

## **Pine Street Inn and Disability Law Center Partner to Enhance Accessibility in Shelter**

The Disability Law Center and Pine Street Inn are pleased to announce the completion of a joint effort to enhance accessibility and services for vulnerable populations in congregate shelter settings. The Disability Law Center (DLC), a non-profit designated as Massachusetts' Protection and Advocacy agency for individuals with disabilities, engaged with Pine Street Inn (PSI), the largest homeless services provider in New England, to pursue a vision to support homeless people who live with disabilities.

These collaborative efforts made meaningful changes in three key areas: enhancing physical accessibility and safety; updating PSI policy and practice; and supplementing trauma informed staff training. Physical accessibility and safety improvements over several years have included changes to intake areas, restrooms, and living quarters as well as updating emergency action plans to address and inform shelter guests who may have a disability and need additional support vacating the premises in an emergency. PSI retained Safety, Hope & Healing Counseling and Consulting (SHH) to provide recommendations concerning ways to make policies and practices more trauma-informed. DLC and PSI also worked together to review and update shelter policies and practices, including those concerning reasonable accommodations on the basis of disability.

Homelessness is a very traumatic experience. Many people who come to shelter have a history of trauma and identify as a person with a disability. PSI's expanded, trauma informed offerings of accessible supportive services have enhanced the shelter experience for individuals with disabilities at PSI. PSI and DLC appreciate this joint effort.

"Pine Street Inn was pleased to collaborate with the Disability Law Center to enhance our guests' experience," said Lyndia Downie, President and Executive Director of PSI.

"We applaud Pine Street Inn's efforts to engage with DLC in identifying and addressing the needs of and barriers faced by shelter guests with disabilities," said Barbara L'Italien, Executive Director of DLC.