



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2025 | July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

Dear Families First Community,

Fiscal Year 2025 was certainly a tumultuous year for families and Families First. Despite the current challenges parents and the nonprofit sector face, we continue to meet the needs of families through our high-impact programming. We reached well over 800 parents last year!

Supporting parents through these times lays a strong foundation for parents to achieve the best possible outcomes for their children no matter what life brings their way. We will never waiver from our commitment and belief in the importance of this work.

Because Families First is a trusted member of the community, many parents come to us for critical resources, vetted information, and peer support. When we talk to parents, we emphasize the need to put their oxygen masks on first because taking care of ourselves builds a resilient mindset for parents and children alike. Emphasizing these skills continues to be critically important.

Last year's challenges and uncertainty have required us to pivot and innovate with limited resources without sacrificing the quality and impact of our work. We continue to be amazed and impressed by the incredible team at Families First. We have seen our staff members adapt to a rapidly changing landscape, launch new partnerships with organizations across the state, and take on new roles when needed to best serve our mission.

We have also seen many of our partners in this space come together to leverage assets and resources through shared proposals and programs. We are excited by the sector collaborating in new and innovative ways to move the work forward together. We will continue to offer opportunities for parents to become leaders in and outside of Families First.

We very much appreciate Families First's many supporters and our Board of Directors, who have all stepped up to ensure that Families First delivers on our mission.

Thank you to this incredible community and to all the families who continue to move our work forward.

With gratitude,



Sue Covitz
Executive Director



Ally Turner
Chair of the Board of Directors



Parents have the power to shape their children's futures and make their communities stronger.

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.

OUR VISION

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

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



THE POWER OF PARENTING



Advancing our Programs Across Massachusetts

We strengthened the efficiency of our **program staffing model through the promotion of four team members—Rosemary Adorno, Jennifer Baez, Arpan Barua, and Yamaris Rivera**—to Program Manager roles. In this capacity, they lead the cultivation of strategic partnerships, plan and implement programs, and deepen the reach and impact of our work across Greater Boston and Western Massachusetts.

Greater Linguistic Access

We advanced our commitment to **language equity** by translating program materials into Vietnamese. We also launched our first Power of Parenting using materials in Simplified Chinese with simultaneous interpretation in Mandarin. This marked an important step in expanding access for **multilingual families**.

National Recognition

A major highlight this year was the **publication of our study**, “Evaluation of Family Protective Factors and Parenting Stress Following the Strengths-Based Power of Parenting Program.” The research, which demonstrates our **Power of Parenting program's impact**, was featured in *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Science*, a leading peer-reviewed journal of the **National Council on Family Relations**.

This recognition affirms what we see every day: **parents gaining confidence, connection, and tools to strengthen their families**.

The manuscript presents promising evidence that POP supports:

- Statistically significant **growth in the five protective factors that promote family well-being**
- Statistically significant **decreases in parenting stress**

THE POWER OF PARENTING: PROGRAM IMPACT



578

Parents Engaged



estimated
1,176

Children Benefited



45

Programs



59

Parent Leaders



24

Ambassadors



15

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.



Parental Resilience

96%

IMPROVED IN AT
LEAST **ONE** AREA



Social Connections

84%

IMPROVED IN AT
LEAST **TWO** AREAS



Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

64%

IMPROVED IN AT
LEAST **THREE** AREAS



Concrete Support in Times of Need



Social & Emotional Competence of Children



Decreased Parenting Stress

THE RIPPLE PROGRAM



The Ripple Program continued to expand opportunities for **parent leadership and community-centered impact**.

One standout project was led by our **Western Massachusetts fellows**, who organized an educational session for parents on understanding the **Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process**. Families gained important knowledge to navigate special education services and advocate for their children's needs with greater confidence.

7

Ripple Programs

7

Community Impact
Projects (CIPs)

108

Parents Engaged

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

94%

HAVE
MORE
GOALS FOR
THEIR
FUTURE

94%

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

87%

HAVE A
STRONGER
SENSE OF
WHO THEY
ARE

84%

SPEAK UP
MORE WHEN
THEY HAVE
SOMETHING
TO SAY

83%

BELIEVE
MORE THAT
THEIR
OPINION IS
IMPORTANT

ALUMNI



Our commitment to families extends well beyond program completion. Families First believes that support should not end when a program does; it should evolve as families grow and their needs change.

This year, we hosted **17 alumni events**, welcoming a total of **257 participants**. These gatherings created meaningful spaces for alumni to reconnect, access continued learning opportunities, and celebrate milestones together. Through workshops, family-centered activities, and community-building events, families remained engaged, supported, and connected long after graduating from our programs.

In addition, the **Parent Representative Committee** continued to grow and deepen its impact. This committee played a critical role in elevating parent voices, strengthening leadership pathways, and shaping organizational decision-making. Alumni leaders shared insights from their lived experiences, helping to inform program improvements and ensure Families First remains responsive, relevant, and grounded in the needs of the families we serve.

Together, these alumni engagement efforts reinforce Families First's belief that **parents are lifelong partners in our work**. By investing in sustained connection and leadership opportunities, we empower families to not only thrive within their own homes but also create positive change within their communities.





FAMILIES FIRST FEST: CELEBRATING COMMUNITY IN WESTERN MA AND BOSTON

This year marked a major milestone with the **launch of our first Families First FEST in Western MA** and our **second annual Families First FEST in Boston**. Both events brought families, partners, and local organizations together in celebration of community, connection, and positive childhood experiences.

Western MA's First Families First FEST

On May 10, more than 300 community members joined us for a joyful day of arts and crafts, face painting, games, a 360 photo booth, raffles, and a LEGO scavenger hunt. Families enjoyed a magical performance by Jason Purdy and a special visit from Boomer, the Springfield Thunderbirds' mascot. The event also featured 40 local vendors offering resources, services, and goods, creating a warm space for families to connect and engage.

Celebrating Together in Boston

In addition to the success in Western MA, Boston hosted its second Families First FEST on June 7, drawing more than 500 community members. This celebration continued the momentum from last year, with families coming together to enjoy performances, activities, and connections with local partners. The enthusiasm and turnout reaffirmed how meaningful these events are for families across the region.



UPDATE TO OUR BUSINESS PLAN: MEETING THE MOMENT

As we entered a period of existential challenge for the nonprofit sector, we focused on navigating uncertainty with purpose—finding the most effective ways to **support families, sustain our impact, and strengthen our foundation for the future.** We made updates to our business plan to reflect that focus and commitment.

At the same time, the **need for our programs was and continues to be more urgent than ever.** Rising economic insecurity and systemic inequities—exacerbated by recent social and political shifts—are increasing parenting stress.

In a virtual parent café, **over 50 parents shared how the current environment is creating additional challenges.** Parents shared fear and concerns for their safety and the well-being of their children.

As trusted community members, we stepped up to meet families' needs by:

- **Updating our content** to help parents address their discrimination and children's fears
- **Connecting families to essential resources and services** through our strong partner network
- Hosting additional Parent Cafés for **shared learning and support**
- Accelerating the launch of a **new resource portal for alumni**
- **Elevating the role of Parent Ambassadors** to support families in their communities



“Beyond personal growth, I’ve come to see the importance of parenting support and leadership opportunities in building stronger communities. Being part of this program has empowered me in ways I hadn’t anticipated. Families First inspired me to feel confident standing up against hate speech.”

- Program Participant



POLICY WORK: CENTERING PARENT LEADERSHIP

This year, we began the groundwork for a parent-led approach to advocacy and policy primarily in the state of Massachusetts. This year centered on structure, clarity, and purpose, with parents guiding the development of our vision for future policy engagement.

Parent and Staff Partnership

We launched the Families First Policy Committee, a collaborative group made up of parents and staff who are committed to elevating family voices in advocacy. Parent leaders **Shareef Smith, Jewel Melendez, and Nayanny Bello**, working alongside staff members **Jenn Baez, Tiffany Benson, Arpan Barua, Sue Covitz, Katie Panzer, and Israel Rivera**, created our foundational advocacy statement and began outlining the policy pillars that will guide our work.

The group also designed a process for reviewing advocacy requests, assessing alignment with our mission, and ensuring that the parent voice remains central in every decision.

Our Three Tiers of Advocacy

To guide our work, the committee adopted a three-tiered model:

Tier 1

Resource Sharing

Connecting families to information from trusted partners.

Tier 2

Civic Engagement

Supporting parents in learning about and participating in civic processes.

Tier 3

Organizational Advocacy

Joining coalitions and supporting policies that reflect our mission and policy pillars.

This year, **most efforts focused on Tiers 1 and 3**. We developed new internal procedures and defined our policy pillars so that future decisions can be more intentional and aligned with what matters most to families.

Expanding Family Access to Resources

A significant achievement was the **creation of our Massachusetts Resources List**, now available on our website. It offers families support across key areas, such as food security, housing, immigration, legal help, financial services, mental health, and advocacy organizations.

This was a year of **building a foundation**. These early steps set the stage for deeper and more coordinated advocacy work in the future. With **parents leading the way**, this is the start of a growing effort to **strengthen the systems that shape family life in Massachusetts**.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING (DEIB) UPDATE



Families First continues to prioritize being an **inclusive, equitable, and diverse community**. We value and emphasize the wisdom and expertise of those closest to the issues and solutions in their communities. Policies and programs must incorporate the **voices and ideas of families**. At Families First, we work to ensure that we are doing that in all areas of our work, from program input to the Board of Directors.

When we have asked families how we can be more inclusive and respect the diversity of the people in our programs, they told us to be sure our **programs are accessible to all families**. That pushed us to translate our program materials into different languages. We launched our first Power of Parenting program for Vietnamese-speaking families in 2025 and will be hiring a Portuguese-speaking facilitator next year.

We maintain our conviction and commitment to fostering an environment, organization, and program that values Diversity, Equity Inclusion, and Belonging and know that we will not realize our vision unless these values and principles are emphasized and supported throughout the organization.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

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 partners, please [visit our website](#).



Our Team

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THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS.
For a full list of foundation and corporate support, please
[visit our website.](#)

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