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Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission

Year Seven Findings and Recommendations

Prepared for:

Clerks of the Senate and the House of Representatives

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

House Committee on Ways and Means

Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Recovery

Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

Prepared by:

Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission

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Oct. 30, 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction *3*

Report Overview *5*

Commission Processes *6*

Commission Meetings **6**

Commission Administration **6**

Commission Activities **6**

Provided Insight and Guidance on Programmatic Elements, Sustainability, and Evaluation 6

Communicated the Importance of the Restoration Center 7

Identified and Operationalized Funding Sources 7

Work Completed by Vendors to Operate and Support the Restoration Center *9*

Vinfen **9**

Restoration Center Location 9

Staffing 9

Ambulance Drop-Off 10

Sustainability 10

Stakeholder Engagement 11

Service Provision 12

Communications 13

Knowledge and Best Practices Gathering 13

Project Administration 14

ForHealth Consulting **14**

Findings, Recommendations, and Implementation Timeline *16*

Findings and Recommendations **16**

Implementation Plan and Timeline **16**

Introduction

The Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission (Commission), established under Chapter 69 of the Acts of 2018, *An Act Relative to Criminal Justice Reform* (Act), as amended by Section 142 of Chapter 126 of the Acts of 2022, *An Act Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2023*, hereby submits its Year Seven (November 2024-October 2025) findings and recommendations to the General Court as required by the Act. The Commission has worked since its inception to:

- Investigate the gaps and needs in behavioral health and diversionary services in Middlesex County that could prevent arrest and unnecessary emergency department (ED) utilization among individuals with behavioral health conditions.
- Develop a service model for a Restoration Center pilot program in Middlesex County and implement the program.

The Act tasked the Commission with planning and implementing "a county restoration center and program to divert persons suffering from mental illness or substance disorder who interact with law enforcement or the court system during a pre-arrest investigation of the pre-adjudication process from lock-up facilities and hospital emergency departments to appropriate treatment."[1] This report summarizes the activities the Commission completed in Year Seven and includes an overview of efforts to launch the Restoration Center (Center).

ForHealth Consulting®, the healthcare consulting and operations division of UMass Chan Medical School (UMass Chan), compiled this report on behalf of the Middlesex County Restoration Center Commission.

Commission members included:

- Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian, co-chair
- Dr. Danna Mauch, president and CEO, Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, co-chair
- Senator Cindy Friedman, 4th Middlesex District
- Representative Kenneth Gordon, Middlesex 21st District
- Lydia Conley, president and CEO, Association for Behavioral Healthcare
- Scott Taberner, special advisor, Executive Office for Health and Human Services (through March 2025)
- Nancy Connolly, assistant commissioner for forensic services, Department of Mental Health (through June 2025)
- Deirdre Calvert, director, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services
- Eliza Williamson, director of community education and training, National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts

[1] Chapter 69 of the Acts of 2018.

- Chief Justice Paula Carey, Massachusetts Trial Court (Ret.)
- Chief Roy Frost, Billerica Police Department
- Audrey Shelto, president and CEO, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation
- Dr. Lee Robinson, associate chief for Behavioral Health, MassHealth Office of Accountable Care & Behavioral Health (starting April 2025)
- Matthew Broderick, manager of Forensic Operations & Policy, Department of Mental Health (starting July 2025)

Report Overview

First, this report describes activities the Commission completed in Year Seven, which include the following:

- Summary of Commission meetings held in Year Seven
- Description of the work completed to launch and start services at the Restoration Center

Next, this report describes the work completed by:

- Vinfen, the vendor selected to operate the Restoration Center
- ForHealth Consulting, the organization that provides implementation assistance and conducts the evaluation of the pilot program

Finally, this report outlines findings and recommendations, which include:

- Pathways to fund and sustain components of the Restoration Center
- Implementation plan and timeline for the Restoration Center pilot program

Commission Processes

This section describes the Commission's processes to support the launch of the Restoration Center.

Commission Meetings

In Year Seven, the Commission met twice to:

- Receive progress updates from the selected vendor, Vinfen, on implementation of the Restoration Center.
- Discuss programmatic elements and provide feedback,
- Brainstorm sustainability opportunities.

Commission leadership, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), and Vinfen also met several times to share the status of the Restoration Center, identify potential challenges, and discuss solutions.

Commission Administration

The state fiscal year's 2026 budget once again appropriated funding for the Center to the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) line-item 4000-0300. EOHHS continued to engage with ForHealth Consulting through an Intergovernmental Service Agreement to ensure preparations to open the Restoration Center align with the model developed by the Commission and provide programmatic and policy guidance.

Commission Activities

This section describes Year Seven activities for the Commission.

Provided Insight and Guidance on Programmatic Elements, Sustainability, and Evaluation

The Commission developed two working groups—one focused on the Sober Support Unit that transformed over time into sustainability efforts and another on ForHealth Consulting's evaluation of the pilot project.

Sober Support Services and Sustainability Working Group

A group of Commission members—Dee Calvert, Jonna Hopwood, on behalf of the Association of Behavioral Health, Danna Mauch, and Lee Robinson—met several times since the beginning of 2025 to talk about the Sober Support Services at the Restoration Center. The group reviewed and finalized the admission criteria and supports that will be made available to individuals in the Vinfen-developed program. Once the service components were agreed upon, the discussion shifted to developing strategies to ensure sustainable funding. As a relatively new model both nationally and within Massachusetts, sobering support lacks a dedicated funding mechanism,

though it remains a core element of the Restoration Center model. The group devoted several meetings to exploring potential pathways to licensure, which in turn would enable billing capacity. Licensing options discussed include a clinic with mental health services, an outpatient program, or a BSAS special project designation.

Evaluation Working Group

ForHealth Consulting and Vinfen met throughout Year Seven to explore available participant data, determine aggregate metric definitions, and discuss data sharing mechanisms. ForHealth Consulting developed an evaluation plan, per the legislative mandate of the Commission, and presented it to a working group of Commission members in July. Commission members participating in the working group were Sheriff Koutoujian, Danna Mauch, Senator Friedman, Paula Carey, and Audrey Shelto. The group discussed the metrics that ForHealth Consulting will collect to describe implementation, provide information about the population receiving services, and measure outcomes. The evaluation timeline and metrics are detailed under the ForHealth Consulting section.

Communicated the Importance of the Restoration Center

To celebrate the selection of the Restoration Center's location, engage key community and government stakeholders, and share initial floor plan designs, Vinfen and Spectrum hosted a gathering in May. Sheriff Koutoujian, Danna Mauch, and Senator Friedman provided remarks, alongside the leaders of the host organizations, Jean Yang of Vinfen and Kirk Isaacson of Spectrum, and Lowell City Manager Thomas Golden. The Commission leaders reflected on the work completed to date and described the promise of the Restoration Center to connect individuals to community-based behavioral health care once the doors open in April 2026. Following the gathering, the Lowell Sun published a story detailing the Restoration Center services and its goals.[2]

As the preparations for the Restoration Center's opening continued, Vinfen recommended updating the name from the "Middlesex County Restoration Center" to the "Restoration Center of Greater Lowell." The Commission agreed upon the revised name, which will help to reduce any potential confusion of the state operating the Center as well as allow for potential replications in Middlesex County or other counties.

Identified and Operationalized Funding Sources

During Year Seven, Commission members continued to pursue funding opportunities to blend and braid funding for the Restoration Center. Funding sources secured included:

- An ongoing annual appropriation of $1.5 million in EOHHS line-item 4000-0300 into the Criminal Justice and Community Support Trust Fund in FY26.
- $1 million annually in FY26 and FY27 from the Opioid Remediation and Recovery Fund (ORRF).

[2] https://www.lowellsun.com/2025/05/15/restoration-center-of-greater-lowell(ow)6 (el)12.7 (t)-6.6 (he.0 0.0842.06 (on)TJ0 (6 (5004 Tc -