



Impact Report: 2026 Year In Review

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

It is with great excitement and enthusiasm that I write to you as the new Executive Director of Positive Directions. I am honored to have the opportunity to lead Positive Directions in its next chapter. I have worked with many mental health organizations within Connecticut and across the country, and there is truly something special about this team and their unique combination of prevention and counseling services. I am hugely grateful to Jess Branson, who led the organization with dedication through the past year of transition.



Since joining Positive Directions, on a daily basis I witness the amazing team's deep dedication to our mission to be innovative community leaders in mental health, substance prevention, and peer support. I am impressed with what Positive Directions accomplished during 2025 to 2026. Highlights for me include:

5,700+ people reached this fiscal year.

- 1 We expanded access to high quality mental health counseling and reduced financial barriers.** Through our grants, sliding scale, and treatment fund, Positive Directions subsidizes a portion of the costs for all mental health services provided.
- 2 We showcased peer-led pathways to wellbeing.** 123,641 individuals visited our unique CT Support Group project, a safe, peer-led space for young people to build connections, community, and access trained peer support.
- 3 We provided targeted skills building in schools across Mid Fairfield to reduce suicide and substance use.** This year alone, our prevention team trained 935 teachers and students in suicide prevention and provided cannabis education and resources to all health and physical education teachers from five towns.
- 4 We led collective community action for mental wellbeing.** Our 5th annual NorWALK for Mental Health event brought together 75 agencies and 500 community members to raise awareness and access wellness supports.

Our achievements are only possible in partnership with our friends, supporters, community members, and fellow nonprofit organizations. I am excited to join with you all in our shared mission to improve the mental wellbeing of all in our communities.

Warmly,

Kim DiBella-Farber, LMSW
Executive Director

Prevention: Guiding stakeholders to build healthier communities

Creating systems change in Norwalk



Some members of the Norwalk priority planning working group

In the past year, Positive Directions was proud to design and lead an innovative systems change project in Norwalk, thanks to funding from the New Canaan Community Foundation. With 36% of Norwalk youth reporting they did not feel their life was heading in a positive direction, we saw the need for large-scale thinking, shared leadership, and coordinated action across sectors. Through our leadership roles with the Norwalk ACTS Social-Emotional Health team and The Norwalk Partnership, we involved a diverse group of adults and youth in an exciting grassroots project to develop a roadmap to support youth mental wellbeing throughout the city. Building on our Youth Survey, provider gap analysis, and community conversations, all conducted through our Prevention Department, our project guided the community in developing a comprehensive set of strategies being acted on now.

Read the Priority Plan for Youth Mental Wellbeing in Norwalk [here](#).

PREVENTION BY THE NUMBERS

2,496

community members engaged at events & health fairs

1,636

youth & adults trained in mental health, suicide & substance prevention, & more

166

high school teens attended our substance-free social events

92

elected officials & community leaders informed at our regional legislative forum

250

community stakeholders planning and delivering prevention work

1,000

lockbags, Narcan kits, liquor stickers, and parent handbooks distributed

Regionalizing youth cannabis prevention



Community leaders at the project launch

In June we concluded an 18-month pilot project funded by the state to address underage cannabis use. Positive Directions saw an opportunity to build regional capacity. We developed the Mid-Fairfield Youth Cannabis Prevention Project to work with five key sectors — youth, parents, prevention, law enforcement, and schools — across five communities: New Canaan, Norwalk, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. Accomplishments included:

- Law enforcement summit with the Attorney General and DMHAS.
- Professional development for all health and physical education teachers from five towns.
- A landscape analysis at smoke shops in all five towns.
- A Regional Youth Team trained to teach health classes and spread awareness to peers, including PSAs.
- A Regional Speaker Series with local experts educating parents.
- Awareness messaging, lockbags and resources distributed region-wide.
- A Local Government Summit to discuss prevention challenges and sustainability in the region.

Peer support: Building community for recovery and support

Recognizing our young adult peer support project



Our CT Support Group project, funded by DMHAS, is a virtual peer-led platform for young people in Connecticut to find connections, learn about and access peer supports around the state, and build community. This past year we refreshed the project website. We are proud that the redesign won the 2025 Health and Wellness Design award from Graphic Design USA.

CT Support Group project

- 249** young people in our Discord
- 19** teens & young adults receiving one-to-one peer support
- 22** online social events hosted

Our support groups

500 people attended one or more of our 4 free support groups last year: SMART Teens, SMART Friends & Family, Alternatives to Suicide, Alzheimer's Caregivers.

Counseling: *A path to recovery and healing*



Cozy new play therapy room invites children age 5+

Expanding counseling to ages 5 and up

We are grateful to the Jewish Federation of Greater Fairfield County, the New Canaan Community Foundation, and the Westport Rotary for making this transformation possible. Our new state-of-the-art play therapy room has allowed us to accommodate 33% more children in 2025.

Reenvisioning a welcoming space for our clients

In mental health care, the space where we meet our clients is so important. This year, we thoughtfully redesigned our waiting and therapy spaces to foster a deep sense of safety, dignity, and calm, where clients can open up and engage in healing. Our warm, modern, and intentional atmosphere helps our clients feel truly seen and valued from the moment they step through the doors, from having a cup of coffee in our bright and comforting waiting room, to meeting with their clinician.



Our Positive Directions team welcomes clients into our refurbished space.

Removing financial barriers to care: Case study

"John" is a middle-aged working man who came to us recently. He makes too much money to qualify for state insurance, yet has been unable to afford the high premiums of commercial insurance. As a result, he was unable to access the mental health care he needed. We helped him enroll in both our Sliding Scale and Treatment Fund to supplement the costs of mental health care. Because of these programs, sustained by private donations, he was able to access the counseling services he was looking for at Positive Directions.

CLINICAL SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS

33%

more children served with our increased capacity

376

individuals received counseling

5,704

counseling sessions delivered

Rave reviews for our clinic, from our annual client feedback survey

Positive Directions counseling makes a difference

89%

of counseling clients surveyed felt better able to handle daily problems and crises

Satisfied clients

94%

reported they like the services they receive

Recommend Positive Directions

92%

reported they will keep coming back and recommend us to family and friends

Responsive to clients

97%

reported that we return their calls within 24 hours

Change Agents: Celebrating our award-winning staff



Margaret receives the Ubuntu award

Our Prevention Director, Margaret Watt, won the 2026 Ubuntu Award, meaning "I am, because we are", from Norwalk ACTS, recognizing her deep commitment to equity, collaboration, and human connection, and her work integrating mental health and prevention across the city.



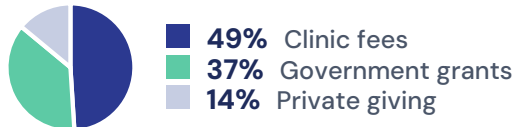
Quinn Jannetty, Manager, CT Support Group Project

Quinn Jannetty, who leads our CT Support Group project team with heart, soul, and intelligence, was awarded Advocacy Unlimited's Dr. Karen Kangas Award for Excellence in Advocacy.

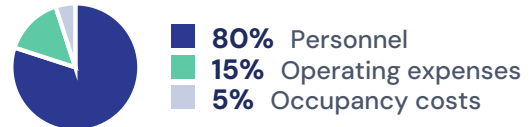
Our financial picture: Making the most of our resources

Positive Directions' \$1.1M budget weaves together multiple sources to support the range of programming we provide. We take our role as a steward of government and private dollars seriously, efficiently managing our expenses to ensure that communities that rely on us receive the most effective services throughout Fairfield County and Connecticut.

FY 2026 revenue sources



FY 2026 expenses by category



Your gift makes a difference

Every subsidized counseling session, every free support group, and every training is funded through grants and donations. Please sponsor our work.

positivedirections.org/donate



Transforming perspectives, embracing mental wellbeing for all.

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