped away stigma, invited vulnerability, and created a space of warmth, safety, and connection.

“It was a fantastic experience,” Gulman says. “It was one of the first opportunities I’d had to watch the film with a group, and then talk about it, and getting to see how people received it live and in the moment was something very new and special to me.”

Moments like this are what make the **Vinfen Film Festival** more than just an event. “It was a chance to be around a group of people who could speak openly about their experiences with depression,” Gulman continues. “In an environment like that, we all could let our guard down—it created a palpable warmth, safety, and comfort. The depth of connection was amazing—most of my life I couldn’t get that from others... people who didn’t understand what depression is like to live with. It’s hard not to be overcome with emotion when you find a safe space like that.”

For 18 years, the festival has harnessed the power of film to spark dialogue, foster empathy, and change perceptions about mental health conditions and disabilities. Each screening—whether a feature film, documentary, or short—becomes a shared experience, amplified by panel discussions with filmmakers, clinicians, and people with lived experience. Audience members leave not only informed but transformed.

What began in 2008 as an idea to bring difficult conversations into the public square has grown into Vinfen’s annual signature event. From its early days at Harvard Medical School to its new home at GBH’s state-of-the-art studios, the festival has continually evolved while staying true to its mission: to open eyes, challenge assumptions, and build understanding.

The festival also serves as a vital professional development opportunity for the human services field, offering continuing education credits to attendees. “The ability to get CEUs has been critical to drawing our audiences,” says Vinfen staffer Will Buckley, who has helped shape the festival since its inception. “So, we’ve always been very focused on selecting films with subjects that resonate with those who work in our field, and ones with themes that will provoke great, impactful discussions. We always prioritize finding panelists—whether they’re clinical professionals or folks with lived experience—that can glean the substantive material in the films and converse about them in meaningful ways.”

In addition to *The Great Depresh*, audiences who attended the 2025 Film Festival were moved by a Deaf and autistic woman’s inspirational story of surviving incarceration and healing from trauma through art in *Being Michelle*; learned firsthand about the challenges a young man with a disability faced in embarking on his independent adult life in *The Ride Ahead*; and experienced the intersection of empathy and education from our diverse collection of short films: *Roads to Recovery*, *Vince*, *the Punctual Vagrant*, and *Jelly Brain*.

Gulman says, “The experience of doing [*The Great Depresh*] has been incredibly gratifying and redemptive for me, and the Vinfen event was one of the brightest parts of this project—a culmination of the best parts of sharing my story,” he adds. “I got to watch the special through a new lens and saw how it really resonated with people.”

It’s those kinds of communal experiences—ones that encourage dialogue, inspire greater understanding of the challenges so many people face everyday, and help viewers to see the world from another perspective—that have made the Film Festival such a successful event and valuable resource for the human services community. Over nearly two decades, the Vinfen Film Festival has become more than a showcase. It is a movement for awareness, empathy, and change.

The 19th Annual Vinfen Film Festival takes place March 28, 2026 at GBH Studios. Visit vinfen.org/film-festival in the coming months for a schedule of films and information about purchasing tickets!



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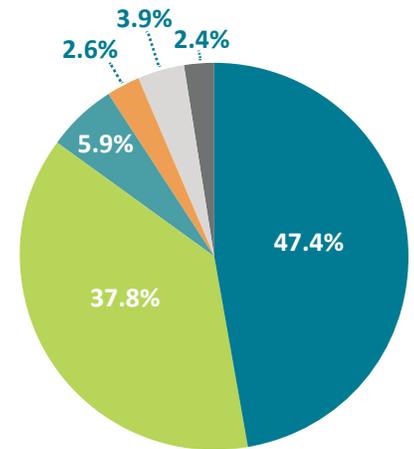
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For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025

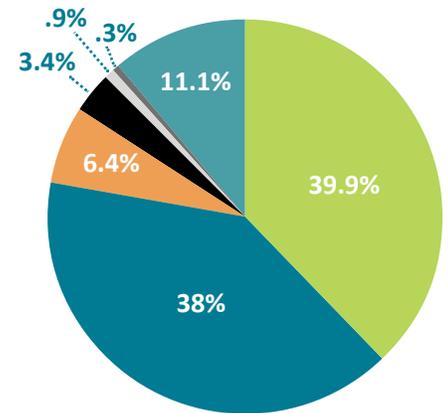
OPERATING REVENUE

● Department of Mental Health	47.4%	153,066,948
● Department of Developmental Services	37.8%	122,105,487
● Medicare/Medicaid/MassHealth	5.9%	19,053,855
● Private Insurance	2.6%	8,528,101
● Client Fees and Rent Subsidies	3.9%	12,485,301
● Other	2.4%	7,808,197
Total	100%	323,047,889



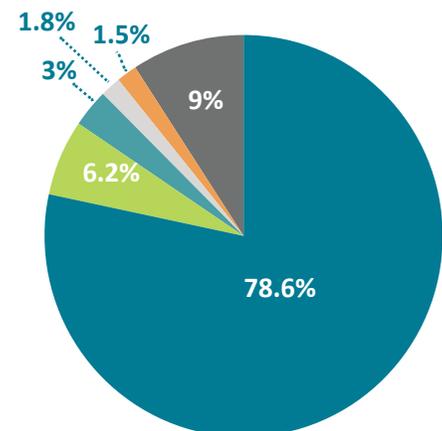
OPERATING EXPENSES

● Psychiatric Rehabilitation	38.0%	117,883,367
● Developmental Disabilities & Brain Injury	39.9%	123,896,542
● Clinical Services	6.4%	19,779,776
● Integrated Care	3.4%	10,566,515
● Innovation & Other	0.9%	2,944,782
● Supported Housing	0.3%	894,437
● General & Administrative	11.1%	34,496,037
Total	100%	310,461,457



EXPENSES BY FUNCTION

● Personnel	78.6%	243,936,179
● Occupancy	6.2%	19,339,438
● Program Supplies & Client	3%	9,408,078
● Information Technology	1.5%	4,527,677
● Transportation	1.8%	5,449,730
● Training & Other	9%	27,800,356
Total	100%	310,461,457



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