Introduction to the Plan

Wayside’s story began in 1977 when a group of citizens formed one of the first emergency shelters in New England for runaway and homeless youth - Harbinger House. As the need for alternatives to orphanages, reform schools, and psychiatric hospitals grew, Wayside responded by developing an array of services that support youth and families in their communities.

Today, Wayside is one of Massachusetts’ most respected child and family serving agencies and is nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation. Wayside currently provides a variety of family-based outreach services, care coordination services, residential treatment programs, community-based counseling services, and community support to more than 6,000 children, youth and families each year throughout Eastern, Northeastern, and Central Massachusetts.

In keeping with our organizational vision, Wayside leadership has undertaken a strategic planning process to determine the strategic goals for the next four years. A crucial cornerstone for our future planning was an updating of our Agency Mission Statement and a concurrent reaffirmation of our agency Core Values.

Our Mission & Core Values

Alongside the early phases of our Strategic Planning Process outlined below, Wayside’s staff, Senior Management, and Board of Directors all engaged in a process through which the agency’s Mission Statement was updated.

At the Board of Director’s Meeting on December 2, 2014, the Board voted to approve the new agency Mission Statement.

Wayside’s new Mission Statement, in concert with a review of our Core Values, continued to inform our direction throughout the development of our new Strategic Plan.

Wayside’s New Mission Statement: “Empowering children, young adults and families to achieve greater independence and emotional well being.”
Our Core Values

Strength
Wayside believes in a strength-based approach, focusing on affirmative and inspirational strategies that promote sustainable change. We honor the power of families, as they possess a wealth of knowledge and strength and are key drivers in the change process. We strive to provide a diverse and welcoming community for our children, young adults and families and our staff who support them.

Hope
Wayside believes in the power of hope as a central factor in providing the motivational resources necessary for change. Shared hope for a positive future is the underpinning of all that we do. Our staff tenaciously “do what it takes” to help our clients and families fulfill their hopes for the future. Positive expectations promote psychological and physical well-being. Our staff focus on developing hope-inspiring strategies that mobilize internal and external resources for achieving greater independence and emotional well-being.

Resiliency
Wayside firmly believes all people have the inherent ability to rebound, learn and grow from life’s difficult experiences, and our staff members are supportive partners with people as they engage in the process of personal change. We join with them to build the resilience that will see them through adversity.

Wayside’s Management Values

Our Mission/Our Passion:
Demonstrating an unsurpassed passion for serving children, young adults and families through mission-driven activities.

Quality Services Require a Strong, Diverse Staff:
Developing and supporting a highly trained staff as diverse as the children, young adults and families we serve.

Risk Management/Compliance:
Ensuring that Wayside mitigates risk through a comprehensive quality improvement approach, and that the agency remains in compliance with all regulatory authorities.

Financial Strength:
Managing the financial drivers of the organization in order to maintain strength and stability.

Strategic Decision Making:
Implementing a plan for positioning Wayside to ensure that future clients, funders and the community-at-large have access to Wayside’s depth and breadth of expertise.
Process and Approach

Prior Strategic Plan:
Throughout this entire process, we were informed by a review of our previous Strategic Plan. We reflected upon the progress made towards the goals established for the 2011-2014 period of time.

Current Initiatives:
We also reviewed the status of several initiatives embarked upon within the previous year; ones that were not necessarily a part of the prior strategic plan, but that were important to consider as we engaged in the new planning process. These initiatives included community awareness; our diversity initiative; leadership development; and customer service.

Current Assessment (SWOT Analysis):
We gathered information from a variety of constituencies. We engaged staff members who were well-connected in Wayside’s primary communities to assist us in connecting with local leaders who shared their feedback with us. We also engaged an outside consultant to directly connect with specific “Key Informants” to gather more in-depth data on an anonymous basis. We sent out community surveys, completed interviews at multiple levels, gathered information from Wayside staff and Wayside clients, and looked at a range of internal and external data. We wanted to gauge Wayside’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities for improvement, and potential Threats. We also did an analysis of state and federal health care policies that are likely to impact Wayside both directly and indirectly in the near future.

Financial Review:
Simultaneously with the SWOT Analysis, Wayside’s financial strength was assessed as measured by our balance sheet (working capital, accounts receivable, debt service requirements, and relevant ratios), and our operating margins; identifying general trends for particular services, which partially informed our program expansion goals.

Strategic Planning Recommendations:
Senior Leadership met to begin to formulate the Proposed Strategic Goals. These goals were then presented to the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board of Directors.

Upon completion of all of these phases, the findings and recommendations were presented to the full Board of Directors, who approved this plan on June 30, 2015.
Highlights from Prior Strategic Plan (2011-2014) Progress

The prior Strategic Plan set out to accomplish the following three goals:

- Improve Financial Stability
- Reinvest in Staff and Infrastructure
- Position Wayside as Service Leader

1. Improve Financial Stability: Wayside made tremendous progress in stabilizing our finances, including: paying off the agency’s $2.3M line of credit; improving our current ratio (measure of liquidity) from 0.9 to 2.0; turning around the performance of our then newly-opened (2009) campus from a deficit of ($718,000) to a surplus of $495,000, and significantly growing program revenues in Lowell and Watertown. We developed a signature fundraising event, the Wayside 5K4Kids, with revenue growing 300% from 2011 to 2014 (over $100K).

2. Reinvest in Staff and Infrastructure: Staff cost of living raises were re-instituted and clinician salaries were raised to market levels. Employee contributions to health insurance costs remained generally flat from 2011-2014, and in 2015 at the strong urging of staff, Wayside switched carriers to Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Administrative costs were reduced from 14% to 10%; an Electronic Health Record was fully implemented; a new website was completed in 2015, and a renewed focus on worker safety is underway. A Diversity Initiative is vibrant and active. Currently, 38% of Wayside staff identify as being from a diverse cultural background and Wayside employs 37 bilingual clinicians. A “Customer Service” initiative has begun, with a “mystery shopper” assessment, and various efforts to make Wayside a truly “welcoming” environment. A significant focus on Worker Safety is actively underway.

3. Position Wayside as a Service Leader: Wayside thoughtfully capitalized on its strengths by diversifying and stabilizing its innovative Transition-Aged Youth services, with stabilized funding of Tempo and Shortstop, and a 40% increase in capacity at Prescott. Wayside also expanded its niche in day services, with a) growth from an average of 2 to 8 youth every day in our Campus partial hospitalization program Wayside Day Center, b) a 50% increase in students enrolled at our special education school Wayside Academy, as well as c) a 66% increase at our Choices Therapeutic Afterschool Program. We were selected to develop two new cutting edge “Continuum” programs in Framingham and Arlington, and were invited to partner with Venture Community Services to bring child/family services to the Sturbridge/Southbridge areas.

The Wayside/Advocates MCI Partnership continues to be among state leaders in performance measures of Mobile Crisis Intervention. Our Milford Trauma Intervention Services contracts grew nearly 40% in 2015, reflecting the high regard for this critical program. We have increased our partnership with Framingham Public Schools and the Milford Public Schools to facilitate rapid access to Wayside services for their students, and Wayside was selected as the Social Service Resource Coordinator for the Town of Watertown. Lastly, we have begun partnering with Advocates in integrating our combined array of mental health services with healthcare entities.
Special Initiatives

In addition to the prior Strategic Plan Goals, Wayside launched four initiatives over the past 18 months, which currently remain in place:

1. Community Awareness: We want the agency to become known as the “premier resource for children and families with social/emotional/behavioral challenges for the communities of Metro West, Waltham/Watertown and Milford.” Specific accomplishments to date include the launch of a “Speakers Bureau” providing opportunities for Wayside staff to deliver workshops to key audiences; the increase in size/scope of our 5K4Kids annual fundraising event; the creation of a position dedicated to communications; and the hiring of a consultant to perform a communications audit.

2. Diversity and Inclusion: This is an employee-led initiative dedicated through open communication and ongoing education to affirm Wayside’s commitment to an inclusive, diverse, vibrant workforce that reflects the communities we serve. Specific accomplishments to date include employing an expert consultant to help lead diversity and inclusion efforts; addition of a diversity/inclusion module to agency pre-service orientation, and the addition of specific annual diversity trainings across the organization.

3. Leadership Development: These efforts support the agency’s overall future succession planning as they identify and strengthen Wayside’s future leaders. Specific accomplishments to date include 42 senior and middle managers participation in a Future Leaders Course (20-25 hours) and four staff completing the Clark University Human Services Management Program.

4. Customer Service: Designed to ensure that every individual who calls or visits Wayside will receive “The Wayside Welcome:” a warm, professional and caring reception. Specific accomplishments to date include a “Mystery Shopper” assessment of baseline functioning. A Customer Service module was added to pre-service orientation; Customer Service performance measures were added to Staff Annual Performance Evaluations; and more coordinated triage efforts were developed across program sites.

Who We Serve

Wayside's programs helped more than 6,000 children, youth and families across Eastern and Central Massachusetts in 2014. Client demographics do not include some community services such as support groups and lead agency services, which we do not track through our EHR system.

**Age**
- Under 12 (20%)
- 12-17 (61%)
- 18-24 (15%)
- 25+ (4%)

**Race & Ethnicity**
- White (60%)
- Asian (3%)
- Black (9%)
- Hispanic (21%)
- Other (7%)

**Gender**
Wayside's population is almost equally divided between male and female with a small percentage (<1%) of transgender youth.

**Diversity**
Of those reporting (1811), 40% identified as being a racial/ethnic minority.
Current Assessment (SWOT Analysis) Methodology

A critical component of the planning process was the SWOT Analysis. This consisted of collecting stakeholder feedback through a series of interviews, surveys, focus group sessions, and the analysis of other data points available both within Wayside and outside of Wayside. Research was also conducted on federal and state policy trends. All information gleaned has been able to help us direct our thinking as we developed our goals for the new plan.

Feedback from some stakeholders was gathered in the following manner:

- Board of Directors surveys and discussions during the strategic planning process
- Annual survey of all Wayside employees and meetings with CEO and HR Director
- Wayside parents/families—via Survey Monkey
- Wayside parents—via Sr. Leadership attendance at two Parent Focus Groups
- Wayside parents—via Board members meeting with parents
- Campus Parent Support Group feedback—via Senior Staff attendance at a group session
- Community Partners—via Survey Monkey
- Community Partners—via phone interviews with identified Wayside staff
- Program Director surveys and discussions in Program Director’s meeting

Other feedback that was critical to the SWOT Analysis was the series of interviews conducted by our consultant—Jan Nissenbaum, former Deputy Commissioner at the Massachusetts Dept of Children and Families—who spoke confidentially with 13 different “Key Informants” knowledgeable about Wayside and the child and family service and policy arenas.
Findings from Current Assessment

Reputation & Strengths:
- Strong commitment to high quality clinical and support services
- Strong and seasoned Leadership
- Strong commitment to engaging families as partners/Parent Partnership program among state leaders with DMH
- Comprehensive array of services
- Staff turnover relatively low compared to other similar agencies
- Key language capacity in many programs
- Young Adult Services are innovative and strong
- Care Coordination services are seen as strong (Leads and CSAs)
- Provision of Acute Behavioral Health Services (Mobile Crisis, CBAT, ICBAT, Partial Hospitalization)
- Significant amount of Child Psychiatric resource – 1.5 FTEs, plus one full time and three part-time Clinical Nurse Specialists who are able to prescribe medication under the supervision of our psychiatrists.
- Low use of physical restraint at our Campus compares very favorably nationally (lowest 20%)
- Known for willingness/ability to serve youth/families who are considered quite complex

Weaknesses/Areas for Development:
- Need for more rapid access to clinical services across the agency
- Need to continue to increase Wayside’s visibility and presence, especially “outside of Framingham”
- Need for better communication and integration across and within the agency (“silo-busting”)
- Low Staff Satisfaction within the realms of compensation and benefits
- Need for more bilingual capacity in specific communities and specific services
- More specialized and agency-consistent clinical expertise in certain areas needed (i.e., Trauma-Informed Models)
- The “customer experience” is not uniformly positive.

Opportunities/Threats:
- Integration of primary care and behavioral health care is on immediate horizon
- Need to continue to seek new sources of funding
- There are populations with unmet needs (i.e., children on autism spectrum, young children and their families, bilingual families)
- Numerous children and families are unserved or go to other agencies due to our wait times
- There are other communities which could benefit greatly from many of Wayside’s Clinical services (South of Worcester, Southeastern MA, Western MA, Southern NH)
- Young Adult Services such as TEMPO would be most welcome in other communities
- Afterschool Programming is needed in various communities
- DCF currently purchases a range of clinical in-home services from Wayside but would like the ability to purchase other service models not currently contracted with Wayside (i.e., Parent-Aide type services)
- More integration with school systems needed
- Are we further limiting access by our "silos" within the agency?
Development of Strategic Planning Goals

THEMES:

Based upon the Current Assessment which led us through a thorough analysis of Wayside’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and combined with the financial review, all informed by our Mission, Core Values, and Management Values, several themes presented themselves on a recurring basis: **RESPOND, SUPPORT, REINVEST, EXPAND, IMPROVE, and ADAPT**.

Wayside will:

**RESPOND** to the critical needs of the children, youth and families in our communities, with immediate access to behavioral health services.

**SUPPORT** our staff capacity to serve by increasing satisfaction, compensation, diversity, and career development, as evidenced by increased recruiting and retention.

**REINVEST** in our current and long-term stability by strengthening our finances, and infrastructure of facilities and IT resources.

**EXPAND** key existing and well-established services, to include additional service modalities and new geographic communities.

**IMPROVE** the quality of our services, the community’s awareness of our services, our internal communication, and the overall “customer experience” for our children, young adults, families, and referring partners.

**ADAPT** to the changing and competitive health care environment by coordinating care seamlessly with all partners, especially primary care providers, thereby maximizing successful outcomes for our children, young adults and families.

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Program Locations

Wayside’s program sites are located in the following communities: Arlington, Framingham, Lowell, Malden, Milford, Waltham, Watertown, Somerville, Sturbridge, Worcester and Whitinsville. We serve families living in communities throughout Eastern, MetroWest and Central Massachusetts.
Vision:
Wayside will be the “Go To” resource for children, young adults, families, and communities within our catchment areas.

CURRENT ASSESSMENT/SWOT ANALYSIS
- Review of prior plan
- Review of recent initiatives
- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- “Key Informants”
- Client Satisfaction Data
- Turnover Data
- Staff Satisfaction Data
- Outcomes Data
- Community Demographics
- Current and future environment

RECURRING THEMES
- RESPOND to our Community
- SUPPORT our staff
- REINVEST in our agency
- EXPAND our programs
- IMPROVE our services
- ADAPT to the changing environment

STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal #1 (Our “Audacious” Goal): Wayside will RESPOND to the needs of the communities we serve with immediate access to our services.

Goal #2 (A Key Driver): Wayside will SUPPORT our staff team by investing in the hiring and development of a highly trained, diverse and satisfied staff team.

Goal #3 (A Key Driver): Wayside will continue to REINVEST in our overall financial health and infrastructure.

Goal #4: Wayside will EXPAND key programs to meet community needs and decrease service wait times.

Goal #5: Wayside will IMPROVE the quality of our services and the service experience of the children, young adults and families we serve.

Goal #6: Wayside will ADAPT to the changing health care environment by improving integration with primary care and ensuring we remain on the “leading edge” at all times.
Strategic Goals (2015-2019):

Goal #1 (Our “Audacious” Goal): Wayside will RESPOND to the needs of the communities we serve. By the third year of this Plan (2017), no child or family will be required to wait to receive Wayside services. Wait times for services will decrease by 50% by the end of 2015; by 75% by the end of 2016; and be eliminated by the end of 2017.

   Action Step 1.1: Wayside will realign the structure of our community-based teams to decrease service silos, maximize staff time dedicated to direct service, increase community responsiveness and improve external relationships.
   Action Step 1.2: Wayside will cross-train staff in multiple service modalities so as to better adapt to the needs of the children and families in our communities.

Goal #2 (A Key Driver): Wayside will SUPPORT our staff team by investing in the hiring and development of a highly trained, diverse and satisfied staff team.

   Action Step 2.1: Wayside will raise employee compensation and benefits to competitive levels, which will support our goals of increasing recruiting, retention and decreased service wait time.
   Action Step 2.2: Wayside will develop and implement robust and efficient strategies for recruiting and on-boarding of staff, resulting in a 10% annual increase of our Master’s level clinicians, to a total of 150 by the end of 2018.
   Action Step 2.3: Wayside will focus substantial efforts upon diversity and inclusion across the agency, becoming an affirming and welcoming community as a result.
   Action Step 2.4: Worker safety will be a primary priority in all Wayside programs and sites.
   Action Step 2.5: Wayside will focus significant efforts upon leadership development, including development of diverse staff and training/on-boarding of new Wayside managers.
   Action Step 2.6: Wayside will improve staff-retention strategies so that staff turnover is not a barrier to service access.
   Action Step 2.7: Wayside will develop technological efficiencies in order to minimize staff time spent in administrative tasks.

Goal #3 (A Key Driver): Wayside will continue to REINVEST in our overall financial health and infrastructure.

   Action Step 3.1: Wayside will achieve annual operating and capital budget plans throughout the life of the Plan which will result in our balance sheet ratios benchmarking among top 30% of peer agencies in Massachusetts and nationally.
   Action Step 3.2: Wayside will work with our state agency and insurance payers, trade and advocacy associations, “sister” human service agencies, CPAs and vendor partners to maximize administrative efficiencies and reduce our administrative costs from 10% to below 9% by the end of 2018.
   Action Step 3.3: Wayside will achieve and maintain state of the art facilities and computer infrastructures that are safe, functional, and secure.
Strategic Goals Cont’d:

Goal #4: Wayside will EXPAND key services to meet community needs and decrease service wait times.

**Action Step 4.1:** Wayside will grow staff teams, diversify our service models, and increase the volume of families receiving services in the following communities: MetroWest, Blackstone Valley, Waltham/Watertown, Lowell, Malden and Sturbridge. We will consider expanding in Worcester, Franklin, and other communities contiguous to current Wayside locations.

**Action Step 4.2:** Wayside will expand our ability to serve diverse populations by increasing bilingual and bicultural capacity across all programs.

**Action Step 4.3:** Wayside will develop our expertise and clinical staff to be a significant resource for LGBTQ youth and families.

**Action Step 4.4:** Wayside will explore growth opportunities for Transition Age Youth programming, including supported education and supported housing opportunities, as well as additional or expanded young adult resource centers such as Tempo and STEPS.

**Action Step 4.5:** Wayside will explore growth opportunities for Wayside’s Therapeutic Afterschool Programming, such as replicating Wayside’s Choices programs in other communities.

**Action Step 4.6:** Wayside will continue the recent expansion of day services at the Wayside Campus: partial hospitalization at the Wayside Day Center, and special education at Wayside Academy.

**Action Step 4.7:** Wayside will respond to community need for family-centered programs, and will be prepared to develop a Family Resource Center if funded.

**Action Step 4.8:** Wayside will expand our well-regarded care coordination services as a Family Networks Lead Agency, Community Service Agency (CSA), Continuum Program provider, and in the future, health home coordination.

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**Family Satisfaction**

Wayside continually monitors family satisfaction with our services and consistently receives high scores. In 2014:

- **96%** reported being satisfied or highly satisfied with overall quality of Wayside services.
- **97%** reported being satisfied or highly satisfied with their level of involvement in their child’s services.
- **88%** reported being satisfied or highly satisfied with progress made by child/family on identified goals.
Goal #5: Wayside will IMPROVE the quality of our services and the service experience of the children, families and communities we serve.

**Action Step 5.1:** Program sites will be clean, professional, and welcoming to all members of the diverse Wayside community

**Action Step 5.2:** Wayside will develop and improve external communication tools – website, social media, telephone and print – to help those seeking Wayside services find them easily.

**Action Step 5.3:** Wayside will provide seamless care coordination and collaboration to all those receiving multiple Wayside services. This includes regular communication and smooth transitions within Wayside’s programs, as well as between Wayside and external service providers.

**Action Step 5.4:** Wayside will expand the capacities of its long term residential treatment model via thorough adoption of the Building Bridges principles.

**Action Step 5.5:** All Wayside programs, and especially its Campus programs, will adopt trauma-informed approaches to support those we serve.

**Action Step 5.6:** Wayside staff will hold leadership roles in key community and statewide task forces/committees.

**Action Step 5.7:** Wayside staff will engage in writing, research, and/or conference presentations to the professional community.

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Goal #6: Wayside will ADAPT to the changing health care environment by improving integration with primary care and ensuring we are on the “leading edge” of service delivery at all times.

**Action Step 6.1:** Wayside will develop key partnerships with primary care providers in MetroWest, Blackstone Valley, Lowell, and Waltham/Watertown areas.

**Action Step 6.2:** Wayside will develop and market key strengths and staff areas of clinical expertise by gathering, benchmarking, and reporting on outcomes data strategically.

**Action Step 6.3:** Wayside will realign agency structures to ensure significant improvement in clinical quality, risk management and corporate compliance.

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Results

Compared to 94 similar organizations across the country via the Netsmart Children & Families Benchmarking Initiative, Wayside scored favorably across the board, and is identified as an industry leader in the following categories:

- Family preservation: preventing hospitalization or out-of-home placement
- Family reunification: discharging youth from a residential program back home or to a less restrictive level of care
- Minimizing the use of physical restraints
- Staff retention
- Employee satisfaction

"I may never fully understand why our daughter struggled so much, but I will ALWAYS remember the selfless people that got her through it...It was simply amazing."

-Wayside Parent
**Board of Directors**

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Eric L. Masi, Ed.D.  
President & CEO

This planning effort was led by:  
Susan Yi-Millette, Chairperson of the Board of Directors  
Strategic Planning Committee  
Andrea Salzman, LICSW, Vice President of Community Services

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