



2026

Families First

Summer



Honoring Jasarah Burgos Dilán: A Champion for Families in Western Massachusetts



For years, **Jasarah Burgos Dilán** has been a steadfast supporter of Families First. As a graduate of our program, she understands the impact of Families First firsthand. Through her resilience, leadership, and unwavering commitment to her community, she has also become a passionate advocate for children and caregivers across Western Massachusetts. We are proud to recognize her many contributions, her spirit of collaboration, and the countless ways she has helped connect families, organizations, and opportunities in service of stronger communities.

Jasarah's commitment to families is both professional and deeply personal. Having grown up in Puerto Rico and rebuilt her life in Massachusetts after Hurricane Maria, she has transformed early challenges into a source of strength and compassion. Her journey is an inspiring example for the Western Massachusetts community and a testament to the power of perseverance and service.

Our connection with Jasarah began when she participated in Families First's **Power of Parenting** program as a parent. Recognizing its value, she remained engaged and became one of the program's most enthusiastic

champions. She has consistently encouraged other families to participate and has generously collaborated with us by helping provide space, childcare, and meals for programs and gatherings.

Jasarah's support extends far beyond formal roles. As an active member of our **Western Massachusetts Advisory Council**, she continually offers thoughtful feedback and innovative ideas that help us better serve families throughout the region. She is always seeking opportunities to collaborate, connecting Families First with organizations, potential partners, and grant opportunities that have strengthened our work and expanded our impact. Even without being asked, she serves as a **true ambassador for Families First**, regularly introducing people and possibilities that benefit the families we serve.

In her work, Jasarah draws upon lived experience to build trust and foster meaningful relationships. She believes that **transparency, accountability, and equity** are the foundations of lasting change, and she works tirelessly to strengthen connections among families, schools, service providers, and communities while expanding access to essential supports.

We also extend our heartfelt congratulations to Jasarah on her role as **Executive Director of Enlace de Familia**. This new role is a fitting recognition of her dedication and leadership, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate and support one another in our shared mission of helping families thrive.



Nurturing Parents, Strengthening Community

This spring, Families First was honored to bring our **Power of Parenting** program to families connected with **the Madrina Project**, whose mission is to support mothers experiencing **postpartum depression**. Together, we welcomed **16 participants**, most of whom were caring for newborns, making the Birth-3 curriculum a natural fit for the group.

What made this series especially meaningful was the sense of **community and mutual support** that emerged. Alongside mothers and their infants, **two fathers** joined as partners in caregiving, enriching the conversations and reminding us that supporting family well-being is a shared responsibility. Between the discussions, the laughter, and the quiet moments of mothers breastfeeding their babies, we witnessed a side of the program that was both tender and powerful.

The encouragement participants offered one another became the heart of the experience. At Families First, we are intentional about creating programs that foster **lasting connections and support systems**. By strengthening relationships and building

confidence, our programs play an important role in promoting **family mental health**. In fact, 95% of Power of Parenting program graduates report improvement in at least one protective factor that supports positive mental health and family well-being, such as resilience, social connections, or parenting confidence.

This effort was made possible through a true **community collaboration**. The entire team at the Madrina Project supported recruitment and transportation for participating families, while Square One generously provided the meeting space and childcare. Together, we saw firsthand how organizations can come together to surround parents with care and improve outcomes for children.

The impact of the program continued beyond the final session. One participant shared that topics such as self-care, temperament, and child development resonated deeply with him. He attended every session and later expressed interest in joining Families First's **Ripple Program**. Moments like these remind us that when parents find understanding, encouragement, and community, the benefits extend far beyond the program.



A New Space for Community Connection

We are excited to announce that **Families First's Western Massachusetts team has a new home!** Thanks to the generosity and support of the **O'Dell Women's Center**, we now have office space on the second floor of their center at **45 Lyman St in Springfield**.

This new space represents an exciting opportunity for Families First to become even more connected to the Western Massachusetts community. We are grateful to the O'Dell Women's Center for welcoming us and providing this opportunity to join a building filled with organizations dedicated to supporting individuals and families.



Our new office places us alongside several incredible community organizations, including **Dress for Success Western Mass, Mass Hire, O'Dell Women's Center, and It takes a Village**. Being in such close proximity creates new opportunities for collaboration, relationship-building, and connecting families with a broader network of resources and support.

This space will allow us to expand how we serve families across the region. We look forward to using the office to host **meetings, program sessions, graduations, and community gatherings**, opening the door for new ways to bring families together and strengthen our work in Western Massachusetts.

We are so grateful to be part of a team of organizations doing impactful work in Springfield and beyond. We are excited for this next chapter, the relationships we will continue to build, and the many opportunities ahead to support families throughout Western Massachusetts.

Looking Ahead in Western Mass

As we reflect on the close of Fiscal Year 2026, we are incredibly grateful for the growth and progress of our Western Massachusetts work. A special thank you goes to Yamaris Rivera, whose leadership, dedication, and commitment helped carry this work forward through a challenging year. We truly would not have been able to continue building our presence in WMA without her.

We are also grateful for Maritza Martinez's continued support and the important role she has played in strengthening our work. She

joined Families First in February as our Program Assistant for Western Massachusetts and has been an integral part of supporting our team and expanding our work in the region.

We are excited for what comes next and the opportunities ahead to continue supporting families across the region. If you know of organizations that share our mission and would like to collaborate, we would love to connect! Email Yamaris Rivera at yrivera@families-first.org.

