



# Upholding our Mission in Challenging Times

By Joel Abrams, President and CEO  
Dorchester House Multi-Service Center

Headlines shout of foreclosures, job loss and a depleted business climate. Dorchester House, too, has felt the impact of a worldwide economic meltdown. However, while we have not prospered as in years past, we have managed, without missing a beat, to uphold our mission of serving our community.

We have brought much-needed medical, dental, eye and behavioral health care to nearly 20,000 individuals. Our lab, radiology and physical therapy departments bustle with activity, and the volume of prescriptions filled in the pharmacy outstrips what we could have anticipated. Our DotWell partnership offers key services in the areas of public health, violence prevention, recreational opportunities in our pool and gym, Health Works fitness and nutrition offerings, financial literacy services in Codman Square and Fields Corner, and an array of programs in our local schools. Chronic care management is empowering diabetic patients and others with chronic health conditions by giving them tools to help them live long, healthy lives. Our recent designation as an independently funded Federally Qualified Health Center gives us access to federal resources that include the new stimulus dollars. In short, we have honored Dorchester House's roots as a settlement house dedicated to social reform that began some 130 years ago, while exponentially broadening our scope to meet the complex needs of a very different time.

What about next year? A legitimate question, given Massachusetts' projected revenue shortfall for 2010 and pending budget cuts. I am, of course, concerned. Commonwealth Care and MassHealth make up more than 80 percent of our funding. Add to that our funding which comes through Boston Medical Center, as well as various grants and contracts, and you can see how dependent we are on state funding.

What about health care reform—with so many people covered, shouldn't that guarantee revenues? Yes and no. The answer comes down to how much of our costs are covered. As a safety net provider with little federal funding, and with the disappearance of the Free Care Pool, we face increasing gaps. New co-payments for patients formerly covered completely by the free care pool add to their burdens and ours.

We will continue our mission, although how we are configured to do this may change to accommodate new financial realities. And we will seek growth in key areas. We intend to receive National Center on Quality Assurance (NCQA) accreditation as a "Patient Centered Medical Home" over the next few years and, now, are opening an Urgent Care Clinic. With the help of stimulus dollars, we will overhaul our aging information technology. We will pursue new technologies, such as digital x-ray and mammography, and continue our commitment to delivering the highest level of care. All tall orders in this climate, perhaps, but I am confident that we are up to the challenges. My deepest appreciation goes to all of you who value the difference Dorchester House makes in this community.

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