



Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition



Massachusetts Clubhouses: Resiliency and Resourcefulness in Response to COVID-19. May, 2020 (Most photos above were taken pre-COVID-19)

In May, 2020, Massachusetts Clubhouses, that are funded by the Department of Mental Health (DMH), have continued to operate as vibrant employment and recovery centers. Though now, in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Clubhouses are serving members in creative ways, including virtually, via various on-line platforms, by chatting and texting with members on phones, visiting members curbside (safely), helping members apply for jobs on-line, by going on walks with individual members (at a distance) as well as by providing meals and care packages (including masks) plus opportunities to engage in work and social activities.

Clubhouses are also providing forums for members and staff to join together, as a community, in conference call and Zoom meetings. These community gatherings are

taking the form of both meetings to organize the work of operating the center, including organizing the outreach to members, writing for the newsletter, updating the web site, and planning together, as well as a chance to gather for wellness, social activities, and dual recovery supports.

This public health crisis has reinforced what we always knew – more than just mental health “programs”, Clubhouses are communities. Members and staff continue to connect and care for each other, holding their Clubhouse communities together during this crisis, despite restrictions on physical togetherness.

The current working motto of Massachusetts Clubhouses:

Our Clubhouse Building is Closed. Our Clubhouse Community is Open.

Recognizing how challenging social isolation is for those who are working to recover from the effects of a serious mental health condition, Clubhouse communities have worked hard to **make sure that members know that they are not alone.**

While Clubhouses over the past few months, in responding to the pandemic, have implemented physical distancing, they have discovered ways to help members stay socially engaged and connected to their Clubhouse, and their fellow members and Clubhouse staff. What has become clearer during this time is the critical role that our Clubhouse communities play in the lives of the individuals with whom they work. During this time, when members are not able to see family, friends, be involved in social and recreational activities, and for those who have not been able to continue working their jobs, the Clubhouse is playing a key role in helping members through this challenging time.

Clubhouses recognize the social and vocational isolation that members feel and how much members need social contact and support, opportunities to be involved in important work, help with finding resources, and connection to others. This has been the current and primary mission of all of the 36 Massachusetts Clubhouses – to help members secure the support they need to weather this difficult time in their lives.

While the present circumstances are challenging, Clubhouses have discovered that intensive outreach efforts have led to some very positive outcomes. Some members have become actively involved with their Clubhouse, who had a hard time participating on-site recently. We expect that on-line and conference call participation will continue into the future, as there are some who prefer to connect this way.

Planning for on-site member participation

Massachusetts Clubhouses are slowly beginning a thoughtful planning process for the time when members will be able to participate in their Clubhouse on-site. This will be done carefully, with guidance from the MA Department of Mental Health, the agency that operates the Clubhouse and engaging members and staff in discussions and planning about new protocols, while being sure to follow the CDC and Governor Baker's guidelines.

In Massachusetts, Clubhouse member on-site attendance will not be part of the Governor's Stage I re-opening. MA Clubhouses are also participating in webinars with Clubhouses across the country and around the world, who have begun the process of re-opening for on-site participation, to see what we can learn about how these communities have been able to maintain physical distancing when transitioning to on-site. One example from these webinars has been to utilize outside space when possible. For example: Does the Clubhouse have access to a community garden or does the space outside of the Clubhouse provide opportunities to eat or work outside? Understanding that fewer members will be able to participate in the building at a time, how are Clubhouses structuring this? How many members can work in a unit at one time given the need to stay 6 feet apart? For each Clubhouse the answer will be different and dependent on their space.

The Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition (MCC) plans to hold a meeting with those at DMH who plan for Human Services Transportation (HST), to see if there are ways for members to access the Clubhouse safely. While this is not an issue for most

Clubhouses located in urban settings, for those who serve members who live in more rural settings, HST was the way many accessed their Clubhouse. In the past, these vans were packed to capacity and many areas had waiting lists for HST.

The MCC has continued to hold Zoom meetings with Massachusetts Clubhouses to share best practices and innovative ideas on how to run a Clubhouse without walls, providing Clubhouse services both mobile and remotely. Here are just some examples of the creative approaches Clubhouses have implemented.

Outreach to Clubhouse Members

Massachusetts Clubhouses are supporting members by staying in contact with them.

- Massachusetts Clubhouses are continuing to reach out to and help members stay connected to their Clubhouse community in a variety of ways – through phone calls, virtual platforms, texts, and emails.
- One encouraging trend is that some members, who had not been coming in, including older members, are now actively engaged. Once we can meet in person again, we have hopefully discovered new ways to engage these members who want to be connected but can't always physically attend the Clubhouse.
- Clubhouses are asking members: How are you? What are your needs? How can we help? And staff are having conversations to help members not feel so alone. Based on feedback from outreach calls, a response is developed on how to help meet members' expressed needs.

Virtual Meetings & Conference Calls

Massachusetts Clubhouses are connecting with members via a variety of online platforms as well as with conference calls.

- Massachusetts Clubhouses continue to hold Unit or House meeting via conference calls and/or online platforms. Some are holding such meetings twice a day (ex. at 9am and 3pm or 11am and 3pm) etc. Some several times a week.
- Clubhouses are continuing to use on-line Platforms such as Facebook Live, Zoom, WebEx, Clubhouse Websites and Conference call services. Some are exploring SLACK as a way to work on projects together on-line.
- Other types of scheduled online or conference call meetings offered by Clubhouses include Job Clubs; cooking classes, health and wellness discussions (which include info on COVID 19); sessions on Zumba, Chair Yoga, meditation, stretching, and exercising; and group discussions on finances, nutrition, and stress management.
- Clubhouses are holding online Zoom or conference call Dual Recovery Anonymous meetings.
- Some Young Adult and Young at Heart members are playing games on-line as a social activity.

One Challenge Clubhouses and the MCC have discovered is that some members do not have internet access, mobile phones or computers that would enable them to participate virtually. There is also a training need, in helping members who have been reluctant to participate virtually, to gain the skills and confidence to have full access.

Prior to the pandemic, many members gained their computer and internet access via their Clubhouse and through public libraries. That free access is not open to them at this time. This is a challenge that the MCC and Clubhouses take seriously, as such access is part of living fully in the community and we expect that even when members can attend their Clubhouse on-site, there will be some who will continue to participate virtually.

Some Clubhouses have been able to raise grant funding or find free resources to provide lap-tops, or funding for member's Wi-Fi access and/ or have been able to fund increased phone minute access for participation in conference calls. As a community, the MCC is in discussions about what we can do to help members expand this critically important on-line access.

Dual Recovery Anonymous (DRA) Meetings

Dual Recovery Anonymous is a twelve-step fellowship similar to Alcoholics Anonymous. DRA is designed to help those who have a mental health condition, as well as an addiction, in their recovery from both. DRA is open to those who are struggling with any kind of addiction, including drugs and alcohol, as well as over

eating, gambling, smoking, shopping etc. Many DRA meetings also welcome those who are supporters of DRA who wish to play a role in forming or strengthening DRA meetings an/or helping others in their recovery paths.

The MA Clubhouse Coalition has a Dual Recovery Project that is supported by the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP). This Dual Recovery Project helps to develop the leadership and support the development and strengthening of Dual Recovery Anonymous (DRA) meetings in Massachusetts. During the Pandemic, the MCC has held it's monthly Dual Recovery Committee educational meetings via Zoom with the option to call in for those who prefer this or don't have internet access. That has worked well and participation has been strong.

Dual Recovery Retreat on hold for now:

One of the activities that the MBHP funded Dual Recovery Project has supported is an annual Dual Recovery Retreat. This is typically held on a College Campus and includes two overnight stays plus two and one half days of workshops, DRA meetings, a dance, plus opportunities to build leadership and fellowship among the leaders and supporters of DRA meetings. Due to COVID-19, the Retreat, that had been planned for late June, early July 2020, has been put on hold. We are in the planning stages of deciding what we will do instead. On-line workshops are a possibility and it may be possible to hold a one day conference if it seems safe to do that. We would also like to address the challenge of some having on-line access while others do not have such access. Is there something we can do to expand access?

DRA Meetings expand on-line access that is open to the community :

Some DRA meetings have chosen to hold their meetings via Zoom or via conference calls that are open for others to join the meeting. Some are only opening their meeting to their own community. To view the on-line and conference call Dual Recovery Anonymous (DRA) meetings, go to the Dual Recovery section of the MCC web site: www.massclubs.org. The list includes both DRA meetings hosted by Clubhouses as well as those DRA meetings that are hosted by Recovery Learning Communities.

DRA Zoom Meetings Open to the public

CROSSROADS CLUBHOUSE, Hopedale is hosting 2 weekly DRA Zoom meetings

WEDNESDAY: 4pm-5pm (DRA Step Meeting),

FRIDAY: 4pm-5pm (DRA Discussion Meeting)

Meeting ID: 470 634 361

Call-in Number: 646-558-8656

URL: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/470634361>

NEPONSET RIVER HOUSE, Norwood is hosting 3 weekly Zoom DRA meetings

MONDAY: 11am-12pm,

TUESDAY: 4:30pm-5:30pm

FRIDAY: 2pm-3pm

Meeting ID: 606 073 3905

Call-in Number: 646-558-8656

URL: <https://zoom.us/j/6060733905>

FORUM HOUSE in Westfield is hosting 3 weekly Zoom DRA meetings

MONDAY: 4pm-5pm

WEDNESDAY: 4pm-5pm

FRIDAY: 4pm-5pm

Meeting ID: 244 086 6418

Call-in Number: 646-558-8656

URL: <https://zoom.us/j/2440866418>

QUINCY/FALL RIVER RECOVERY CONNECTION CENTER is hosting eleven weekly Zoom DRA meetings

MONDAY: 10am-11am & 2pm-3pm,

TUESDAY: 10am-11am,

WEDNESDAY: 9am-10am & 3pm-4pm

THURSDAY: 10am-11am & 3pm-4pm,

FRIDAY: 10am-11am & 2pm-3pm & 6pm-7pm,

SATURDAY: 11am-12am
Meeting ID: 496 068 0998
Call-in Number: 646-558-8656
URL: <https://zoom.us/j/4960680998>

**COMMUNITY COUNSELING OF BRISTOL COUNTY is hosting eight weekly Zoom
DRA meetings**

**MONDAY: 12pm-1pm,
TUESDAY: 12pm-1pm & 5pm-6pm,
WEDNESDAY: 12pm-1pm & 5pm-6pm
THURSDAY: 12pm-1pm,
FRIDAY: 12pm-1pm & 5pm-6pm**
Meeting ID: 612 119 7042
Call-in Number: 929-436-2886
URL: <https://zoom.us/j/6121197042>

**BROCKTON RECOVERY CONNECTION CENTER is hosting 2 weekly Zoom DRA
meetings**

**WEDNESDAY: 7pm-8pm,
FRIDAY: 1pm-2pm (Step Meeting)**
Meeting ID: 288 937 2907
Call-in Number: 646-558-8656
URL: <https://zoom.us/j/2889372907>

For complete list go to MCC web site: www.massclubs.org

Assistance with Internet and Technology Challenges

Clubhouses are providing assistance to members who have internet or technology challenges - providing technical assistance, and helping members who do not have phones to obtain phones, or extend the limits on their pre-paid phone minutes. Clubhouses are also exploring how to help members without Wi-Fi to gain free internet access. As mentioned above, we have discovered that lack of such access is a challenge that Clubhouses have identified and are in discussions about what we can do to lessen this real barrier.

Engagement in Clubhouse Work

Clubhouses have continued to engage members in the work of the Clubhouse virtually in creative ways, for those who would like to do this - emailing work projects, such as the newsletter, home to those with computers, engaging members in menu planning, and creating a Clubhouse cookbook; participating in gathering Clubhouse statistics; choosing the color to paint Clubhouse walls; interviewing potential Clubhouse staff; and preparing to participate in and raise money for the NAMI Mass Virtual WALK. For those who do not have computers or access to the internet, member's writings and artistically designed birthday and get well cards are picked up (curbside) when delivering food or care packages, then cards are mailed to members.



Employment Supports

Support for members who are currently working is continuing.

Many members who have jobs are not able to work right now because their places of employment are temporarily closed. For those who are working, providing employment supports to members is particularly challenging to do right now. However, Clubhouses are finding ways to do so, including:

- Calling members who are employed and providing support over the phone, checking in and problem solving.
- A few Clubhouses are providing Transitional Employment (TE) back up coverage and one Clubhouse is continuing to staff a group placement.
- Helping members get tax prep help from volunteer tax preparers.
- Providing benefit counseling, and assistance with filing for unemployment as member's employment statuses change.

Clubhouses are also supporting and remaining connected to employer partners, even those that needed to temporarily suspend Clubhouse members' jobs. Maintaining strong and supportive relationships with employers will help to ensure a smooth transition for members back into these jobs when this crisis has ended.

Helping members who are seeking employment is on-going.

Staff continue to help members who are seeking employment. Despite the challenges, Clubhouse staff are helping members:

- Develop resumes
- Practice interviewing skills
- Complete online job applications
- Connect to online computer classes
- Sign up for online Serve-Safe training, or prepare to take an in-person course in the future

MCC Employment Celebration

Due to the Pandemic, the MCC had to suspend our annual Employment Celebration, where each Clubhouse selects an employer to receive an award for excellence and legislators present the awards to honorees. This event is typically held at the State House in Boston and had been planned for April 1, 2020. The plan now is for each Clubhouse, with local legislators, to present the chosen employer with their award locally, likely at the employer's place of business, when doing so becomes safe.

NAMI MA Virtual WALK

On Saturday, May 30th, many Clubhouse members and staff, across the state, participated in the NAMI MA Virtual WALK. Members and staff walked individually, listening to WALK speakers and music on their cell phones as they walked in their own neighborhoods. Most walked (virtually) with the Team they joined, organized either by their Clubhouse, the agency that operates their Clubhouse or with their local NAMI chapter.

Social Programming

Clubhouses have continued to engage members in much needed social activities, including:

- Sending home puzzles, art projects, cooking projects and then via Zoom or FB Live, being together while doing the puzzles/art projects/cooking projects.
- Emailing meditation and movement links to members who have internet access and then conducting Meditation, or Moving and Grooving together via Zoom.
- Fun activities such as Scavenger Hunts, Trivia, and Music Sing-alongs.
- Dropping off (curbside) pizza dough and toppings and then being together virtually while making pizza.
- Watching Live Streamed movies together and via What's App chatting, texting with each other about the movies.



Food and Meals

Many members relied on two meals a day at the Clubhouse. Clubhouses are delivering food to members who choose to take advantage of this resource in a variety of ways:

- Staff are preparing meals at the Clubhouse and delivering them, curbside, at members homes and taking the opportunity to chat for a few minutes outside. Many deliver meals for two days at a time or deliver to some members one day and other members the next day. Others are delivering food, meals or box lunches to members who want them once or twice a week or only if requested.
- Clubhouses are preparing grab and go food or meals for members who pick up the food without entering the Clubhouse, at designated times and with calling ahead to arrange this.
- Several Clubhouses have food pantries that are open with reduced hours for members to access. Physical distance is maintained.
- Clubhouses are also helping members navigate how to get food from grocery stores and other community resources.
- Clubhouses have helped some members order food to be delivered to their homes from supermarkets or food delivery services.

Care Packages

Clubhouses are preparing and delivering Care Packages for those who would like them. These Care Packages may include:

- Masks, toilet paper, Playing cards, DVDs, word games, art projects, cleaning supplies, etc.
- Donation of dog and cat food delivered to members who have pets and need pet food (or grab and go prep of pet food).
- Helping members who are homeless access clothing via donations.
- One Clubhouse purchased fabric and a sewing machine and with a member who is sewing from home and the staff at the Clubhouse, they are making masks that are then distributed to members.

Housing Supports

Clubhouses are continuing to provide housing supports in many different ways:

- Helping members who are homeless or are facing the danger of homelessness.
- Reaching out to members, including those who had been homeless who have been placed in new residences or helping members secure new housing placements.
- Educating members about their rights regarding utility companies not being allowed to shut off electricity and gas at this time and providing Information about the rules

around evictions, where to call for resources, etc.

Staffing Virtual Clubhouses

While the Clubhouses in Massachusetts are not open for members to enter the physical facility at this time, staff are staggering their work schedules between working out of the Clubhouse space and working remotely from home. No more than 5 staff are allowed in the building at a time, though some Clubhouses have fewer on-site at one time while others deliver meals and care packages or visit members curbside. One Clubhouse is engaging specific members to join the staff team to work on projects in the Clubhouse and has begun to open on-site to a limited number of members.

Some Clubhouses have divided staff into teams and the two teams do not work on the same days. This is to ensure that if a staff person on one team tests positive for COVID-19, and that team needs to self-isolate, the other team can continue working out of the Clubhouse, delivering meals, care packages etc.

Clubhouse facilities are being cleaned and disinfected regularly by staff to protect those who are working there

Stronger Together

These are unprecedented and very difficult times; and all of us will get through this by supporting each other and being strong together. The Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition will continue to partner with and connect Clubhouses throughout the state during these challenging times - helping Clubhouses share best practices, learn from each other, problem solve together, and ensure that all of our Clubhouse communities come out of this stronger and more vibrant than ever.

Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition | 617-872-0190 | Revas.maclub@verizon.net
www.massclubs.org

