

PRIORITY 3

CHAMPION OUR WORKFORCE

DARE TO
HOPE



A workforce that powers dreams & empowers futures

When social services workers thrive, so do kids and families. We're committed to making nonprofit social services an attractive, rewarding, and sustainable career choice.

GOAL: \$1.7 MILLION

Why Focusing on the Workforce Matters

The social services field works on some of our **society's most entrenched challenges** — from child abuse and neglect, to intergenerational trauma, to poverty, to racial inequity. At HopeWell, our staff are in communities and homes every day helping people who are facing some of life's toughest circumstances.

This difficult work requires our country's best talent and brightest minds. But college students and those already in the workforce have many different career path options. So how do we attract them to work in the areas of society that need them most?

A budget is a reflection of values.

Social services workers are essential employees whose skills, expertise, insights, and compassion are invaluable to our communities.

How do we move the needle?

Yet, despite their importance and their impact, their compensation consistently lags behind their similarly-educated peers working in other fields. Across the country, including here in Massachusetts, there is a long history of systemic devaluation of nonprofit and human services workers.

We believe that workers in the social services sector deserve wages and working conditions commensurate with the dignity of the work. It's the right thing to do and it's the smart thing to do — because when social services careers are attractive, rewarding, and sustainable, **we find and keep the best talent, children and families receive better supports, and our communities grow stronger.**

✓ **Attract the best and the brightest to work in child welfare.**

We aim to recruit a **best-in-class workforce** who are highly-qualified, productive, engaged, diverse, and culturally-competent.

✓ **Invest in people.**

We aim to provide employees with the **working conditions, tools, and opportunities** they need to succeed — both individually and collectively.



The result is talented and caring people not only find their home in nonprofit social services work — they also grow, excel at their craft, and choose to stay. Because of this consistency, every child and family receives the professional support and trusting relationships they need to heal and thrive.

That's why we're mobilizing around these goals together...

A SNAPSHOT

The nonprofit social services sector should be an attractive, rewarding, and sustainable career path.

But the data points to a big yet solvable problem.

Where does the social services sector in MA fall short?



WAGES



SHORTAGES



WORKING
CONDITIONS



LOW WAGES

In Massachusetts:



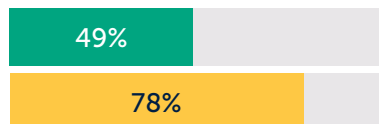
DEMOGRAPHICS

Women and people of color — who already tend to earn less than their white, male counterparts — comprise a significant percentage of the social services workforce in Massachusetts:

PEOPLE OF COLOR



WOMEN



HIGH BAR FOR ENTRY

Most jobs in the social services field require a bachelor's or master's degree. Yet, social services professionals in Massachusetts consistently earn less than their peers with similar levels of education who work in other fields.

In addition to deterring talented people from entering or staying the field, low pay can make it difficult for social services workers to keep up with student loan debt they accrued while completing the schooling required to meet education and licensure requirements.

\$84,775 median income for people with a master's degree

\$66,003 median income for people with a bachelor's degree

Most Massachusetts social services professionals with bachelor's and master's degrees earn **less than \$50,000** per year

THE IMPACT OF COVID

The pandemic had a significant effect on the social services workforce. It caused more people to leave for opportunities with remote or hybrid options and scheduling flexibilities not typically found in social services sector jobs, which by nature require more frequent in-person connections.

STAFF BURNOUT

Burnout is a significant contributor to why people choose to leave the profession. The work can be demanding and difficult — and when people can earn the same amount of money working at Target or Starbucks without the stressors of many social services jobs, leaving is an understandable decision.

The high turnover results in greater instability for children and families, who are forced to constantly build new relationships.

RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

The low wages and high demands of the field result in a limited pool of qualified candidates willing to take on these roles. Nonprofits compete with state agencies for similar roles, and with other sectors that have fewer entry requirements but similar or higher pay.

WIDESPREAD VACANCIES

Vacancy rates among social services organizations in Massachusetts are as high as **23%**, compared to an overall vacancy rate of **6%**.

GOAL 3.1

Pay staff attractive and competitive salaries across all roles and levels.

CHECKING IN WITH OUR HUMAN RESOURCES TEAM

What immediate impacts have we seen so far from improved compensation?

A POSITIVE SHIFT IN APPLICANT TRENDS

“This past summer, we experienced an influx of applicants! This was a notable departure from the usual seasonal slowdown we see.

By raising salaries, we've attracted a **strong pool of talent**, which has strengthened my team's ability to hire the most qualified candidates to **provide critical services to children and families**. We hope this trend continues!

– CHIFFAWN JOHNSON
Director of Talent & Innovation



What We'll Do

Our goal is to pay all of our staff **at or above the 75th percentile** of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) benchmark for their role. Massachusetts currently uses the 50th percentile — this has the effect of depressing wages because the benchmark is based on a three-year rolling average, which fails to count for the rising cost of living.

BETTER RETENTION

The last time we did a round of salary increases, HopeWell experienced a 10% reduction in staff turnover! We've been able to maintain **this level of stability** with ongoing salary adjustments. The portion of staff who exit due to salary concerns has been reduced significantly.

– MARTHA ASKANDAR
HR Manager, Employee
Experience &
Communications

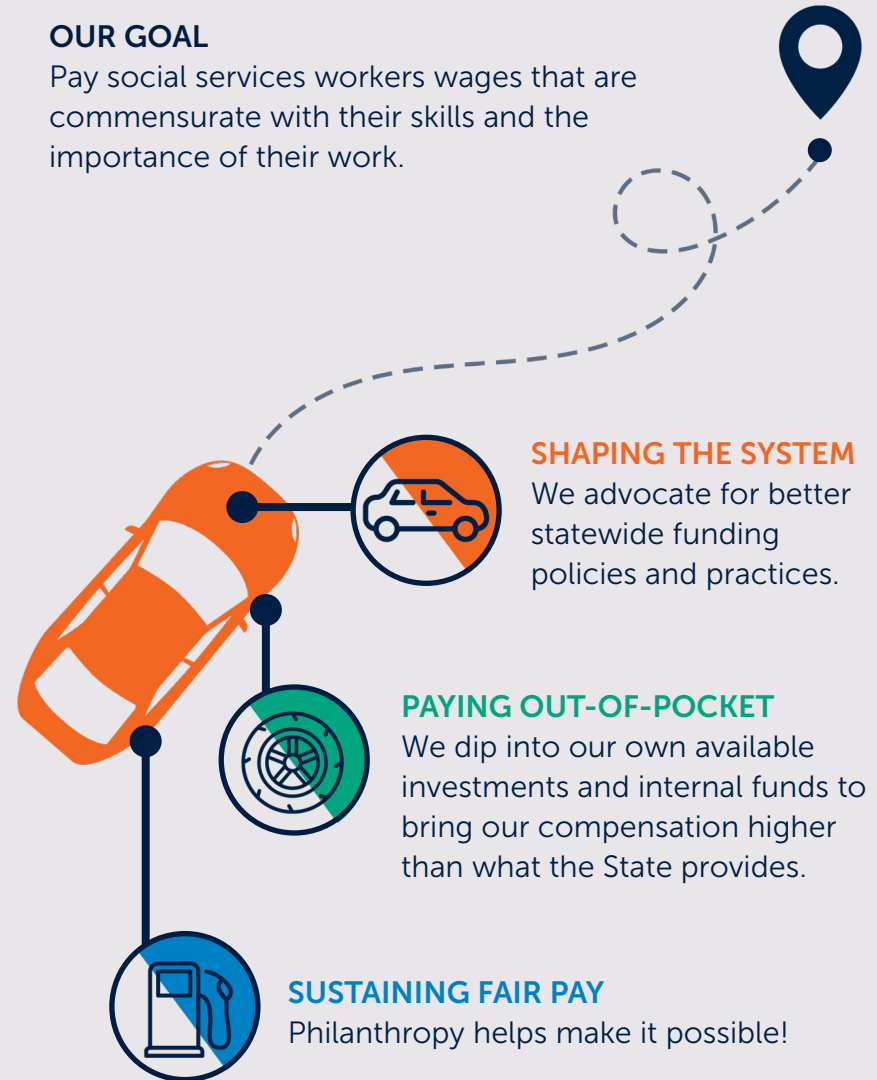


How We're Addressing Chronic Underfunding

IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

OUR GOAL

Pay social services workers wages that are commensurate with their skills and the importance of their work.



GOAL 3.2

Enhance our suite of benefits to promote wellness and learning.

What We'll Do

Strengthen our workforce well-being toolkit to:

- ✓ **Attract and retain top talent.**

One of the best ways we've found to create a positive, productive experience for employees is offering a menu of different options to support their health/wellness and diversified funds to support life's everyday needs. Our goal is to offer a combination of benefits that ensure no one is "pouring from an empty cup," so our staff can be **the best version of themselves** as they engage in their essential work with children and families each day.

- ✓ **Prevent and combat burnout.**

Employees who exemplify our values are central to the impact of HopeWell's work. That's why we provide bonuses for milestones like employee sign-on, licensure achievements, and taking on additional responsibilities (such as working with families in their native language, helping to launch a new initiative for managing our pipeline of prospective foster parents, or supporting the learning and development of other staff members). Less burnout means less turnover, which in turn means **stronger relationships and greater stability for children and families.**



Support each team member's learning, growth, and development.

For example:

- ✓ **Offer language courses so staff can grow their skills and better meet the needs of the children, families, and communities they support.**

We currently have 10 dedicated staff members who are honing their skills in Spanish, French, and Portuguese through our new Language Learning Pilot program. This initiative equips them with valuable skills that will **enhance the quality of care** we provide to children and families.

- ✓ **Help staff meet the demands of the field by making education and preparation programs more feasible.**

Because salaries are low across the social services field, money is often a barrier to staff being able to invest in learning opportunities that would help them grow professionally. Our ability to offer education supports — such as student loan pay-down assistance, licensure reimbursement, and a HopeWell tuition scholarship — helps address this barrier and **makes these opportunities more accessible.**

How Philanthropy Helps

How will your donation have an immediate and direct impact?

Compensation sends a message about what our society values — and this message is heard by everyone from high school students thinking about their future career plans, to employees themselves, to the families and communities they serve. Philanthropy plays a crucial role in helping us sustain social services wages that are fairer, better aligned with the cost of living, and more commensurate with **the importance of the work**.

Your support also strengthens our toolbox for attracting and keeping the highest-quality social services workforce possible and allows us to sustain, expand, and introduce meaningful learning opportunities for staff.

For example:

✓ **“Preply” Language Learning Pilot Program:**

First launched in February 2024, this initiative empowers our staff to grow their skills in a language other than English by working regularly with a tutor. The ultimate goal is to help staff build deeper connections with the diverse families we serve.

✓ **Build-Your-Own-Wellness Program:**

Help us bring back one of our most successful wellness initiatives! Each employee receives funds to spend on a flexible array of wellness options to meet their unique needs.

✓ **HopeWell Tuition Scholarship:**

We seek to establish a HopeWell tuition scholarship because many roles require a master’s degree, but cost often stands in the way of talented staff being able to invest in their own education and growth. \$8,000 per year would make pursuing further education more doable for interested staff members who are ready to take that step in their lives and careers.

Budget Breakdown

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Direct Care Staff Living Wage Increase | \$625K |
| Employee Wellness & Educational Benefits | \$600K |
| Staff Recruitment Efforts | \$250K |
| Core Mission Support | \$225K |
| TOTAL | \$1.7M |
| PROJECTED STATE CONTRIBUTION | -\$0 |
| OUR GOAL | \$1.7M |





DARE TO HOPE

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