

# annual report 23

**Fiscal Year 2023**

**July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023**



# Leadership Statement

Dear Families First Community,

We are pleased to present our Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023. FY23 was an exciting year at Families First as we continued to expand our programming across the state with a 40% increase in the number of parents reached.

We continue to expand our reach in Greater Boston to impact more parents through new partnerships. We entered Year 2 of our work in Western Mass, expanding to a total of 8 Power of Parenting programs and launching the Ripple Program, formerly the Parent Leadership Program. We remain committed to building our work and presence in Western Mass and will be launching a Western Mass Advisory Committee this year.

We also completed Year 2 of our contract with the MA Department of Early Education and Care to expand the Ripple Program across the state. We trained 190 Parent Leaders, who led 20 Community Impact Projects with local agencies across the state from Berkshire County to Barnstable County. The Ripple Program also took first place and won the audience award at the Zaentz Innovation Challenge through the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Finally, we developed a new 5-year business plan with the help of Community Action Partners (CAP). CAP is a group of volunteers who are alumni of Harvard University's Business School and the Kennedy School. We worked with a phenomenal team that helped us assess how best to expand our high-impact model so we can reach more families. As one of the Parent Ambassadors on the FF team recently remarked, "The Ripple is great, but we should be making waves!" This theme will take us into 2024 as we continue to grow our presence locally and look to expand outside of Massachusetts.

Families First's work will continue to ensure that all parents are strong and supported, every community benefits from the power of parents and that every child is thriving and resilient.

Thank you, and we hope you have a great start to 2024!

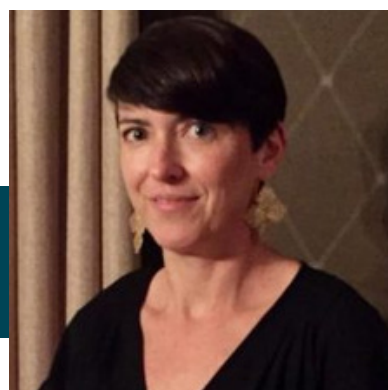
With appreciation,

Sue Covitz  
Executive Director

Eileen Cloherty  
Board Chair



**Sue Covitz**  
Executive Director



**Eileen Cloherty**  
Board Chair

# Our Vision

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

NEW

# Our Mission

Families First **partners with parents to amplify their power** so they can positively impact the lives of children and communities through our groundbreaking programs.



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**Program Highlights** >>>

Families First met all our programmatic goals, engaging **741 parents** across all programs statewide. This is a nearly **40% increase** from the 537 parents engaged in FY22.



# Power of Parenting™

499

Parents Engaged

1,000+  
estimated

Children Benefited

34

Programs

51

Parent Leaders

5

Outreach Ambassadors

13

Program Facilitators



Power of Parenting outcomes are based on the **Protective Factors Framework** developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy and the **Parental Stress Index**. We don't expect parents to report improvement in every area, because many parents enter the program with a strong foundation of knowledge and skills in one or more of these areas.



Resiliency & Family Functioning

94%

IMPROVED IN AT LEAST ONE AREA



Social & Emotional Support

82%

IMPROVED IN AT LEAST TWO AREAS



Nurturing & Attachment



Concrete Support in Times of Need

67%

IMPROVED IN AT LEAST THREE AREAS



Decreased Parenting Stress

# The Ripple Program™

## 197 Parents

engaged, including 79 parents through a contract with the Department of Early Education and Care.

## 5 Leadership Ambassadors

who previously graduated from the programs returned to support the program.

## 20 Community Impact Projects

co-created by 56 parents in collaboration with community-based partner organizations.

As a result of the **TRANSFORMATIONAL** Ripple Program trainings, parents reported that they:



93%

**BELIEVE THEIR OPINION IS IMPORTANT**



87%

**SPEAK UP MORE WHEN THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY**



87%

**HAVE A STRONGER SENSE OF WHO THEY ARE**



87%

**MORE OFTEN LIKE TO HEAR DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW IN A DISCUSSION**



73%

**HAVE MORE GOALS FOR THEIR FUTURE**

"I'm struck by the lasting impact that you [parent leaders] all have had. You have recruited new parent leaders to join you in your communities. You have built new events and new processes and new expectations of the public agencies to work differently with you, whether it's the schools and the teachers or the parks department, which I think is amazing."

– EEC Commissioner Amy Kershaw



## Alumni Events

In FY23, we reached **163** alumni through **11** events — including parent cafés, workshops, and a holiday event — that were planned and co-facilitated by our Leadership Ambassadors.

## Alumni Spotlight

Families First's alumni include thousands of parents who have participated in our programs. Miranda Norman is an alumna of both the Power of Parenting and the Ripple programs.

"I love the way Families First partners with parents. They don't just talk at families. The whole program is about collaborating.

"Before the Ripple program, I always shied away from policy and advocacy. Now I'm part of an advocacy team, and I'm not shy. I signed up for the Early Childhood Agenda as a Lived Experience Leader. When I go to meetings and advocate for policies, I bring my kids. When I learn something, there is a ripple effect for my kids because they are learning how to use their voices too.

"I always felt I had the tools, but I wasn't confident to use them. Now I feel like I'm learning more every day and I see how that works effectively for my family and my community."



**- Miranda Norman, Parent Ambassador**



# Power of Parenting Research Study

Families First continues to invest in high-quality evaluation. Through a partnership with Suffolk University's Applied Developmental Psychology program, we analyzed data from over 500 parents across 3 years of Power of Parenting programs.

## Preliminary Findings



Results showed statistically significant improvements in pre/post surveys across all outcomes assessed:

- Family Resilience
- Concrete Support
- Social Support
- Parent and Child Attachment
- Parenting Distress
- Child Difficulty
- Knowledge of Parenting



Results were consistent across both Power of Parenting curricula for birth-age 3 and ages 3-8.



Overall, there was a positive association between parents' participation (sessions attended) and their growth in social support, concrete support, and attachment.



# The Award-Winning Ripple Program



In April 2023, the Ripple Program (formerly called the Parent Leadership Program) won the first place and the audience choice awards at the [Saul Zaentz Early Education Innovation Challenge](#) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education from among 100 applicants nationally.

Senior Director of National Strategy Magda Rodriguez and Family Engagement Manager Tiffany Benson pitched the Ripple Program to a live audience, a panel of judges, and thousands more watching online via livestream.

Winning the Zaentz Innovation Challenge is confirmation of the need to elevate and center the voices of parents in order to inform equitable and inclusive practices that benefit all children and families. From 13 parent leaders in year one, to nearly 200 parent leaders trained in FY23, parents are leading a movement of change across the state — and agencies are welcoming them.

We are inspired by the parents who are working alongside community agencies as equal partners in changing systems. We look forward to the opportunity to continue to expand the Ripple Program in Massachusetts and beyond so that even more children can benefit from solutions created by parents and agencies. We will also launch a study with NYU Metro Center focusing on how parents contribute to systemic changes through Community Impact Projects.



" Ample research shows that parents who are given leadership opportunities experience transformative change in their lives. We need further research, though, on how collaboration between families and agencies can change institutions, improve service delivery, reinvigorate democracy, and support thriving children. The innovative and unique Families First model offers the perfect opportunity to understand how building dual capacity among parent leaders and agency staff leads to these critical impacts."

- Joanna Geller, Ph.D.  
Director of Policy, Research, and Evaluation

# New Business Plan

This year, with support from consultants from Harvard University's Community Action Partners, we created a new business plan to extend over the next five years. The 9-month planning process, which wrapped in May 2023, included an extensive landscape analysis that led to the creation of new goals for the organization.

The 5-year plan focuses on offering more Power of Parenting programs regionally and expanding the Ripple Program nationally. We are also extending our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging through additional innovations, including offering our programs in more languages.

Through this new business plan, and with parents driving change in their families and communities, we will partner with parents and other organizations through our research-based, groundbreaking programs both locally and nationally. We will also expand our role as thought leaders in parenting support and family engagement.

## Our organizational goals are as follows:

**1**

Foster an inclusive and diverse organization that 1) is reflective and responsive to community needs and 2) values and includes parent/participant voices in the design of the programs and the decision-making of the organization.

**2**

Strengthen, innovate, and expand the Power of Parenting and the Ripple programs through regional bases and large-scale partnerships in Massachusetts and beyond.

**3**

Implement a research-based plan to monitor and assess our programs to refine their effectiveness, demonstrate impact, and guide our expansion plans.

**4**

Build a sustainable organizational infrastructure with a 5-year financial plan and aligned marketing strategy to support and drive expansion.

# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

We continue to center our work in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) by building our ongoing DEIB work into all aspects of our organization. DEIB continues to be the number one organizational goal across departments.



## **Messaging**

We continually update messaging across the organization to be strength-based and aligned with the latest research. We also gather input and feedback from parents. Parents informed the update to our mission and vision as well as the renaming of the Ripple Program.



## **Human Resources**

To build on last year's investment in HR capacity, we surveyed staff related to flexible/hybrid work to inform policy changes, finalized staff and supervisor competencies with input from the team, implemented quarterly check-ins, and updated our annual performance review tool.



## **Program Quality Control**

We reviewed the Ripple Program curriculum to ensure that DEIB principles were embedded in all sessions and continued to offer Spanish interpretation at some of the Ripple Program sessions. Ongoing data collection from parents helped us to learn more about their experiences to improve our programs. We also built the concept for the new Parent Representative Committee.



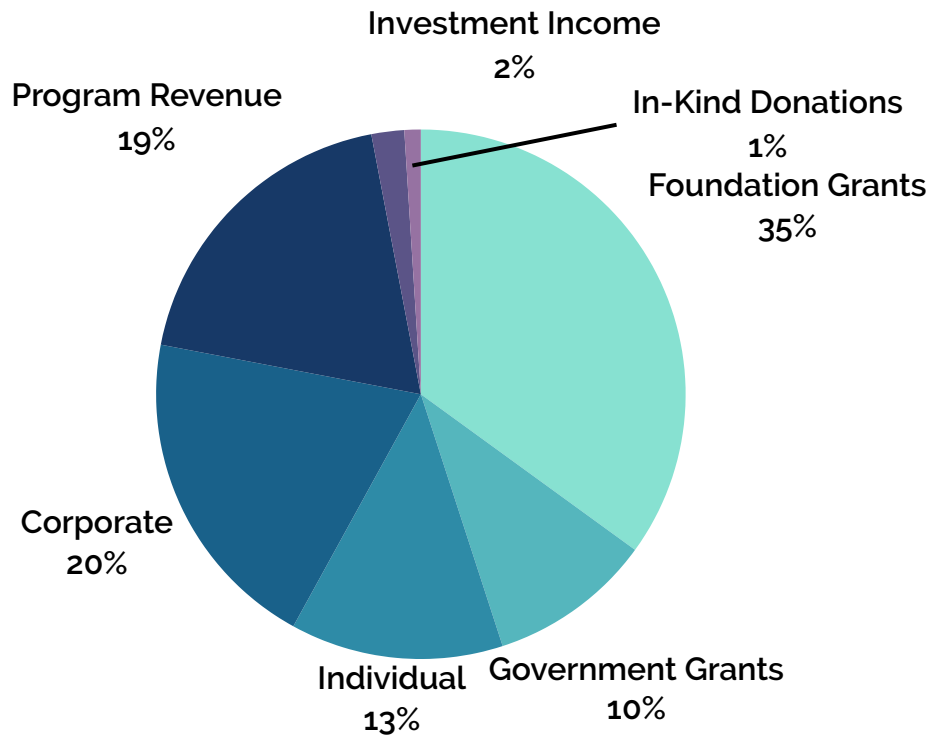
## **Evaluation**

We updated parent feedback surveys to be more inclusive and are working toward creating more ways for parents to see and access program data. We also updated the DEIB evaluation plan.

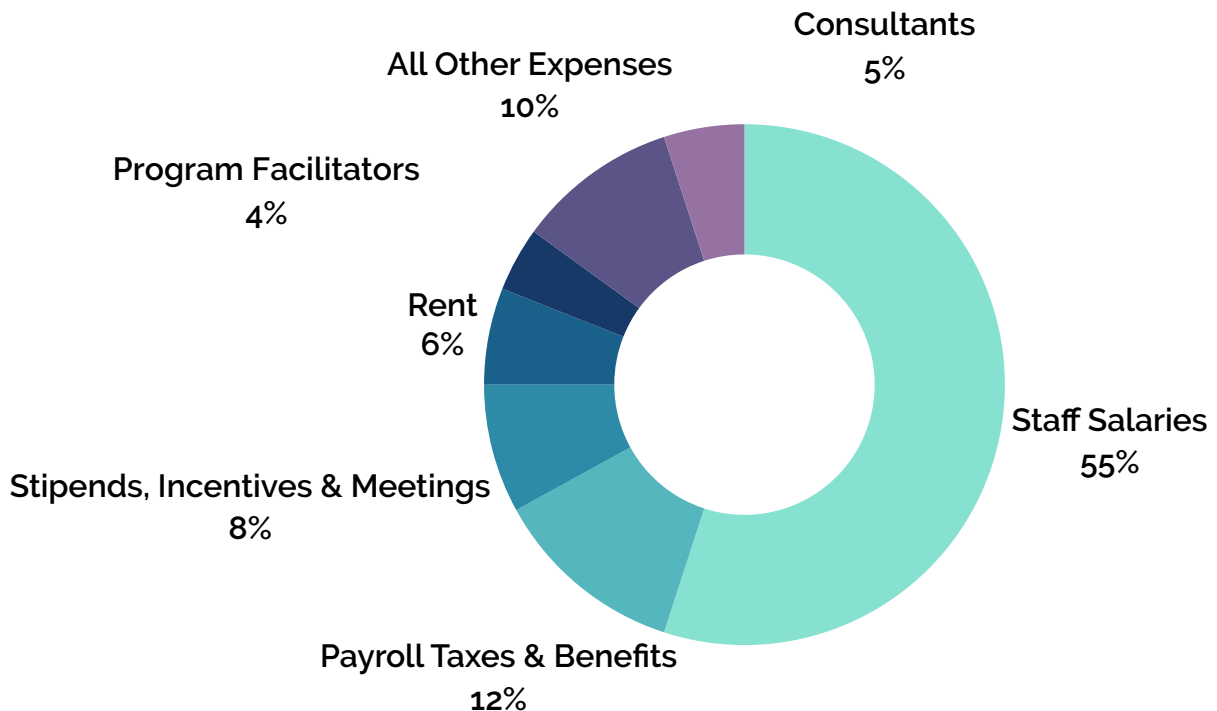
# Financial Overview

July 2022 - June 2023

Revenue \$2,175,686



Expenses \$2,168,518



# Community Partnerships

Cross-sector partnerships are pivotal to our program model so that parents are connected to resources, support, and opportunities in their communities. For a complete list of our many partners, please [visit our website](#).



# Thank You!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Eileen Cloherty, Chair	Michelle Padden Dragone
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Milagros Arbaje-Thomas	Erin Liang
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Michael Caljouw	Judith Remondi
Colleen Chapman	Jason Soto
Gary Creem	Adam Steinberg
Mirella Cruz	Ally Turner
Ariel Cudkowicz	Adebola Yakubu-Owolewa

## OUR TEAM

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Yajaira Baez	Wendy Friedman	Ray Perkins
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Kamely De La Cruz	Yesenia Menedez-Sanchez	Jennifer Zocco



**THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS.**  
**For a full list of foundation and corporate support, please**  
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FamiliesFirst



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