



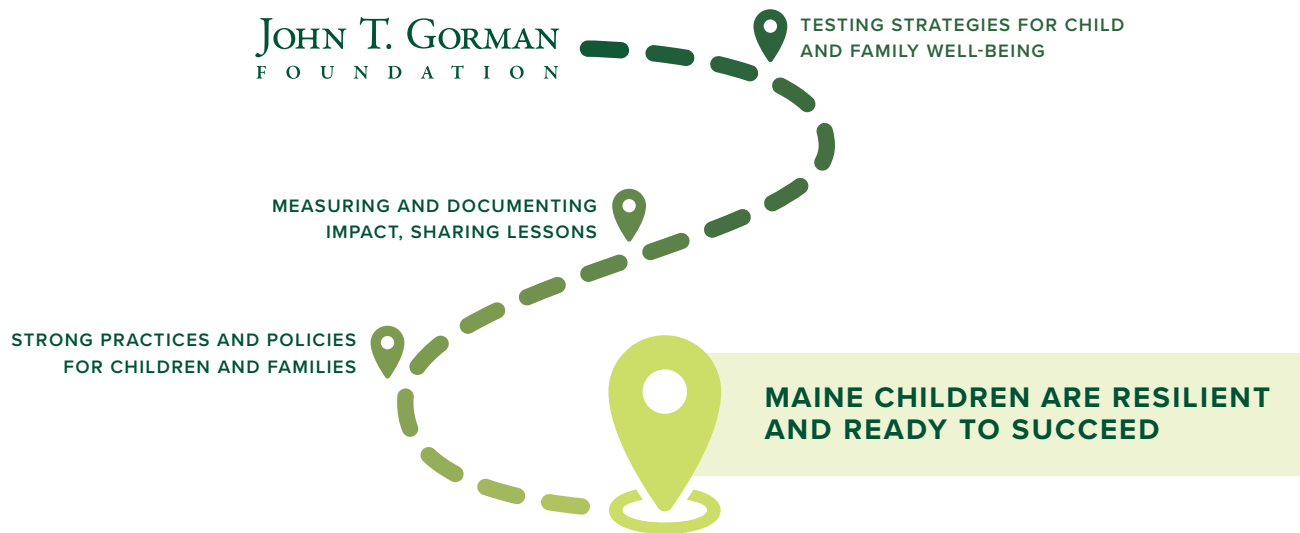
JOHN T. GORMAN  
FOUNDATION

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# Progress Report

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2023 & 2024



# Two years ago, we set out with an ambitious goal. Here's where we stand today.

In our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, the John T. Gorman Foundation shifted our focus to ensuring all Maine children are resilient and ready to succeed. Several factors informed the decision, including data showing that Maine children face greater challenges to their well-being than their peers nationally, a track record of impactful Foundation grantmaking focused on children and families, and new opportunities to create meaningful change. Ultimately, we decided that we could have greater impact by taking a preventive, upstream approach that put more children on a trajectory toward a brighter future.

The plan was also rooted in the knowledge – based on research as well as our own experience – that children do best when their caregivers and families have the resources and supports they need to thrive. To improve outcomes for children, the Foundation further adopted a two-generation approach, which serves children and their parents/caregivers simultaneously. This comprehensive approach aims to strengthen five interconnected components of child and family well-being: education, employment navigation and supports, physical and mental health, social capital, and wealth and assets.

Finally, the plan sought to leverage our grantmaking to achieve a greater impact. Not only are we working to improve outcomes of the children and families served by the strategies we fund, but we are also documenting what we learn from these initiatives and sharing those lessons broadly so they can have a wider

impact. Our approach is now designed to test and evaluate strategies that, if effective, can be taken to greater scale through practice and policy change.

With the midpoint of this strategic plan approaching, we want to report on the progress we have made in the last two years – where our resources have been invested, the kinds of strategies being implemented and tested, what we are learning so far, and how we are engaging stakeholders and other key audiences.

As the data and information shared in the following pages demonstrate, we have stayed true to the plan's intentions. We have focused the largest share of our funding on testing strategies to improve child and family outcomes. Across the state, these strategies are centered on two-generation approaches and address needs across several areas of child and family well-being. As we continue to evaluate these initiatives, we are starting to see their direct impact on people's lives, trends behind their success, and common obstacles to their progress. We are also building the capacity of leaders and organizations to take on this work, while educating stakeholders and the public on its potential for greater impact.

While this work represents important progress, there is still much to do. We hope this report is a useful resource as we continue working toward the strategic plan's ambitious and important goals over the next three years.

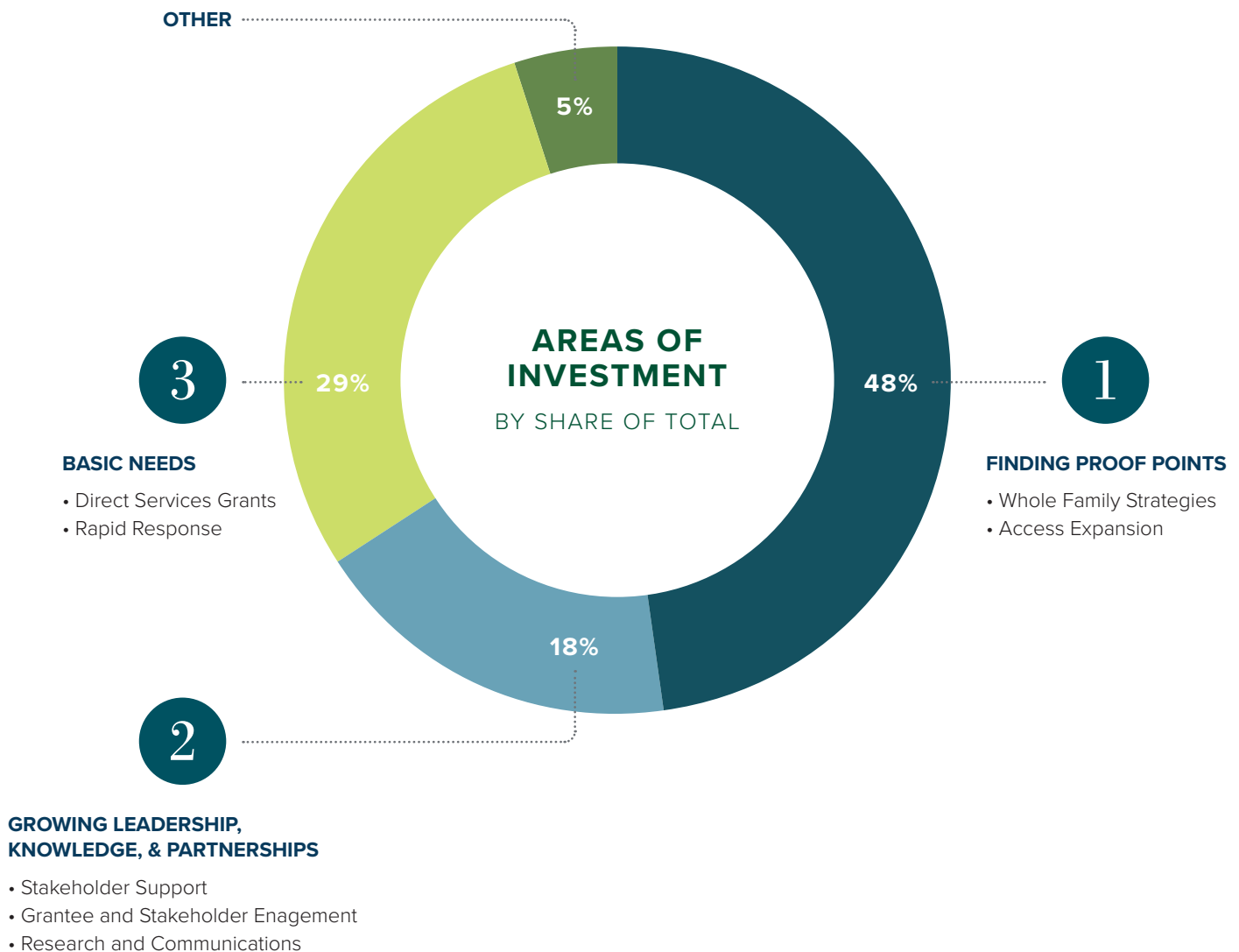
# OVERALL Grantmaking

## 2023 & 2024

**375**  
**GRANTS & CONTRACTS**  
**AWARDED**

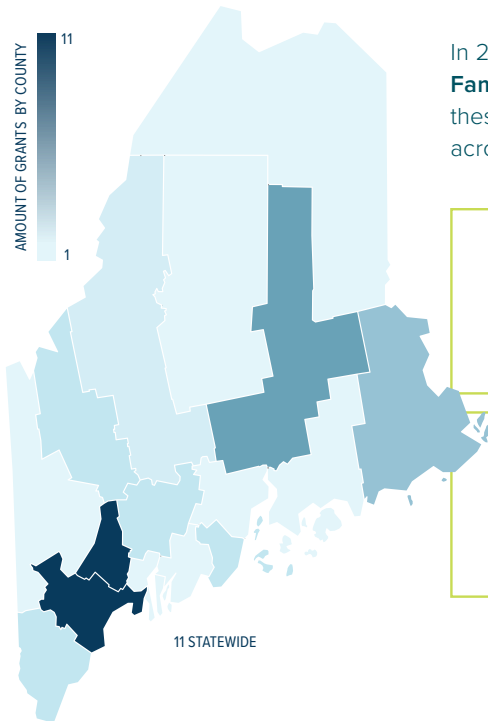
**\$16,559,185**  
**TOTAL**  
**INVESTMENT**

**\$75,590,265**  
**ADDITIONAL**  
**INVESTMENT LEVERAGED**



# 1 Finding Proof Points

## WHOLE FAMILY STRATEGIES AND ACCESS EXPANSION



In 2023 and 2024, the heart of our grantmaking has been investments in **Whole Family Strategies** and **Access Expansion**. Centered on two-generation approaches, these grants are designed to test strategies for improving child and family well-being across five components.

58  
GRANTS AWARDED

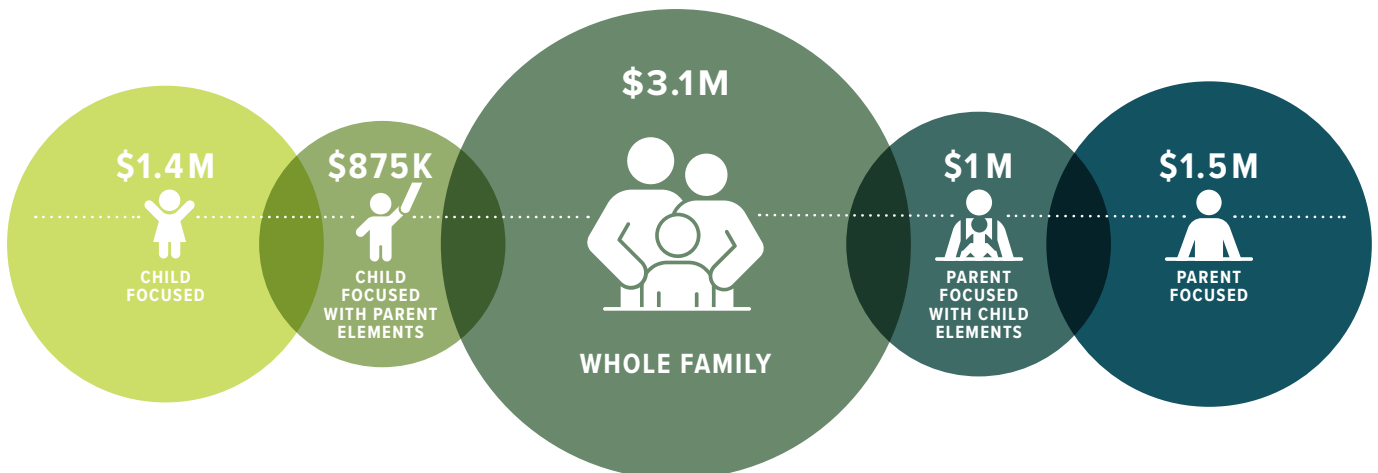
\$7,930,600  
TOTAL  
INVESTMENT

50  
GRANTEES

\$112,500  
MEDIAN  
GRANT AMOUNT

## WHERE GRANTS LIE ALONG 2GEN SPECTRUM

Over the last two years, the Foundation has sought to devote a greater number of investments to two-generation (2Gen) initiatives that serve children and their parents simultaneously. These strategies may differ in where supports are emphasized – whether more toward parents or children. Plotting our grants along this continuum, we find the bulk of our investments are indeed in the middle of this spectrum, with programs delivering services and supports to children and adults more or less equally.



## TESTING & TRACKING STRATEGIES ACROSS FIVE COMPONENTS OF WELL-BEING

Taking a comprehensive view of what children and families need to thrive, Foundation grants have supported five critical components of well-being. The selected strategies provide examples of our investments in each component, rather than a comprehensive list. Though each grant has only been included once in these totals, many grants target multiple components simultaneously.



### EDUCATION

11 GRANTS // \$1,817,000

- Expanding access to high-quality early education and childcare
- Extending child learning time and youth career exploration through afterschool and summer programs
- Integrating social-emotional and academic supports in school settings
- Connecting children to early intervention services to support learning success and healthy development
- Bolstering the capacity of Maine's educator workforce with professional development and career navigation for aspiring teachers



### EMPLOYMENT NAVIGATION & SUPPORTS

12 GRANTS // \$849,000

- Strengthening systems that parents rely on for employment, such as transportation
- Providing career navigation and coaching for parents
- Supporting the success of student-parents pursuing education to advance careers



### PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

23 GRANTS // \$3,466,620

- Embedding low-barrier mental health supports in community programs
- Working to improve birth outcomes for women of color and their children through health-care access and other supports
- Supporting mothers and their children in substance use recovery



### SOCIAL CAPITAL

5 GRANTS // \$663,000

- Using cohort models to build peer support networks
- Providing opportunities for social connection, community building, and career networking



### WEALTH & ASSETS

7 GRANTS // \$1,115,000

- Supporting pathways to home ownership for families with low incomes
- Providing mentoring and capital support to aspiring women entrepreneurs from immigrant communities
- Helping families build assets through savings programs and financial education



## 2 Growing Leadership, Knowledge, & Partnerships

### STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

This key area of grantmaking has been used to strengthen the capacity of critical organizations that serve children and families in areas where the Foundation lacks the capacity, expertise, or ability to do so on its own. Some examples include grants to support organizations in increasing understanding, awareness, and advocacy for preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences in the areas of domestic violence prevention and child safety and wellbeing; advocating for increased access to early childhood education; and providing trauma-informed training to professionals working with children and families.

26  
GRANTS

\$1,817,000  
AWARDED

### GRANTEE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

We have engaged grantees and stakeholders in several ways to increase their capacity to improve outcomes for children and families.

- 12 leaders are now participating in the redesigned John T. Gorman Fellowship and 42 others are engaged through Fellowship network
- Over 200 leaders attended four Foundation-hosted events and convenings held to deepen learning and make connections
- Foundation has provided dozens of partners with access to national convenings and expertise.

25  
GRANTS/  
CONTRACTS

\$563,824  
AWARDED



Cohort 5 of the John T. Gorman Fellowship



Maine 2Gen Summit drew over 130 leaders in 2023



Foundation partner Fowsia Musse at the 2024 Aspen ThinkXChange

## RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATIONS

In an effort to inform and influence practice and policy decisions, our research and communications goals have centered on educating stakeholders and the public about key challenges facing Maine children and families, as well as Foundation partnerships that are working to address these issues.

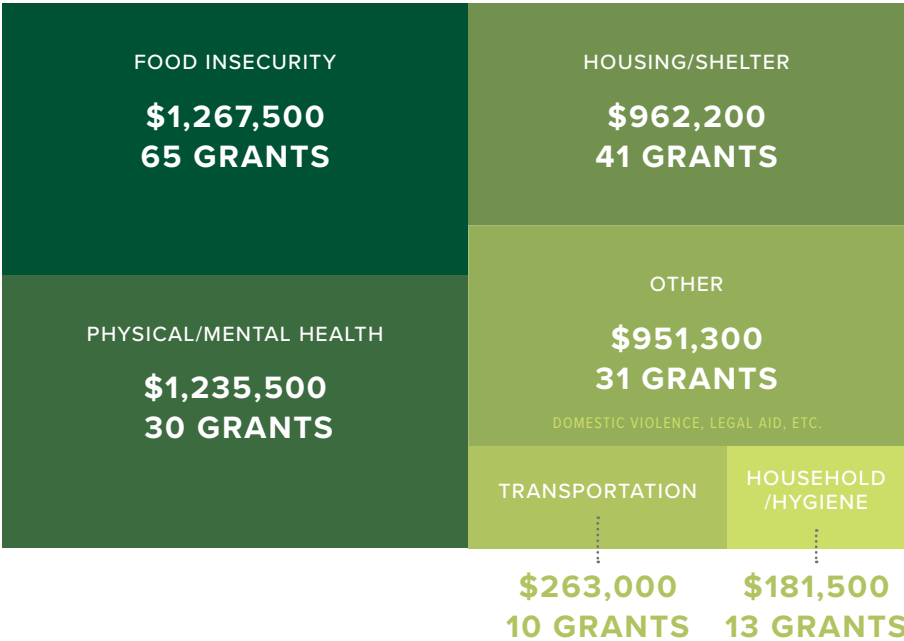
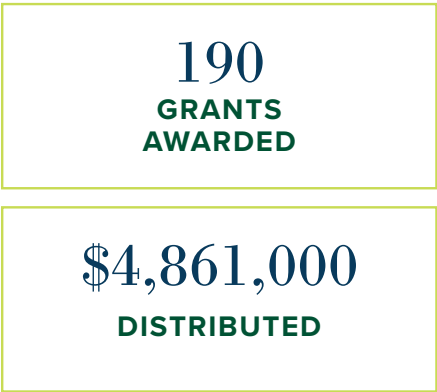
- Grant funding has allowed Maine Public to deepen its reporting on issues facing Maine children and families. The Foundation has also partnered with the Portland Press Herald to publish the *Building Brighter Futures* series to highlight initiatives that are having a positive impact in addressing these issues.
- Foundation has collaborated with partners to release two policy briefs – one with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston on family wealth and asset development and the other with the Administration of Children and Families on addressing benefit cliffs
- Foundation newsletters and other communications products offer deeper dives on key issues we’re working with partners to address – such as mental health access, economic well-being, and education



### 3 Basic Needs

## DIRECT SERVICES AND RAPID RESPONSE

The Foundation has continued to address basic needs for Maine people facing economic hardship through its Direct Services Grant Program, support for those affected by cancer, and Rapid Response Grants to meet emergency needs in the community.



# PROOF Points

## WHAT WE'RE SEEING

The Foundation's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan placed our theory of change front and center. In this model, we measure outcomes in three categories – Impact, Influence, and Leverage. We are testing and measuring the *impact* of strategies on people's lives, sharing that information to *influence* decisionmakers with the goal of *leveraging* the most effective strategies for greater impact through program and policy change.

This is not the first time we have used this model of change. The Foundation has seen it work before. One example is Lewiston, where the Foundation has worked with local partners for more than 10 years to improve health, economic opportunity, and quality of life in the Tree Streets Neighborhood. The community has successfully leveraged the Foundation's support to secure tens of millions of dollars of outside investment and spur a neighborhood transformation that is benefiting thousands of people.

In our current plan, we are applying this model across a much wider range of initiatives, measuring and analyzing outcomes

more intensively, and leveraging these results toward a singular goal of ensuring that Maine children are resilient and ready to succeed. Some of these initiatives are built on existing partnerships; others include new partners with promising strategies. Five are being evaluated by the Carsey School of Public Policy, six are being supported by external evaluators and researchers, and the remainder are self-tracking outcomes. The last two years have involved preparing these initiatives to launch or expand, establishing the evaluation infrastructure, and getting programs through their initial implementation.

We are now beginning to see some of the impacts these programs are having on the people they serve. While this kind of data will accelerate in the coming year, we are developing an understanding of what makes for a successful strategy and the types of challenges that can get in the way. In this section of the report, we present preliminary highlights from a sample of our Whole Family Strategies and Access Expansion grants, as well as some common elements of success and emerging obstacles across these areas of strategic grantmaking.



photo by Whitney J. Fox, courtesy of Avesta Housing



# Snapshots

## HIGHLIGHTS AND EMERGING DATA FROM SELECT PARTNERSHIPS

### MOVING FAMILIES FORWARD

Partnership between Bangor Housing and the Boys and Girls Club of Bangor uses a two-generation approach to improve the economic mobility and overall well-being of families living in Bangor's Capehart Neighborhood.

- 153 families currently enrolled – including 267 children
- 53% of MFF households are now employed, compared to 33% of non-MFF Bangor Housing residents
- 308 families participated in MFF's Family Self-Sufficiency Program over the last five years – 45% of participants have raised their incomes, one-third reduced their cash welfare assistance, and 20 moved to home ownership after completing the program.

#### Testing New Programs

- 15 parents/caregivers have completed the new Industry Exploration Academy to learn about career options, receive advising, and meet local employers
  - 87% reported that the program helped them identify a career they'd like to pursue
- 55 students participated in a summer math program at the Boys and Girls Club
  - 54% of students improved their math scores from the beginning to end of summer – of those whose scores improved, the average increase was 35%
- 15 children, grades 4-6, participated in a Career Exploration Initiative offered at the Boys and Girls Club
  - 86% reported a better understanding of how their skills and interests could lead to a career
- 56 women have participated in the MOMS Partnership, learning stress management skills and receiving mental

health support — 98% have reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the experience (more follow-up outcomes will be reported in 2025)

**“MOMS taught me ways to manage my stress in different ways and is helping me be a better mom to my children.”**

– Participant

### CHILD CARE BUSINESS LAB

With training, technical assistance, and connections to capital, this CEI program supports aspiring entrepreneurs in launching licensed childcare businesses – creating childcare capacity in areas of the state with critical shortages and enabling families to access work opportunities.

- 41 new childcare businesses have been created to date, serving 951 children
- 170 new jobs created
- 38% of parents who have secured childcare through program have been able to start new jobs

#### Expanding Model Statewide

- Foundation is providing support to expand the model to new areas of state after showing years of success in Lewiston
- Expansion expected to create 10 new businesses and serve at least 225 children by next fall
- Child Care Business Lab and new childcare businesses have leveraged \$6.1 million in federal, state, and private investment since Foundation's first grant in 2020

**“I tried to get licensed three times and never made it – then I met the Child Care Business Lab team. They helped me learn the rules, create policies for families and get a loan. Now I am a licensed provider. I'm open the hours parents need to work – even until 11:00 at night – and it's a good job for me.”**

– Participant

### PREVENTING CHILD HOMELESSNESS

York County Community Action Corporation helps unhoused families secure stable housing and build the foundation for long-term economic stability and well-being.

- 47 families, including 108 children, have secured housing since December 2023
- All families remain housed to date, with 26 families maintaining stable housing for more than 6 months
- 14 families are receiving ongoing support from Whole Family Coach after first securing housing and a level of stability

#### Closing in on Housing Goal

- One year into an 18-month grant, program nears goal of housing 50 families
- Foundation support for a flexible housing fund has assisted 43 families

with associated costs of securing housing, and 4 families with rental assistance to prevent eviction

- Success in securing and maintaining housing is attributable to the housing navigator's work with both families and landlords to find matches that promote long-term success

**“This work is about more than just finding a home. It’s about helping families build the foundation they need to thrive.”**

– YCCAC Housing Navigator

### SUPPORTING FAMILIES GROWING TOGETHER

At pediatric clinics in Portland and Rockland, MaineHealth supports the healthy development of patients ages 0-5 by offering parent education and connections to resources that reduce toxic stress and promote resilience.

- 472 families served from January to September 2024
- 1,152 interactions between families and Early Childhood Support Specialists (ECSS) who offer supports tailored to the needs of each family – nearly a quarter of interactions were home visits
- Families who work with the ECSS are more than three times likely to

follow through with referrals for early intervention services needed to support healthy child development

### Pursuing Paths for Replication and Sustainability

- MaineHealth has newly added a pediatric case manager position to the children's health services division, recognizing the importance of a 2-gen approach
- Team piloting new billing model to increase program's financial sustainability

### FRANCES WARDE HOUSE

Partnership between Mercy Hospital and In Her Presence works to improve birth outcomes for women of color and their children through health-care access, housing, and other culturally appropriate supports.

- 31 mothers and 30 babies have been served since its opening in June 2023
- 19 mothers and their children have transitioned to permanent housing
- All women who entered Frances Warde prior to their third trimester experienced improved health outcomes for themselves and their newborns, with marked reductions in C-sections, NICU stays, and low birth weights.

### One Family's Journey

One of Frances Warde's first residents came from a temporary shelter with serious pregnancy complications that led to a preterm birth and months of surgeries and intensive care for her baby

daughter. The family now has permanent housing, the mother is employed at Mercy, and the daughter is enrolled in high-quality childcare.

### MCAULEY RESIDENCE

Mercy Hospital supports mothers in substance use recovery, offering a two-generation approach to help them successfully reunify with their children and support their long-term success with academic coaching.

- 25 women currently served at locations in Portland and Bangor
- 76% of women remain in active recovery after completing program
- 96% successful family reunification rate
- 100% of eligible women in Portland now enrolled in higher education, with similar results in Bangor – the rate was 0% before the academic coach was installed

### Expansion in Sight

- Program's long-term success has led to its planned expansion to four rural Maine communities
- 40-60 additional women to be served through expansion
- Foundation investment for expansion has helped leverage nearly \$20 million in federal, state, and private funds



## MAINE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS

Maine Behavioral Healthcare and the Boys and Girls Club of Southern Maine partnered to offer low-barrier mental health supports to Portland Club members with access to an embedded clinician.

- 150-200 children served at Portland Clubhouse per day
- 99 children received direct support from a clinician over a six-month period
- With training from clinician, staff more than doubled their use of trauma-informed behavioral interventions

### Successes and Challenges

- Program received over \$500,000 in Congressionally Directed Spending from Senator Collins to expand model to other clubhouses in Greater Portland and Lewiston-Auburn
- Emerging evidence suggests that the strategy is working; however, turnover with part-time staff slowed some of the progress toward program goals.

## WHAT'S WORKING

The following are some of the elements, approaches, and qualities that are making initiatives more durable and effective.

- **REAL-TIME EVALUATION** is helping shape better decision making by giving practitioners the data and outside perspective they need to remain on course
- **MORE ROBUST PARTNERSHIPS/NETWORKS** create more resilience – initiatives headed by single organizations have been less likely to overcome challenges in implementation
- The **COHORT MODEL** has helped participants build valuable social capital
- Building **EMERGENCY FUNDS** into programs has been effective in keeping participants on track by preventing relatively small financial challenges from derailing progress toward their goals
- **INVOLVING FAMILIES FROM THE START** in program input, design, and feedback is key to building the trust needed for interventions to be successful
- When practices are grounded in **TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES**, they can have a deeper impact on families facing adversity
- **CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE APPROACHES** have helped initiatives be more effective in serving the needs of New Mainer and tribal communities by cultivating trust and understanding

## WHAT'S GETTING IN THE WAY

A range of systemic issues has challenged grantees and families alike – delaying, hindering, or preventing progress.

- **TRANSPORTATION** – Lack of transportation, especially in rural areas of the state, has hampered the ability of program participants to pursue work opportunities and access important services like childcare
- **HOUSING** – Difficulties in finding and retaining housing have made it harder for families to create the stability they need to focus on longer-term goals
- **STAFFING AND RETENTION** – Across grantees, workforce challenges have led to difficulties with staff hiring and turnover, delaying and disrupting program implementation
- **PUBLIC FUNDING SHIFTS** – Flexible and ample COVID response funds have come to an end, bringing a new and uncertain funding landscape to many initiatives.







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