



2025

Families First

Spring



Year in Review with Maridel Perdomo, Senior Director of Programs

As she reflects on her first year at Families First, Senior Director of Programs Maridel Perdomo speaks with deep gratitude for the relationships she's built and the impact she's seen.

“One of the highlights has been developing strong relationships with the rest of the Families First team. They're incredibly dedicated and have taught me so much. I feel proud to be a part of this group.”

Connecting with parents has also been a powerful experience. **“Meeting families and hearing how the program has supported them—it reminds me this work is about all of us, together.”** She recalls one mom, Gloria, who became a Parent Ambassador after participating in several programs. **“Her son loved the activities and encouraged her to keep going—he'd say, ‘Mom, it's time for your Zoom class!’ That's the kind of impact that sticks with you.”**

In her first year, Maridel helped implement updates to the curriculum and began addressing translation gaps to better reach families. **“We're making our materials more accessible in multiple languages, and while we still have work to do, we're committed,”** she says. A recent program offered in Mandarin was especially meaningful: a parent shared how grateful she was to finally see a parenting program in her language. **world,”** she explains. **“That's part of life and part of the work.”**

Maridel also led internal growth, including new strategies for alumni engagement and more efficient recruitment practices to ease the workload on staff.

Adapting to change has been a key theme. **“We've had to stay flexible—to respond to shifting needs in our communities and the world,”** she explains. **“That's part of life and part of the work.”**

As she looks ahead, Maridel is excited about expanding Families First's reach through new partnerships across Massachusetts and strengthening our Power of Parenting and Ripple programs. Her leadership is guided by deep collaboration. **“I believe in teamwork. It really does take a village.”**

What keeps her motivated? **“The families. The mission. When it gets tough, I think about the kids and what they need—and that brings my energy right back.”**

Her message to the community: **“We need each other. The more we work together, the more we can do for families. That's what this work is all about.”**



Community Impact Project Spotlight: Families First Evaluation

We are excited to highlight the Families First Evaluation Community Impact Project (CIP). **Community Impact Projects, one of the pillars of Families First's Ripple Program, uplift the essential role of parents in shaping equitable early childhood systems.** Parents and staff at partner organizations co-create projects that improve programs and systems for families. Our Senior Evaluation Manager, Jane Carpenter, and Graduate Student Intern from the Boston College School of Social Work, Katie Panzer, led the project in collaboration with Parent Leaders Irmine, Robert, Tashika, and Sahory. This passionate team worked to strengthen the way Families First evaluates and learns from its programs. By centering participant voices and using data in thoughtful, equity-centered ways, the project aimed to ensure that program evaluation is an inclusive and effective part of how we serve families.

The overarching goal of the project was to center parent voices in the process of making meaning from evaluation findings – specifically, findings from the recent [New York University \(NYU\) study](#) on the impact of the Ripple Program on parents and partner organizations.

“My experience working on the CIP has given me the strength and courage to be more outspoken. I enjoyed my experience very much. Thank you for this amazing opportunity. I miss my group so much and I look forward to more opportunities with Families First.”
—Parent Leader

Over the course of five months, the team took a phased approach to this work. The project began with a review of the full report from NYU. The Parent Leaders outlined key findings from the study, with the goal of creating a one-page report to share the study results with parents. Next, the team worked together to design the report to make it appealing and accessible to parents. **By the end of the project, the team produced several key deliverables, including a flyer summarizing the study findings (on the next page) and a final presentation** on the project on to the Community Impact Project cohort.

To bring this work to life, the project team drew on a wide range of skills, including:



Evaluation and data analysis



Critical thinking



Graphic design



Communication



Facilitation

Their work had a meaningful impact on bringing parent voices into the evaluation work at Families First. **This project helped Families First build a foundation for the continued involvement of parents in the evaluation process to improve outcomes, foster deeper engagement, and ensure that every family's voice is heard and valued.**



Amplifying Parents' Voices Through The Ripple Program



In the Ripple Program, parents come together to learn and strengthen their skills in parent leadership and have a voice.



2024 NYU Study Results

- 95% of alumni reported sharing resources and information with other parents, and 82% communicated with someone to advocate for an issue they cared about.
- Alumni showed personal growth and transformation in many different areas of their lives.

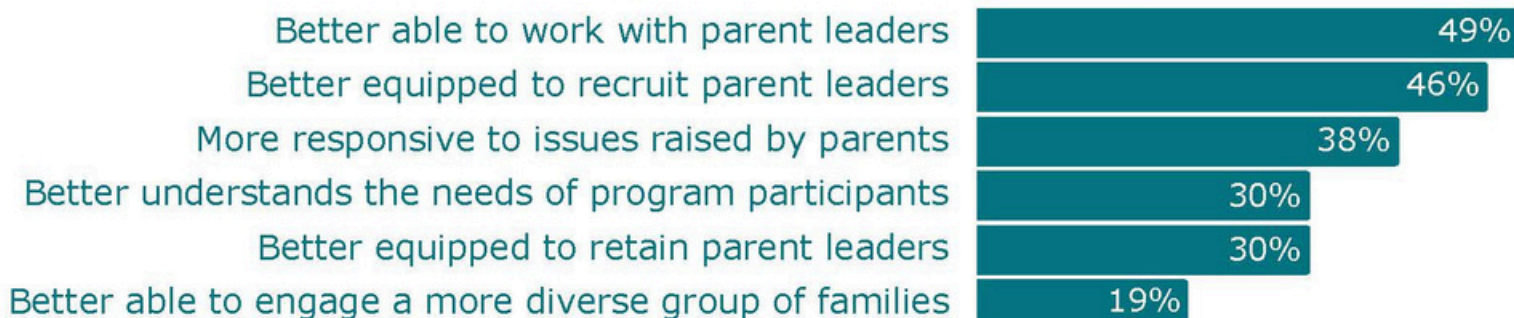
"The [Ripple Program] has boosted my confidence to find my voice and given me the power to advocate for my child's educational needs unapologetically."

-Ripple Program Graduate



Agencies that participated in the Ripple Program felt that they were able to be more responsive to the needs of parents, and had a deeper understanding of those needs.

The graph below shows how staff perceived changes in agency family engagement and leadership as result of the Ripple Program.



Get Ready for Families First FEST – Coming to Western Mass and Boston!

Mark your calendars—Families First FEST is back and bigger than ever! Join us for two unforgettable days of family fun, community connection, and joyful celebration. We're bringing the energy to **Springfield on Saturday, May 10** and **Boston on Saturday, June 7**. You won't want to miss a moment.

What's in store? Picture live performances, music that gets everyone dancing, hands-on arts & crafts, face painting, exciting raffles, delicious refreshments, and an incredible lineup of local organizations sharing valuable family resources. These events are all about celebrating community, creating positive childhood experiences, and supporting parents and caregivers in a vibrant, welcoming atmosphere.

Last year's FEST in Boston drew over 1,000 attendees—and this year, we're going even bigger! Whether you're in Western Mass or Boston, bring your family, bring your friends, and come experience the joy, connection, and inspiration that make Families First FEST so special.

Stay tuned for the full schedules and other surprises. These are the events of the season—you'll want to be there!





Families First FEST Western Mass

Unite, Laugh, Explore – Family Fun for Everyone!

**FREE & OPEN
TO ALL**

**Saturday
May 10th, 2025
1-4 PM**

- MAGIC SHOW
- ARTS & CRAFTS
- COMMUNITY RESOURCES
- FACE PAINTING
- RAFFLE PRIZES
- REFRESHMENTS
- AND MORE!

REGISTER



Brightwood Elementary School
255 Plainfield St, Springfield



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@FamiliesFirstWesternMA



@FamiliesFirstMA



Families First FEST Boston

Unite, Laugh, Explore – Family Fun for Everyone!

**FREE & OPEN
TO ALL**

**Saturday
June 7th, 2025
1-4 PM**

 **Reggie Lewis Center
1350 Tremont St, Boston**

- LIVE MUSIC & PERFORMANCES
- ARTS & CRAFTS
- COMMUNITY RESOURCES
- FACE PAINTING
- RAFFLE PRIZES
- REFRESHMENTS
- WALLY THE
- GREEN MONSTER
- AND MORE!

REGISTER



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