FAMILIES FIRST newsletter

Fall Edition

Fall | Families First | 2026











Parents Are Helping Us Reach More Families

Through a recent Community Impact Project (CIP) as part of the Ripple Program, parents came together to share ideas on how Families First can strengthen recruitment, participation, and connection with families. Parent Leaders **Claudia Figueroa, Marcia Menjivar, Paris Ortiz, and Viviana Avery** shared their experiences and perspectives to help us rethink how and where we connect with parents.

Over the past year, Families First has seen strong program impact while also navigating changes in how families engage amid economic uncertainty, policy changes, and immigration-related fears. Feedback from families highlighted the importance of flexible scheduling and attendance, as well as challenges with traditional communication methods.

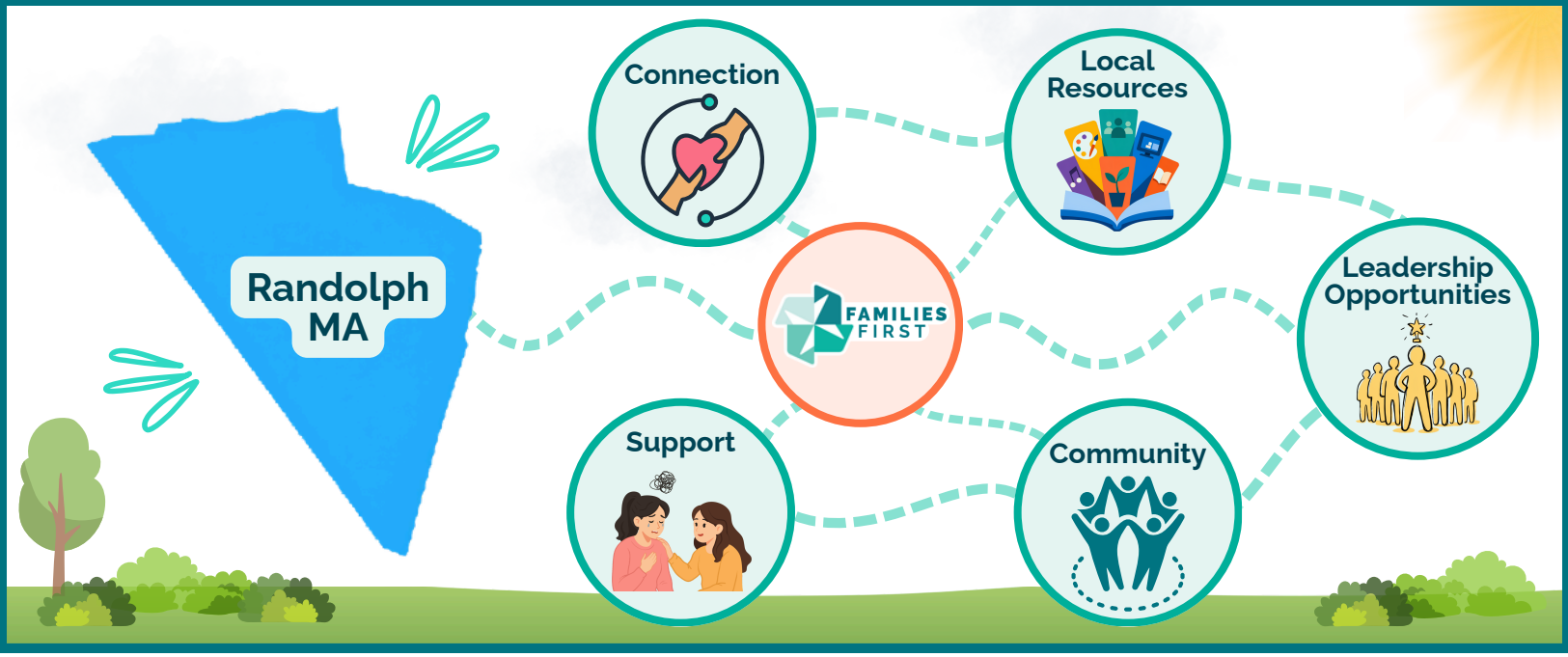
One message from the CIP was clear: **if we want to reach more families, we need to meet them where they already are.**

Parent Leaders recommended **expanding outreach beyond traditional early childhood spaces** to places where families already gather and seek resources, including churches, community centers, schools, libraries, and stores. In response, Families First is expanding our outreach to new community settings, developing targeted recruitment strategies, and strengthening follow-up with families who express interest in our programs.

Parent Leaders also emphasized the importance of what happens after that first connection. Prompt follow-up, clear communication, and consistent support can **make it easier for families to participate and stay connected**. Families First has responded by updating our enrollment and communications systems to support more consistent follow-up, clearer expectations, and more frequent communication.

Families First also hired for two new positions — a Program Assistant and Program Coordinator— to test a staffing approach design to strengthen recruitment, retention, and support for families.

These changes give us an opportunity to test what works in practice. Throughout the year we will monitor progress, gather feedback from families, and refine our approach. **This is what parent leadership looks like in action**: parents identify opportunities for change, Families First puts their recommendations into practice, and together we learn what helps more families connect, participate, and stay engaged.



Deepening Our Work in Randolph

Families First is expanding our work in **Randolph and surrounding communities**, thanks to a new, multi-year grant from Boston Children's Hospital's Metro South West Community Health Initiative. The initiative will help us reach more parents and caregivers with research-based parenting and parent leadership programs to promote belonging, reduce stress, and improve outcomes for children. We will focus on reaching parents who face systemic barriers to support by engaging parents in additional languages, reaching more parents with children ages birth to 3, and connecting with underrepresented caregiver groups like single parents and fathers.

As part of this work, we are growing our existing partnership with **Randolph Public Schools**, while using this opportunity to build new relationships with other community organizations. These partnerships help us connect with families in the communities where they already live, work, learn, and gather.

> **The program has empowered our families to build meaningful connections, strengthen their confidence, and support their children as they grow and thrive. We are incredibly grateful for our partnership with Families First and the positive impact this work continues to have on our families and our community.**
>
> - Alpha Sanford of Randolph Public Schools.

With this support, Families First is building on our work to make parenting support more accessible to families and strengthening the community partnerships that help families find the support they need in Randolph and across communities south and west of Boston.

Growing Our Team and Celebrating Leadership

Welcoming Two New Team Members to Greater Boston

Families First is excited to welcome **Jude Barrera, Greater Boston Program Coordinator, and Samenta "Sam" Jacinthe, Greater Boston Program Assistant**, who joined our team in October 2026. Together, they bring valuable experience and a shared commitment to supporting parents and families across Greater Boston.

Jude joined Families First after coordinating youth mental health initiatives at Boston Medical Center. Since graduating from Mount Holyoke College in 2024, they have supported Boston youth and families in various roles. Jude looks forward to helping parents navigate their children's early childhood. Outside of work, they enjoy the arts, reading, and live music.

Sam brings more than 10 years of experience in customer service, administrative support, and team leadership. Her journey with Families First began as a participant in the Power of Parenting workshop, followed by her involvement as a Parent Leader and alum.

Jude Barrera



Samenta Jacinthe



Having experienced the program firsthand, Sam brings a personal understanding of the value of parent education and family connection. Bilingual in English and Haitian Creole, she is passionate about helping parents recognize their strengths and build supportive connections.

Celebrating Tiffany Benson's Promotion

We're excited to celebrate **Tiffany Benson's promotion to Assistant Director of Programs**!

This promotion is a well-deserved recognition of Tiffany's hard work, dedication, and many contributions to Families First. Over the past several years, Tiffany has taken on new challenges, embraced opportunities to grow, and consistently brought creativity, collaboration, and care to her work with families and our team.

Tiffany has made a particularly meaningful impact through her leadership of our **alumni engagement efforts**. Through monthly alumni events, she has created opportunities for families to stay connected to Families First long after completing a program. Last year alone, these events reached more than **300 parents**, helping build an ongoing community for Families First alumni.

In her new role, Tiffany will build on this work while taking on additional leadership responsibilities, including supporting Program Facilitators and curriculum development. Her experience, commitment, and deep connection to our community will be a wonderful asset to the Programs team as she steps into this next chapter.