



PARENTS HAVE THE POWER TO SHAPE
THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURES **AND**
MAKE THEIR COMMUNITIES
STRONGER.

**FAMILIES FIRST REIMAGINES OUR
ROLE IN COMMUNITIES.**



Dear Friends,

While we are dealing with so much uncertainty and challenge, Families First continues to focus on our guiding principle that parents have an incredible ability to make lasting, positive change for their children and communities, and for future generations, especially during early childhood.

Several exciting initiatives are being prioritized this year.

(1) We will focus on our new FY21-23 Business Plan, designed with support from Harvard University's Community Action Partners' pro bono consultants. The plan will take the work we do with families to the next level of impact, building upon Strengthening Families' Five Protective Factors framework (see right) that has been a part of the Power of Parenting and our work for years.

(2) We will continue to expand our programming and collaborate with partners. Not only will we engage more parents in Boston and Chelsea by increasing Power of Parenting program delivery, but we will also **launch our new Parent Leadership program—equipping more neighborhoods with skilled parent advocates who can bring about needed change.** The Parent Leadership program (see more on p. 2) will create new pathways for family and community engagement—through our neighborhood partners, like Every Child Ready East Boston and Healthy Chelsea, among others.

(3) Finally, we will be building on our progress around diversity, equity, and inclusion to become a **parent-driven, equity-focused** organization that collaborates creatively to bring about deep, long-lasting impact for more families than ever before. To do so, we are building new pathways for parents to join Families First's team, working creatively with cross-sector partners to position parents in advocacy roles, and revisiting our internal systems to ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are at the forefront of all we do.

In all of these efforts, parents will be at the center of our work. Their contributions will be essential to creating a ripple effect, spreading positive parenting practices across new networks and encouraging other parents to actively engage in their communities.

Thank you for your continued involvement and engagement in our work. Your support plays an important role in getting us to where we are today. Thank you!

Susan Covitz, Executive Director

FIVE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- 1 Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development:**
parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional child development
- 2 Nurturing & Attachment:**
positive parent-child relationship
- 3 Family Functioning & Resiliency:**
ability to manage stress and bounce back from adversity
- 4 Social Support:**
connections to friends, family, and others
- 5 Concrete Support:**
access to tangible goods and services

PROGRAM UPDATE

Parents are uniquely motivated to advance positive change in their communities and create a better world for their children.



Parent Leadership

At Families First, our mission is to bring parents of young children together in their communities to strengthen their parenting knowledge, skills, and support systems. And because parents are experts on their own children and communities, we also know that they are the most effective advocates for their community needs.

Now we are using what we've learned from years of parent leadership efforts—and decades of working with parents—to launch our new Parent Leadership program this fall. The program builds on the impact of the Power of Parenting program by offering parents the opportunity to continue engaging with Families First in order to drive sustainable impact and positive community change. Parents participate in leadership and parenting advocacy trainings, receive mentorship from other parents in leadership positions, and carry out a project that benefits families in their community. Follow Eva's journey in the graphic to the right to see how parents can engage in the various leadership opportunities offered through Families First.



POWER OF PARENTING PROGRAM

Eva joined our 12-session parenting education program, guided by a Parenting Educator, to strengthen her parenting knowledge, skills, and support systems.

She became a **Parent Leader** in the program, helping with logistics and program retention by calling participants.

PARENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Eva then decided to continue her parent leadership journey and joined our Parent Leadership program designed to elevate the vital role that parents play as leaders in their communities.

Leadership Development Training



In the first three months of the program, Eva gained new skills through trainings on topics like parenting advocacy, public speaking, and project management.

Community Impact Projects

After completing the trainings, Eva began working on a Community Impact Project in a small group.

Together with their community partner, the team created a Family Advisory Council for parents to influence early childhood policies, procedures, and family services.



PARENT AMBASSADORS

Now Eva can apply to be a part of Families First's team in one of two Parent Ambassador positions:

Leadership Ambassador

In this position, Eva can support the new cohort in the Parent Leadership program, mentoring and coaching them as they work on their Community Impact Projects.

Outreach Ambassador

Or Eva could work with staff from Families First and our partner organizations to recruit new parents to join the Power of Parenting program.





Parent Profile

ROSEMARY ADORNO

Rosemary Adorno is a proud mother of four children, two older sons, ages 16 and 17, and a pair of six-and-a-half-year-old twins. She is Puerto Rican, born and raised in Boston, and she and her family currently live in Roxbury.

Rosemary was introduced to Families First through another mom who was taking the Power of Parenting program at Urban Edge in Roxbury. She was eager to join the program, but as a single mother with two young twins, going places and doing things was almost never easy.

The Power of Parenting program allowed her to bond with other parents, learn new parenting strategies, and discover her strengths as a mother and a leader—all while her children were being taken care of by Jumpstart staff.

"I used to feel that I was going through this all by myself. As a society, we walk by people and never know that we are in the same boat with them. Since I've become involved in this program, it's been great to connect with other parents. It instills a sense of family, and I still talk with some of the parents today," Rosemary said.

After the Power of Parenting program, Rosemary said she became a better advocate for her children. When her son was having trouble at school, she stood up and became his advocate, making sure that children with different learning styles did not slip through the cracks.

In the fall of 2019, Rosemary joined the Parent Leadership Academy—an initiative that has now grown into Families First's new Parent Leadership program. She attended leadership workshops and professional skill-building trainings based on six core competencies, including facilitation, communication, planning, resourcefulness, collaboration, and goal setting.

"Nowadays I'm extremely involved, an advocate, and a strong parent that will continue to strive for the best. I help others realize the same strengths within themselves," she shared.

Now Rosemary is joining Families First's Team as a Leadership Ambassador—offering mentorship and support to our newest Parent Leaders.

On October 16th, Rosemary was honored at Families First's Breakfast Benefit with the Gayle Dublin Award, an award given every year to a parent who continues to inspire us. She shared with us her transformational experience, as she describes it, "from a quiet wallflower to a strong advocate for my family and my community's needs."

“ *I used to be a quiet wallflower. Now I'm a strong advocate for my family and my community.* **”**

Did You Miss It?

Families First brought together parents, supporters, and corporate and community leaders to celebrate the many ways that parenting IS leadership during our very first virtual

Families First Breakfast Benefit.

We highlighted parents, like Rosemary, who are undeniable leaders and agents of change within their family and community.

If you missed it, don't worry! You can view here:
<https://www.families-first.org/breakfast2020>



FAMILIES FIRST

9 Galen Street, Suite 400

Watertown, MA 02472

FAMILIES FIRST & CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Families First has always believed that together we can do more. That is why we have operated under a partnership-based model for 15 years. Because we recognize that our community partnerships are one of our strongest assets, we deliver the Power of Parenting™ program at neighborhood-based sites like childcare centers and housing developments. Now the new Parent Leadership program will feature parents working alongside these community partners; together they will carry out projects that elevate the essential role of parents in shaping systems and improving communities.

We are thrilled to already have key cross-sector partners lined up for this year, including an exciting new partnership with the Boston Universal Pre-K Program run through Boston Public Schools. On top of sponsoring three Power of Parenting programs in the coming year, the Boston Universal Pre-K (UPK) Program will also host two parents from the Parent Leadership program to form a Family Advisory Council. By spreading the word about the citywide initiative to provide free, high-quality preschool for every 4-year-old living in Boston, these parents will have the potential to benefit hundreds of additional families across Boston. As a result, more children will enroll in Pre-K, ensuring them a strong start to their education.

Families First is also a new organizational member of the Boston UPK Advisory Committee, whose goal is to guide larger, systemwide implementation and policy development. This is a step that we eagerly look forward to as we begin reimagining our role within the community to maximize our collective results.

Together, with cross-sector partners like Boston Universal Pre-K, our combined efforts will have an even greater impact on supporting children and their families. We deeply value these collaborations because, as our Director of Programming, Magda Rodriguez, says, "Cross-sector partnerships are the vehicle by which sustainable change takes place."



“*Cross-sector partnerships are the vehicle by which sustainable change takes place.*”