

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

FISCAL YEAR 2020
JULY 1, 2019 – JUNE 30, 2020



FAMILIES
FIRST



LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on a year like no other, we find ourselves in awe of the resiliency of parents, our organization, and this community. It is no exaggeration to say that parents are among the superheroes of our present time, as they transcend incredible hardship while continuing to find ways to support their children and make their communities stronger.

Thanks to continued support from our incredible network of donors and volunteers, Families First was able to adapt our Power of Parenting program, alumni services, and parent leadership activities to a new virtual format. The expertise of our staff allowed us to innovate rapidly, and our close relationships with parents ensured that our programming was informed and directly aligned with their current needs.

Our ability to offer high-quality virtual programming has meant that parents can continue to build strong, stable relationships with their children as well as social support systems and leadership

and advocacy skills. As a result, parents are better equipped to navigate the current crisis, support their children's development, and help build a stronger community.

Over the past year, Families First heeded the growing calls within our community and beyond to acknowledge and dismantle our nation's deeply-rooted systems of injustice that continue to affect so many of the families who engage in our programs. In the coming years, we are committed to doing our part to disrupt these damaging systems, fully acknowledging that racial equity is critical to our mission and vision. We commit to the internal work we need to do to make diversity, equity, and inclusion an integral part of the entire organization.

Our new business plan presents an opportunity to grow our programs in Greater Boston and beyond. We are excited about the work ahead as we continue to grow our programs and launch our more fully developed evaluation plans.

Healthy, vibrant communities start with strong families. We are all members of this community, and so we thank you for your shared commitment to this work.

Sue Covitz, Executive Director
Dr. J.D. LaRock, Board Chair

REPORT OVERVIEW

Mission

Families First brings parents of young children **together** in their communities to **strengthen** their parenting knowledge, skills, and social support systems.

Vision

Every parent is strong and supported.
Every child is thriving and resilient.
Every community benefits from the power of parents.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

POWER OF PARENTING PROGRAM

Our 12-session parenting education and support program helps parents embrace their role as the most important force in their children's learning and development.



256

parents engaged, benefiting
approximately
540 children



16

Power of Parenting programs
offered, including **6** in-person
programs and **10**
virtual.

IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Due to COVID-19, Families First pivoted to virtual programming, offering programs online to continue to meet parents' needs. Read more about our pivot to virtual on Page 5.

Parent Leadership & Alumni Events

In FY20, we engaged **37** parents through our parent leadership activities. **10** parents graduated from our Parent Leadership Academy, and we reached **35** alumni through **4** events that were planned and co-facilitated by Parent Leaders themselves.

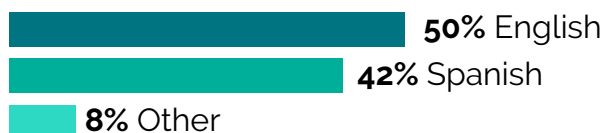


PROGRAM EVALUATION

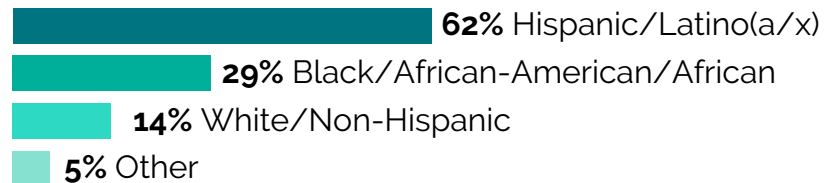
Parent Demographics

- **91%** Female
- **87%** Low Income
- **71%** Ages 26-40
- **46%** Single Parents

Native Language



Race/Ethnicity



Parent Outcomes

Families First's outcomes are based on the **Protective Factors framework** developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Research shows that when we focus on these factors, **positive outcomes**—such as enhanced child development and stronger families—are more likely.

Parents who completed the Power of Parenting program reported the following **improvements** related to the Protective Factors:

91%

of parents gained **knowledge** about parenting

A **knowledgeable** parent can better understand and therefore better support the **social and emotional needs** of their children.

90%

of parents have more **parental resilience**

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

90%

of parents built **social connections**

A parent who is **connected to other parents** is able to grow their network to support their family.

100%

of parents were offered **concrete support**

- Connection to resources
- Gift cards for virtual programs

A parent whose **basic needs** are met is able to focus more on their family.

PIVOT TO VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

“It’s important for other parents to have access to Families First’s programming, especially now. They give you the tools you need to get creative and figure out what parenting strategies work for your family. It’s very helpful in situations like this.” –Program Alumnus

When the pandemic hit Massachusetts, Families First acted swiftly and decisively. Our staff immediately mobilized to get in touch with the approximately 100 parents currently enrolled in our programs to better understand their needs.

After learning that parents needed immediate support, we involved parents at multiple stages of our pivot to virtual programming to ensure that our new virtual services were aligned with the current needs of families.

Within a matter of weeks, Families First launched a comprehensive COVID-19 Response Plan, which included building and implementing the new virtual Power of Parenting program and providing an array of resources and support for families.

Through our new virtual Power of Parenting program, parents of young children across Boston have a place to talk honestly about their parenting challenges, learn new and effective parenting strategies and ways to manage stress, practice positive parenting, and equip themselves to promote their children’s learning and healthy development. Families First is also providing grocery store gift cards for parents to purchase food and basic needs items, and we are leveraging concrete resources from our community partners to further meet families’ needs.



Engaged **134** parents in virtual programs



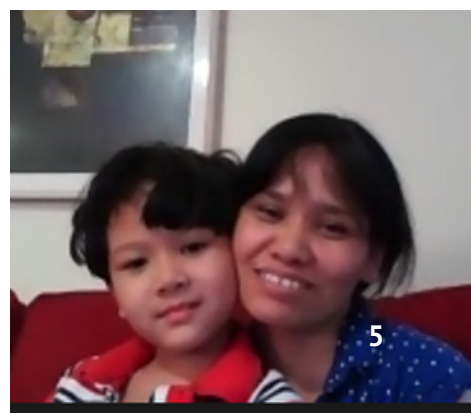
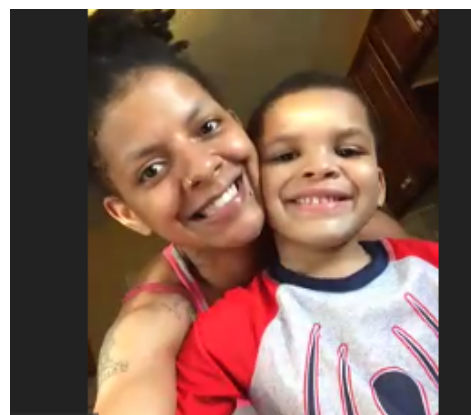
Early focus on **self-care** and **stress reduction**



Provided parents up to **\$100** in gift cards for food / basic needs items



12 Parenting Education hours offered per parent



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

At Families First, we know that parents have the power to shape their children's futures. Yet we are acutely aware of how the systems of injustice in this country keep too many parents from fully accessing their power. Recent political and social events have made it clear that there is much more that needs to be done to break down the longstanding systems of injustice that affect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) within our organization, the early childhood sector, and our nation.

As we move forward, our new business plan is focused on taking measured steps to intentionally increase equity by breaking down the barriers that families face when they attempt to engage with early childhood education and other systems.

In addition, Families First is actively pursuing the following actions to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) practices within our organization:

- Forming a 15-member DEIB committee made up of board members, staff, and parents from our programs. The committee will look at policies and practices for integrating DEIB at all levels of the organization.
- Hiring a consultant to help drive and inform next steps around integrating DEIB principles within our organization.
- Building actionable objectives into staff work plans and our long-term organizational strategic priorities, including designing new hiring processes.

We know that there is so much more we can do as allies and advocates for the families in our programs and communities—and these steps show our steadfast commitment to ensuring that DEIB is an integral part of the entire organization.



STRATEGIC GROWTH

Chelsea
★ New City

After more than 30 years in the parenting education field, Families First has vast experience with neighborhood-based collaborations and partnerships. This year, we began our strategic growth, increasing the number of programs offered in the City of Boston and expanding to a new city: the City of Chelsea.

Over the past year, Families First collaborated with **13** neighborhood-based partner organizations. Additionally, we offered **3** programs to the broader community through a virtual format.

Our FY20 partners included:

Chelsea (new city):

- Chelsea-Revere Family Network
- MGH Chelsea
- Chelsea Community Connections Coalition

Dorchester:

- Epiphany School
- Codman Square Health Center

East Boston:

- East Boston Social Centers
- East Boston YMCA

Jamaica Plain:

- The Community Builders

Mattapan:

- Mattapan Head Start
- Mattapan Community Health Center

Roxbury:

- Urban Edge
- METCO, Inc.

South End:

- Nurtury Tremont Street
- South End Community Health Center

Number of programs in FY20:

- 1 program
- 2 programs
- 3+ programs

The City of Boston

Expansion into Chelsea

Families First launched the Power of Parenting program in the City of Chelsea for the first time—engaging a total of 55 parents and impacting an estimated 110 children.

With record-breaking attendance, our partner from the Chelsea Community Connections Coalition said, “This was a huge eye-opener that we needed a program like this in our community.” In the coming years, Families First will continue to expand in the Chelsea area and beyond into communities like Everett and Revere.



“Before, with work and the daily stress of life, I left my kids kind of forgotten. As a father, I thought my role was just to make money, take it home, and that will solve it all...but in this program, I discovered that’s not true. I learned a lot: how to listen to my children, how to appreciate them, and how to work with my partner as well. My relationship with my children has changed a lot, lot, lot!” – Chelsea Parent Leader



Building Our Evidence Capacity

In a concerted effort to move toward becoming an evidence-based model, Families First began partnering with Suffolk University's Applied Developmental Psychology PhD program. This has greatly expanded our capacity for deeper evaluation on the impact of the Power of Parenting Program.

To further increase our capacity, we also participated in Project Evident's Talent Accelerator—a six-month program to build evidence capacity with a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens.



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

Over the past year, support from our corporate and foundation partners has allowed Families First to pivot our services and continue providing critical support for families during the current pandemic. We want to especially thank those funders who have expended additional funds, rolled back restrictions, and sped up decision-making to ensure that organizations like us have the support we need to step up in the community.

Spotlight: Boston Children's Hospital



In 2018, Families First and The Basics were awarded a three-year grant from the Boston Children's Collaboration for Community Health. Since then, Families First and The Basics have worked together to elevate the role of parents in promoting their children's healthy development, school readiness, and life success. Our work has engaged parents in East Boston, Dorchester, Mattapan, and more.

This multi-year investment has helped us leverage additional funding and has increased our ability to launch new partnerships with community-based organizations. To name a few, we have forged new partnerships with Mattapan Head Start, Codman Square Health Center, and the Epiphany Early Learning Center.

As we look to the third and final year of this grant, we are focused on continuing to provide the Power of Parenting program in neighborhoods while also elevating parent leaders who can sustain the impact of our work over the long term. Families First is deeply grateful for Boston Children's Hospital's incredibly strong support of our work, and we look forward to continuing our work together in the year ahead!

Liberty Mutual Foundation



Families First received our first grant from the Liberty Mutual Foundation over this past year. The Foundation has already proven to be an exceptional partner in this work, quickly transitioning to unrestricted funding in the face of the pandemic and granting us additional funding to help meet the needs of families.

Families First is a small organization with a big impact. Steadfast funding partners like the Liberty Mutual Foundation make a big difference—and help amplify our impact in the community. We are proud to partner with the Liberty Mutual Foundation and are truly appreciative of their philanthropic leadership. Thank you!

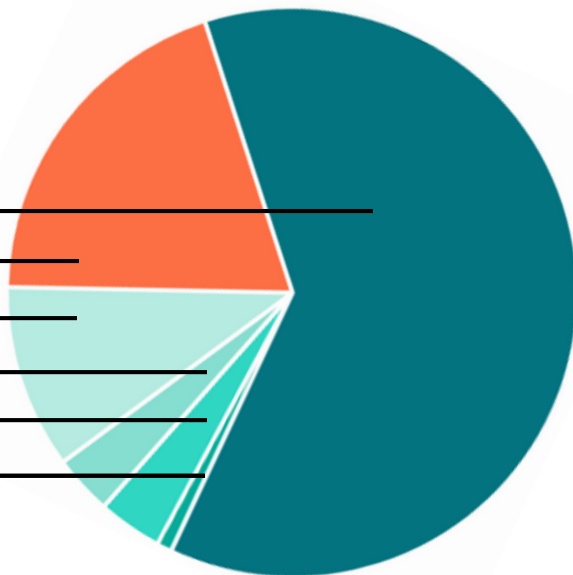
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



July 2019 — June 2020

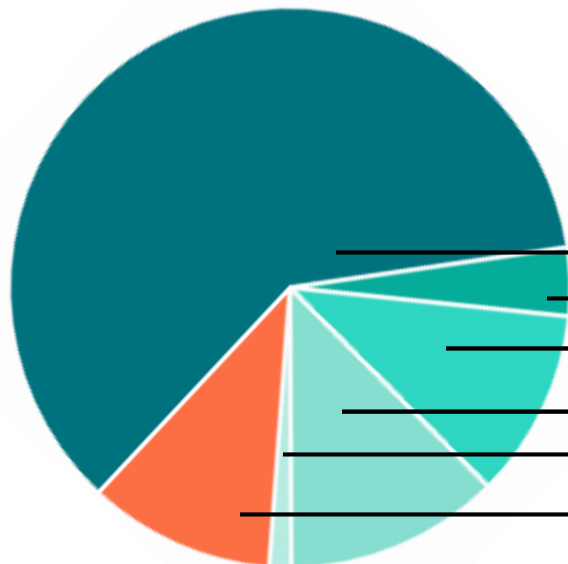
Revenue & Support \$1,235,998

Foundation grants
Individual contributions
Corporate contributions
Program revenue
Investment income
In-Kind donations



Expenses \$1,231,169

Staff salaries
Parenting Educator wages
Payroll taxes & benefits
Rent
Stipends
All other expenses



A photograph of a man with short dark hair, wearing a light green shirt, looking down at a young girl with dark hair and red bows. The girl is smiling and looking towards the camera. The man's hands are visible, holding the girl's hands.

THANK YOU!



FAMILIES FIRST

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