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# PEABODY

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# Shrivastava: From crisis to care: Boston's groundbreaking response to COVID and teen mental health

NOVEMBER 5, 2024 BY [GUEST COMMENTARY](#)

***Aditya Shrivastava, The Governor's Academy***

Boston really went through the wringer during COVID, but the city's response shows how a crisis can spark some amazing changes. When COVID first hit, Boston was slammed – but its major hospitals like Mass General Hospital stepped up in a big way.

The city turned things around quickly with testing and virtual care. But behind the scenes, a quieter crisis was unfolding: teen mental health took a serious hit. We saw kids struggling with isolation, anxiety, and depression like never before. Screen time went through the roof, social connections suffered, and many teens found themselves dealing with serious mental health issues for the first time. Emergency room visits for teen mental health crises shot up, and schools started seeing warning signs even in their top students.

These days, Boston's healthcare system runs on what you might call a mix-and-match approach. You can see your doctor in person or hop on a video call – whatever works better for you. This has been especially helpful for mental health care, where teens often feel more comfortable opening up

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They're training teachers to recognize when a student might be in trouble, and they've set up quick-response systems to get teens help before things spiral. Parents are getting support too, with workshops on how to talk to their kids about mental health and cope with their own stress.

The vaccine rollout really showed Boston at its best, but the city didn't stop there. They're tackling the whole picture of teen health – from getting healthy food through programs like The Daily Table to encouraging exercise and social connections. They're even using social media in a positive way, creating teen-friendly mental health resources and support networks online.

Some cool initiatives that have made a real difference:

- School-based wellness centers where kids can drop in anytime
- Peer support groups led by trained teen mentors
- Stress-management apps designed specifically for young people
- After-school programs focused on creativity and connection
- Parent-teen workshops on building better communication

Looking back, Boston turned a massive health crisis into a chance to make things better for everyone, especially its young people. The focus on teen mental health isn't just about dealing with COVID's impact – it's about building stronger, more resilient kids who know it's okay to ask for help. Other cities are definitely taking notes on how Boston pulled this off, particularly when it comes to supporting their younger residents.

But there's still work to do. Teen anxiety and depression rates haven't bounced back to pre-pandemic levels, and many young people are still struggling to readjust to "normal" life. The good news is that Boston's shown us how to tackle these challenges head-on: by combining traditional healthcare with innovative approaches, keeping mental health front and center, and making sure no kid falls through the cracks.

*Aditya Shrivastava is a Lynnfield resident and junior at The Governor's Academy in Byfield, MA. He is doing research as part of his AP Stat course about correlation between self-advocacy and mental health problems among teenagers.*

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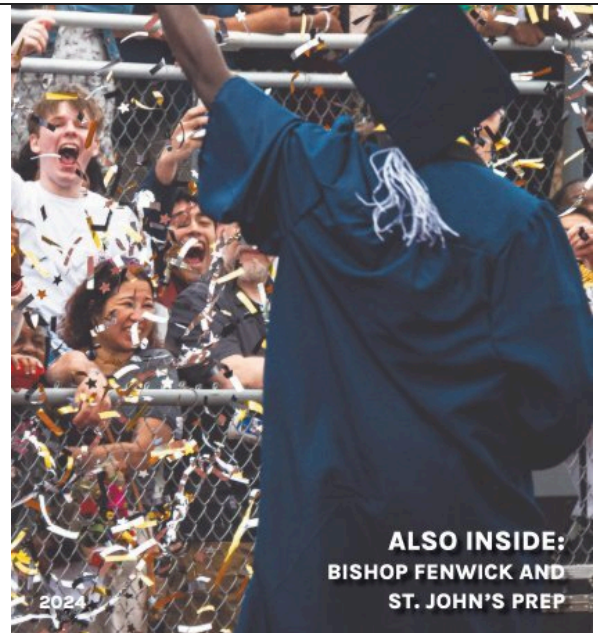
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