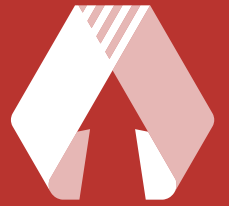


WEBER*RENEW



2022

IMPACT REPORT



Colleen (right), with case manager Charles Harrison at the RI Defeats Hep C Waterfire event in July 2022.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WHAT OUR TEAM at Project Weber/RENEW does every day is bold. It is action-oriented. And most importantly, it is loving. We recognize that the problems we see have grown out of decades—of generations—of oppressive policies that have unfairly targeted and criminalized so many marginalized people and communities.

It is not easy, then, to take a step back and look at the breadth of what we have done over the course of a year and feel that we've had a transformational impact on these ingrained systems. The nature of the work we do is often urgent. It can feel like we are racing around putting out small fires directly in front of us while a forest burns behind us. It can also be full of grief or anger when we learn of the passing of an individual from an overdose we know was preventable.

Putting together a document such as an Impact Report, however, naturally makes you pause and look backward more carefully. In doing so, I have noticed our best-laid plans sometimes don't come to pass. Sometimes they get completely changed by outside forces. However, more often than not—at least in the case of our “small but mighty” team—I am filled with awe, gratitude, and tremendous pride. I've seen how even the frustratingly incremental progress we make is still a step forward.

I thought, for example, how we began 2022 with another deadly COVID wave, scrambling to ensure our staff and the people we serve stayed healthy, that our clients had access to basic needs and harm reduction supplies, and that our drop-in centers stayed open and street outreach continued. After all, without those, many of our clients would be at an even higher risk of overdose, of not having something to eat, of being out in the cold without a coat.

Yes, we served record numbers of individuals in 2022—more than 6,000 sisters, brothers, friends, and loved ones. Yes, we distributed more harm reduction supplies and more Narcan

than ever before—more than 10,000 life-saving doses. We officially submitted an application to open the country's first legislatively sanctioned overdose prevention center. We saw a record number of deaths from accidental overdose and saw the drug supply become even more toxic. We confronted the emerging public health threat of mpox. We witnessed a surge of homelessness. We protested in Kennedy Plaza to urge our state's public transit authority to carry Narcan on buses and make it available at the state's central transit hub.

But interwoven with all of that, there were also these moments:

- **Staff speaking on stage at RI Pride about the need for more affordable housing for trans and queer individuals and then leading the parade as grand marshals**
- **Carrying torches at Waterfire in July to highlight awareness of the fight against hepatitis C**
- **Welcoming media from all over the country to spend time with us and the people we serve as they worked on stories about the overdose epidemic and overdose prevention centers**
- **Being invited to a large house party hosted by local youth who wanted to make sure everyone attending had access to Narcan and fentanyl test strips**
- **Hosting a cookout for more than 70 people we serve in the Pawtucket and Central Falls communities on a beautiful, sunny day in September**
- **Sharing hugs after hearing of the death of a longtime client and volunteer**
- **Our team cooking food for each other and attending a staff retreat so we could recharge, reflect, and think about ways to do the work we love without depleting ourselves in the process**
- **Leading the state's largest one-day Narcan distribution event in history in honor of International Overdose Awareness Day**

I wanted to list some of these because the day-to-day work our powerful, peer-led staff does, the ideas staff bring to meetings and then make reality, and the support systems we create that allow us to keep moving forward when the odds seem overwhelming, is, frankly, like nothing else I've experienced. The harm reduction world, for lack of a better term, can be exhausting, and we're often expected to do so much without major structural and institutional supports. ("Sure, you can have this grant money for harm reduction, but you cannot buy harm reduction supplies with it!") But grassroots organizing, peer-led and -informed programming, and creativity among a group of like-minded individuals in this arena is truly something to behold.

We are on the precipice of a major turning point in how we do harm reduction work in Rhode Island and beyond, and we are committed to being leaders who will not only make history, but who continue to acknowledge that systems in our society need to change, that people who use drugs and/or engage in sex work deserve housing, health, safety, and community. That people with lived experience need to be involved, indeed lead, this work at every level. As we build from a hole in the ground, we will continue to savor the moments that connect us as a team and with the people we serve.

I'm grateful to work with so many individuals and partners who see possibility in front of us. It does not make every day easy, but it makes every day feel vital.



*In community,
and with gratitude
to our team,*

Colleen





PWR staff at RI Pride, June 2022 (left) and at our holiday gathering in Pawtucket, December 2022

WHO WE ARE

Vision

We believe all people deserve a loving space free from judgment and that everyone has the power to change.

Mission

Through peer-led outreach, Project Weber/RENEW provides harm reduction and recovery support services, builds relationships with the people we serve, and fights for systemic change. We empower individuals who use drugs and/or engage in sex work, and people living with or at risk for HIV & hepatitis C, to make healthier and safer choices in their own lives.

Values

HEALTH & SAFETY

We offer our clients tools to live healthier and safer lives and help them access the resources needed to enact positive change.

ADVOCACY

We share our experiences and amplify those of the people we serve, using our collective power to transform systems that cause harm.

MUTUAL RESPECT

We meet people where they are at and honor their autonomy. We uplift clients' visions for their own success and holistic well-being.

RELATIONSHIPS

We are a staff of people in recovery, individuals who have engaged in sex work, immigrants, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ community members who believe in the dignity, autonomy, and wisdom of our clients.

GROWTH

We acknowledge that we live and work within oppressive systems. We strive to uphold our values and remain accountable to one another and the people we serve.

HARM REDUCTION & OUTREACH

Needle exchange, safer smoking and snorting supplies, fentanyl test strips, drug testing education, Narcan/naloxone distribution & training, daily street outreach



WHAT WE DO

BASIC NEEDS

Food and water, clothing closets, hygiene and period products, tents and sleeping bags, housing navigation support

HIV, HEPATITIS C & COMMUNITY HEALTH

HIV & hepatitis C testing, linkage to treatment and care, safer sex supplies, PrEP navigation, vaccination clinics



PEER-LED SERVICES

Linkage to recovery/sober housing, support for individuals engaged in sex work, transportation and referrals to substance use treatment, recovery coaching, case management



LGBTQIA+ SUPPORT

Trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse community support group, referrals for gender-affirming healthcare, transition support, identity document change assistance



- **6,000** individuals served
- **15,600** client encounters
- **10,000** doses of Narcan/naloxone distributed
- **12,000** of client encounters included basic needs (food, water, hygiene products)
- **119,000** clean needles distributed
- **10,000** safer smoking kits distributed
- **2,000** case management sessions
- **1,200+** weeks of recovery housing funded
- **250+** HIV/hep C tests conducted
- **32,000** condoms distributed
- **200+** transports to detox
- **80%** of individuals served were unhoused
- **3,200** fentanyl test strips distributed

2022

BY THE NUMBERS



Overdose Prevention Program Director Dennis Bailer gets an outreach van ready for the next shift (left). Case Manager Lisa Young and Community Health Program Manager Mao Narvaez highlight some of the work we did in 2022 (center). Partnerships allow us to provide hygiene products to the people we serve (right).

HOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE



The work we do every day happens on both grassroots and systemic levels. Whether it's providing harm reduction supplies and peer support to an individual via an outreach van or advocating for legislation and policy change at the State House, we are committed to enacting positive changes. Here are the highlights from 2022.



Deputy Director Ashley Perry speaks at the one-year anniversary of the opening of our Pawtucket drop-in center (left) while the crowd looks on.

Marking One Year of Service in Pawtucket

JUNE MARKED THE one-year anniversary of the opening of our Pawtucket drop-in center—a space where we originally expected to serve a few hundred individuals in our first 12 months. By the time we commemorated our anniversary, we had provided services to 1,700 unique individuals across more than 4,000 encounters.

As a result of the high demand for our services in the Pawtucket and Central Falls

communities throughout 2022, we ramped up our capacity and staffing to ensure the people we serve had uninterrupted access to food and water, our clothing closet, HIV and hepatitis C testing and referrals to treatment, case management, and peer support. In addition, we worked with community partners including Shower 2 Empower, PVD Period, CODAC Behavioral Healthcare, and Amenity Aid to ensure individuals had access to hygiene and period products, showers, and haircuts.

By the end of 2022 we had served more than 2,500 individuals at our Pawtucket drop-in center.

Meeting People Where They Are: Bringing Services to the Sixth District Court

IN APRIL, WE EXPANDED our services to the Garrahy Judicial Complex in downtown Providence through an innovative program that created the new position of a court support navigator. The Judiciary and the National Center for State Courts—a resource center for the nation’s state court systems, which hear 95% of all court cases in the country—and its New England Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative launched the pilot and brought PWR on as partner.

The goal was to place peer staff in the courthouse to support individuals who may be dealing with numerous issues simultaneously, including navigating the legal system, possible substance use, and risk of overdose. Staff member Tarah Dorsey, a person with lived experience who has worked at the Providence Center, the Nonviolence Institute, and the

Lifespan Transitions Clinic, took on the innovative role.

“The courthouse can be a scary place,” he says. “They are afraid of the unknown. I support them, help them whether it’s going with them to a court date or connecting them to other services. They trust what I say because I’ve been there.”

Tarah works one-on-one with any individual who walks through his office door at the courthouse, connecting them with resources that help improve their health, safety, and well-being. This has included educating people about how to use Narcan, connecting them with housing resources, or assisting them with paying court fees and fines. He can also accompany them to hearings to help them advocate for themselves. Since the launch of the program in the spring, Tarah has worked with more than 100 individuals.

As a result of the pilot’s success, the program was extended into 2023 and PWR is now also offering regular record expungement clinics for the people we serve at our drop-in centers, led by Tarah and other peer staff.



Court Support Navigator Tarah Dorsey in his office at court.



PWR staff (pictured here with peers and colleagues) attended the National Harm Reduction Coalition Conference in Puerto Rico in October, where Deputy Director Ashley Perry (second from right) led a workshop titled “Sex Work and Healthcare in Rhode Island.”



International Overdose Awareness Day



DEATHS FROM accidental drug overdose rose to an all-time high in 2021—with more than 100,000 people across the country, and 435 in Rhode

Island, dying in that 12-month period. While we do not yet have final numbers for 2022, preliminary data indicate the number of deaths will climb. It is a traumatizing reality for the people we serve, our staff, and the networks of friends and families who are losing loved ones in ways that are preventable.

Every year, we commemorate International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31st as a way to not only honor those we've lost, but as a call to action for communities and education about how every person can help save a life. In 2022, we spearheaded a statewide day of action, collaborating with community partners to fan out to more than 50 locations across the state to distribute Narcan and teach individuals about what it is and how to use it. Within eight hours, we had handed out more than 4,000 doses.

"We see every day the power of community to help save friends, loved ones, and neighbors," Deputy Director Ashley Perry says. "Every person we've lost to overdose is someone who is not here to be connected to others and make choices for their own lives. We want to make sure as many people as possible know how to use Narcan so we can keep people alive."

That evening, we hosted a gathering at Burnside Park in downtown Providence. As the sun began to set we lit candles finding strength and solace from being in community and honoring the individuals we've lost too soon to overdose.



Clockwise From Top: Pawtucket Program Director Lex Morales with Ashley at Burnside Park in downtown Providence at the end of the day's events; Case Manager Evan Timbo, Kennedy Plaza Program Coordinator Matt Elliott, and Mao honor those we've lost; Trans Program Outreach Coordinator Jesinya Sousa (left) with a volunteer handing out Narcan earlier in the day in Providence; we lit candles and read names of loved ones lost to preventable overdoses.





Dennis leads a community Narcan training (left). Matt and Operations Coordinator Jen Lonergan table at a community event in Providence.

Helping Make Healthier Communities a Reality

OUR STAFF KNOW that harm reduction does not only mean providing safer use supplies and naloxone to the individuals we serve. It is also about building relationships, connecting people to appropriate services that treat them with respect, and ensuring everyone we meet has the tools to live healthier and happier lives.

Throughout 2022, our team worked with community partners on a variety of health initiatives, including a weekly medical clinic at our Pawtucket drop-in center. We also promoted awareness of and access to COVID and mpox vaccines, and hosted five vaccination clinics throughout the year. Specifically for the mpox outbreak, we focused outreach and education efforts on populations at higher risk for the virus. We also led a statewide coalition of community-based organizations to advocate for faster disbursement of mpox vaccine to Rhode Islanders.

In addition, we expanded upon our work as a community HIV and hepatitis C testing location funded by the RI Department of Health. We hosted special testing events for HIV and hepatitis awareness days such as

Trans HIV Awareness Day and World AIDS Day. We also collaborated with Matt Perry, MD, of Providence Community Health Centers to bring HIV and hep C testing to our Kennedy Plaza location. In addition, we led more than three dozen Narcan and anti-stigma trainings for businesses and organizations in Providence and Pawtucket.

Health also means being in community with peers, and we're proud of our programs such as Beyond the Understanding of Gender for creating a safe space for trans and gender-diverse individuals and hosting weekly support groups, meals, gender-affirming case management and healthcare navigation, as well as outings to give attendees a chance to spend time together outside of our Providence drop-in center.

Of course, we know we can't help improve our clients' health without tending to and maintaining our own. That is why we have been proud to work throughout the year with partners such as Second Act, who led drama therapy sessions and trainings for our team throughout the year and helped us learn more about work-life balance and how we can best help our clients while keeping our own cups full.

Advocating for Comprehensive Support for Peers

PWR STAFF—along with our colleagues from other organizations—often speak out at meetings advocating for greater support and recognition for peer staff given the challenging work they do on a daily basis. Using these conversations as a starting point, our executive director created a survey distributed to more than 50 peer outreach workers across the state in early 2022. The results were turned into a document that was presented to the Governor’s Overdose Prevention & Intervention Task Force in the fall. Many of the recommendations from the document were subsequently incorporated into statewide funding priorities. The outcomes from this included us raising our minimum staff wage to \$20 per hour; support for increased organizational capacity to ensure greater overlap between staff; and increased training and mental health support for peer outreach and recovery support staff.



PWR staff at an all-day retreat and training event in May 2022, with Bookkeeper Natalia Otero (center).

Moving Closer to Making History

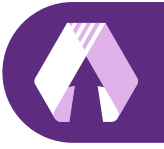
IN DECEMBER WE SUBMITTED an official application for grant funds to open the country’s first state-regulated overdose prevention center (OPC). We were instrumental in advocating for legislation that authorized the creation of OPCs. That legislation passed in 2021. While two OPCs currently operate in New York City, they are not authorized by state law.

The initial funding for Rhode Island’s first OPC is allocated from opioid litigation settlements to the state and is being administered by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. In our application, we proposed partnering with CODAC Behavioral Healthcare, the state’s largest outpatient provider of treatment for opioid use disorder, to open a site that will offer all of the services we currently offer at our other locations, but adding supervised consumption spaces, as well as immediate access to medication-assisted therapy and recovery support. The RI Department of Health will oversee the licensing and regulation of the facility.

“This is an important step forward in the process to open a life-saving center,” says Annajane Yolken, our director of strategy and liaison for the OPC. “We know from decades of data at OPCs around the world—and now New York City—that no one has ever died in these facilities and that clients are much more likely to engage in treatment, recovery, and other services by visiting them. People cannot make choices for their lives if they die from an overdose.”

Preliminary data from 2022 shows the state—and the country—on track to surpass record numbers of overdose-related deaths.

The OPC is expected to open in early 2024.



Making Our Work Possible

We are able to do what we do thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers, individual and organizational donors, and funding from a variety of sources.



Dennis Bailer

Denniss Berganza

Luke Brookner

Lorna Church

Colleen Daley Ndoye

Tarah Dorsey

Matt Elliott

Jay Gildea II

Robin Greene

Charles Harrison

Savaree
Hazard-Chaney

Rich Holcomb

Tyler Joseph

Jen Lonergan

Tyrone McKinney

Lex Morales

Arlo Narva

Mao Narvaez

Natalia Otero

Braulio Ortiz

Zuleika Ortiz

Ashley Perry

Cheryl Robinson

Jesinya Sousa

Evan Timbo

Mikel Wadewitz

Annajane Yolken

Lisa Young

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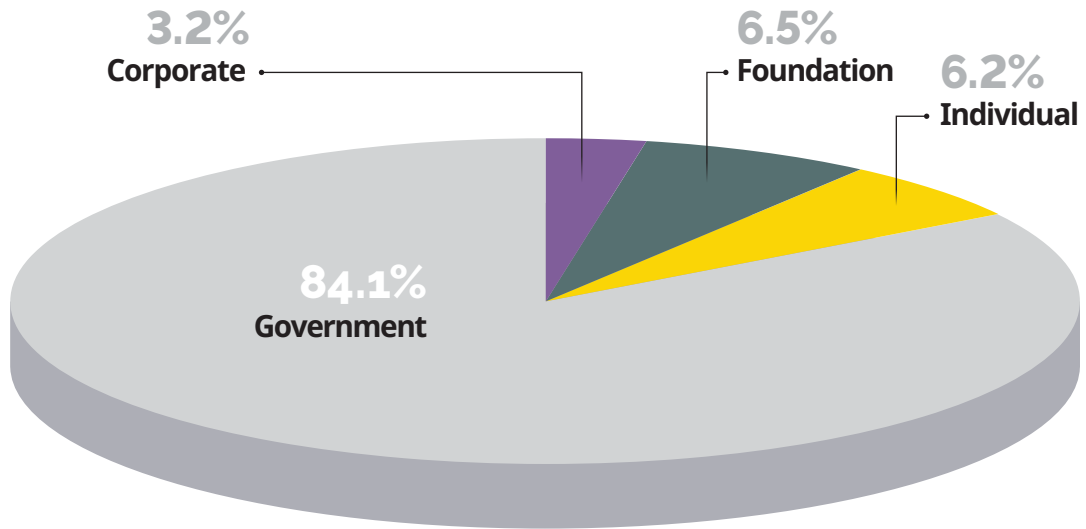
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Juliette Holtzman, MSW

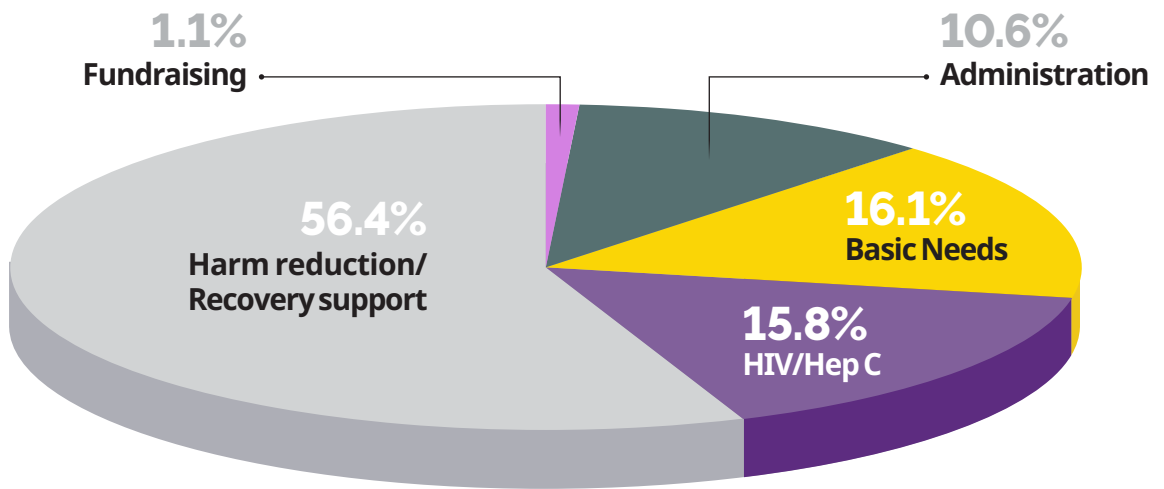
*We are grateful to our board members for their support and work on behalf of the organization. We'd especially like to thank **Neville Bedford, Esq.**, for his past service as both chairperson and treasurer, and **Linzi Rae Matta, LICSW**, for her service as secretary, and for her ongoing support of our staff and mission.*

Our Funding

We receive support from a mix of sources, and approximately 75% of our expenses go to our most important asset: our team. Here's the breakdown of revenue and expenses in 2022.



2022 REVENUE



2022 EXPENSES

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