The Power of Parenting: Supporting Parents to Strengthen Families

Power of Parenting Program

Power of Parenting is a comprehensive program that increases positive outcomes for families. Families First and partners collaborate to recruit parents for the 16-week program, where parents come to build strong relationships with their children and meaningful connections with other parents.

Program Highlights:
- Interactive, research-based parenting workshops
- Discussion-based Parent Café sessions
- Parent leadership development & training
- Families First mobile app
- Connections to community resources & incentives
- Six months of recruitment & retention support

The Need for Parenting Support

Early childhood experiences matter because…

One stable & responsive relationship helps kids overcome adversity.

80% of brain development happens in the first 3 years of life.

Every $1 spent on early childhood programs saves $4 - $9 in social costs.

Program Goals

Overall Goal: By empowering parents with knowledge, skills, and support around parenting, the parent-child relationship is improved and families are able to nurture and guide the next generation, readying them for lasting success.

The program aims to build the Five Protective Factors:

- Goal 1: Build knowledge of parenting and child development in parents
- Goal 2: Build children’s social and emotional competence through parents
- Goal 3: Build parental resilience
- Goal 4: Build social connections between parents
- Goal 5: Partner with agencies that provide concrete support in times of need

Target Audience

- Parents of children from birth – age 8
- Parents in under-resourced communities who lack access to parenting support

Partnerships & Communities Served

- We work primarily in Greater Boston, with a focus on high-need neighborhoods like Roxbury, Dorchester, and East Boston.
- Programs are delivered in collaboration with organizations that share our mission and have strong connections to parents.

Key Partners:

Affordable Housing Developments
Early Education Providers
Social Service Networks
**Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development & Social and Emotional Competence of Children**

A knowledgeable parent is able to better understand and therefore better support the needs of his or her children.

Parents reported the following improvements:

- **Better Understanding of Your Child**
  - Understand the “why” behind behaviors
  - Better understand my child in general

- **Communication & Discipline Strategies**
  - Know to step back/walk away when overwhelmed
  - Stay calm
  - More talking, less yelling
  - Listen and encourage children more
  - Be open minded in conversations

- **Positive Parenting Tactics**
  - Make a schedule for morning routines
  - Give choices
  - Take time for self (parent timeout)

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**Power of Parenting Outcomes**

**Parental Resilience**

A resilient parent manages stress and functions well when faced with parenting challenges.

Three areas we assess in our programs are:

- Confidence in parenting
- Awareness of how stress affects a parent’s relationship with their child
- Use of strategies to manage parenting stress

**One parent’s story:**

Before the program, this parent mentioned a lot of negative emotions, but after, she had a new outlook. With the knowledge she gained to better understand her children, she saw their future together in a much more positive light.

**Social Connections**

A parent who is connected to other parents is able to grow his/her network to support his/her family.

- **Parents shared strategies with one another**
  - “Take 5 mins, breathe and then go back to what needs to be done.”
  - “Ask a question why he’s crying or why he is mad.”

- **Parents became more open to others’ advice**
  - “In the beginning, I need to keep him close...but now I need to let go and let others give me advice...Now I am willing...to take it.”
  - “I sit back more freely and take what people say that applies to [my daughter].”

- **Parents connected on a deeper level**
  - “We’re a sisterhood, a family.”
  - “[After my grandmother passed], I needed support and I received it when I was away; they took care of my children. It opened my eyes; it’s not only about blood relations.”

**Concrete Support in Times of Need**

A parent whose basic needs are met is able to focus more on his/her family.

Partnering with strong community organizations allows us to expand beyond parenting support to meet additional family needs.

Our partner organizations provide:

- Housing support
- Financial literacy training and assistance
- Interview support and attire
- College credits

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“Before the program, I thought I had it all together. Today, I trust and respect my child.”
Key Lessons Learned

Parent Outcomes
• All parents who graduated reported stories of change as a result of the program
• Longer-term programming resulted in…
  • Increased knowledge
  • Deeper connections being formed
  • More opportunities for follow-up

Program Innovations
• Parents enjoyed the Parent Café discussion-based sessions
• Parent leaders began to play a role but could be better utilized in the future
• The app is a great opportunity to connect parents to one another and the Parenting Educator but improvements are needed to best fit parents’ needs

Recruitment & Retention
• Recruiting and retaining parents is challenging; we have built strategies to address these areas and will assess progress in the coming years

Future of Power of Parenting

The Power of Parenting program is at the center of Families First’s new three-year business plan. Guided by the following strategic priorities, the organization will scale the program to serve even more parents.

From 2018-2020...
Parents served will increase while we build key partnerships.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parents Served</th>
<th>Programs Implemented</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>FY18</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY20</td>
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1Harvard Center on the Developing Child, “From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts” (2016)
2Ludy Dobson, C. & Perry, B. “The Role of Healthy Relational Interactions in Suffering the Impact of Childhood Trauma” (2010)
4The Center for the Study of Social Policy, Strengthening Families ™ “Protective Factors Framework.”