



# ANNUAL 20 IMPACT REPORT 25



# A Year of Bold Momentum

## Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters of Empower,

2025 was a year marked by bold momentum, meaningful growth, and an unwavering commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our community. Across Somerset County, and throughout New Jersey, we expanded our reach and deepened our impact—strengthening prevention education, advancing mental health initiatives, and increasing access to the critical resources individuals, veterans, and families need to thrive.

Central to this work is a simple but powerful belief: strong communities are built when individuals are fully supported. Through workforce development initiatives, we helped individuals access training, build skills, and move toward sustainable employment, while our housing-focused efforts removed financial barriers to help families secure safe, stable homes.

Prevention remains at the core of everything we do. We deepened our commitment to mental health awareness and suicide prevention by empowering individuals to recognize warning signs, respond with compassion, and engage in open conversations that break down stigma. Through youth-focused and community-based, we continue to equip young people with the skills to make healthy decisions and build lasting resilience.

This year also marked an exciting milestone with the Grand Opening of our new office in downtown Somerville. The space was thoughtfully designed to be welcoming and accessible for clients, families, and community partners, and features a vibrant mural that brings our mission to life. This expansion has strengthened our ability to grow programs, increase access to services, and reach more people across the state.



None of this momentum happens alone. Behind every program and every milestone is a dedicated network of staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters who bring this work to life. Because of you, we are able to meet people where they are, offer hope where it is needed most, and continue building a future where prevention and recovery are possible and lives are protected.

The challenges facing our communities continue to evolve, and they call for sustained commitment, innovation, and collaboration. In the year ahead, we remain committed to expanding access, amplifying youth voices, and ensuring that prevention remains a priority in every corner of our community.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing in this mission, and for helping turn bold vision into meaningful, lasting change.

With Gratitude,

**Kristen Schiro**

Executive Director & The Team at Empower





# About Us

Empower Somerset is a community-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has served as a trusted resource in New Jersey for more than five decades. Headquartered in downtown Somerville, we deliver prevention education, mental health initiatives, and family support programs throughout Somerset County and across the state.

Since 1974, Empower Somerset has provided evidence-based education and community programs focused on substance use prevention, suicide prevention and mental health awareness, sexual health and risk avoidance education, and life skills development. Our work reaches youth, adults, families, and veterans, helping individuals build the knowledge and resilience needed to make healthy, informed decisions. Through strong partnerships with schools, community organizations, healthcare providers, and local leaders, Empower Somerset works to strengthen protective factors that support healthier individuals, families, and communities.

# Our Story

Empower Somerset was founded in February 1974 as the Somerset Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, with a mission to prevent substance misuse and connect individuals with treatment resources. Over time, our work expanded to address the broader social and behavioral factors that influence health and well-being. In 2010, the organization adopted the name Empower Somerset, reflecting our commitment to prevention, wellness, and community empowerment.

In 2012, Empower Somerset established the Pioneer Family Success Center, a welcoming community hub that connects families with vital resources and support. Through free programs, family events, and community partnerships, the center helps strengthen families and build supportive networks across Somerset County. Today, Empower Somerset continues to evolve to meet emerging community needs while remaining rooted in prevention, education, and connection.

# Our Mission

We empower individuals and families to make positive lifestyle choices by promoting healthy, drug-free and stigma-free communities through education, collaboration, and connections to resources.



# Our Vision

A healthier, stronger New Jersey where youth, individuals, and families are empowered with the resources, support, and opportunities to build stable, resilient lives.



# A Year in Review

## Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention

### 614 individuals trained in Mental Health Awareness

In 2025, **614 individuals** gained lifesaving knowledge through our Mental Health Awareness initiatives. Parents, educators, veterans, students, and community leaders are now better equipped to recognize warning signs, respond with compassion, and take action when it matters most.



**283**  
participants trained in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

**331**  
participants trained in Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)

**4**  
instructors certified to teach Youth MHFA and Adult MHFA

### For many, these trainings were eye opening.

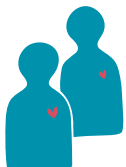
“The instructor did a great job keeping us engaged and making the content easy to understand. I understand how this training can help someone in ways I didn’t think of before.”  
**Adult MHFA Participant**

“As an Army National Guard soldier, I believe QPR is a great course that will help me be a stronger, more supportive leader. I am more aware of how to recognize warning signs and step in when it matters most. I am glad this program exists.”  
**QPR Training Participant**

## Lifelines Suicide Response and Prevention Program

### 40,088 students throughout NJ attend Lifelines schools

In 2025, our Lifelines Suicide Response and Prevention Program reached **40,088 students** across New Jersey, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to recognize warning signs, support peers, and seek help when needed. Through its Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention framework, the program empowers students, educators, and families to respond to crises and traumatic events, creating safer, more connected school communities.



**412**  
faculty and staff members trained

**15**  
school districts participate in Lifelines



**988** Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

“As a result of the Lifelines program, our district now has a comprehensive, sustainable approach to suicide prevention that is embedded in policy, curriculum, and practice—from early identification to crisis response to recovery. The training has strengthened the confidence and competence of our staff and contributed to a safer, more supportive environment for all students.” **NJ School District using Lifelines**



# Prevention and Life Skills Education

## 378 sessions of prevention education delivered

In 2025, we reached **hundreds of families** and **individuals** through prevention education, with a focus on preventing substance use disorder. Programs included the Strengthening Families Program, Botvin Life Skills, Financial Peace, and more. Each session gave participants tools and skills to strengthen relationships, make healthier choices, and build a stronger, safer community.

<b>562</b> Youth Served	<b>350</b> Adults Served	<b>187</b> Veterans Served	<b>44</b> Families Served
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“After attending the Strengthening Families Program each week, I learned new ways to communicate with my teenage nephews, who I am raising. Now, we have more open and meaningful conversations, and our relationship has grown so much stronger. Our home feels more positive and enjoyable for all of us.” **Strengthening Families Program Participant**

“I learned that having a budget helps you reduce your spending and allows you to save. I also learned how to better track cash flow and prevent debt.” **Financial Peace Program Participant**



## Strengthening Prevention Through Data, Awareness, and Community Partnerships

- ▶ Created and launched the Conversations that Count high-visibility media campaign, reaching an average of 5,442 fans per game at the local TD Bank Ballpark.
- ▶ Launched a new Data Committee to increase community support for prevention programming and activities.
- ▶ Expanded prevention outreach to community leaders, healthcare settings, and employers, reaching over 80 community leaders through training, presentations, and coalition engagement.



# Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)

<b>871</b> youth screened in SBIRT	<b>62</b> professionals trained in SBIRT	<b>112</b> youth trained in AlcoholEdu®
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This year, Empower continued to advance Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) initiatives by training professionals in early identification and intervention strategies for substance misuse. Through these trainings, participants gained practical skills to recognize risk behaviors, provide brief interventions, and connect individuals to appropriate resources, strengthening protective factors and promoting healthier outcomes in our community.

## 172 professionals trained in Save A Life 24 professionals trained in MITEY Change

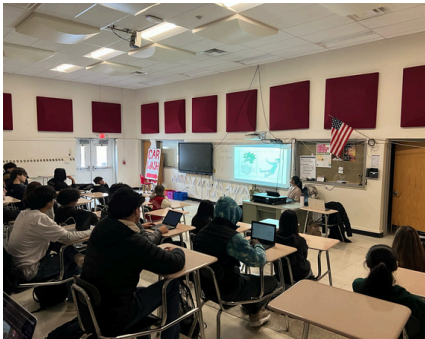
Empower trained youth and professionals through AlcoholEdu®, MITEY Change Motivational Interviewing, and You Can Save a Life. AlcoholEdu® educates students on the effects and risks of alcohol, MITEY Change trains professionals in Motivational Interviewing techniques to more effectively guide and support youth toward positive behaviors, and You Can Save a Life teaches overdose prevention and response, including the use of Narcan.





# BOUND for Healthy Youth Coalition

The BOUND for Healthy Youth Coalition continues to serve Bound Brook and South Bound Brook with a clear mission: to prevent and reduce youth substance use through education, collaboration, and community-wide change. This year, the coalition graduated from the National Coalition Academy, marking a significant milestone in enhancing its capacity to implement evidence-based prevention strategies and drive positive outcomes for youth. Through prevention education, community engagement, and strategic partnerships, the coalition advanced efforts this year to promote awareness and strengthen protective factors for youth across the community.



▶ **1,125** individuals served

▶ **1,126** hours of service provided

# Overdose Fatality Review Program (OFRP)

In 2025, Empower **distributed 1,285 Narcan kits** directly into the hands of community members, giving neighbors, friends, and families the tools they need to respond in an emergency. The OFRP also launched a new initiative, Silver Shields, aimed at overdose prevention for adults ages 55 and older. Through these workshops, participants learned about opioids, counterfeit pills, overdose risks, and received hands-on Narcan training, equipping them to help save lives and strengthen community awareness.

▶ **1,285** Narcan kits distributed

▶ **30** overdose cases reviews conducted

▶ **10** Narcan administration trainings



# One-Stop Operator

▶ **2,000+** customers served

▶ **20** partners served

▶ **27** clients served through Fund my Future



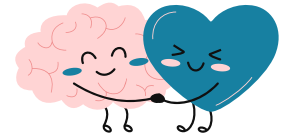
The One-Stop Operator plays a vital role in supporting job seekers in successfully maintaining employment and in assisting businesses by providing candidates who are well prepared to re-enter the workforce and fill job vacancies. In addition, the One-Stop Operator manages and coordinates the local One-Stop delivery system and brings One-Stop partners together to ensure that high quality services are provided in the most effective, professional, and streamlined manner possible.



# Adolescent School Health

## 6,323 students were impacted through school health programs

At Empower, we know that students who feel healthy, safe, supported, and engaged are more likely to succeed academically. This year, our school-based health programs, including the Teen Connection Project (TCP), SPARK, and others, reached **over 6,000 students**, providing education, resources, and support to help youth thrive both in school and beyond.



“TCP taught me life-long lessons such as building connections, and comforting and supporting others. This program has made me more conscious of how I interact with my friends and relationships. I really enjoyed learning more about how to maintain healthy relationships”

**TCP Program Participant**

## 1,473 youth served through our sexual health education programs

Empower continues to strengthen youth protective factors through evidence-based sexual health education programming across the state of New Jersey, aimed at preventing teen pregnancy and STIs. Through PREP (Personal Responsibility Education Program) and SRAE (Sexual Risk Avoidance Education), students gained the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to make healthy, informed decisions.



▶ **1,091** students served in the PREP Program

▶ **382** students served in the SRAE Program

▶ **349** parents and caregivers participated in the Teen Speak Parent Workshop as part of the Statewide Parent Engagement Program (SPEP)

# Pioneer Family Success Center (FSC)

## 3,137 individuals served

The Pioneer FSC is a community-based, family-centered, neighborhood gathering place where any community resident can go for family support, information, and referral to services. The FSC provides opportunities to connect through free family fun nights, support groups, and year-round activities.

**780**  
Families Served

**833**  
Linkages & Referrals



In 2025, the Pioneer FSC hosted **nine Free Family Fun Nights for 641 adults and children, distributed 86 holiday gifts to 36 families, and provided 35 backpacks with school supplies to 16 families**, fostering empowerment, connection, and community.



“It was a wonderful community experience, where we bonded as a family and made new friends. We truly appreciate the opportunity to be here thanks to the Pioneer FSC.”

**FSC Family Fun Night Participant**

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**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT.**

# JOIN US IN BUILDING A HEALTHIER NEW JERSEY

## Be Part of the Change


Every day, Empower equips youth, families, and communities with the tools they need to make healthy choices and build stronger futures.

Your support helps us:

- Equip schools with life-changing prevention education
- Provide families with resources, connection, and support
- Deliver life-saving Narcan and overdose prevention training



## CONNECT WITH US!

 (908) 722-4900

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