



JOHN T. GORMAN  
FOUNDATION

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# Progress Report

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2025

## 2025 marked the third year of the John T. Gorman Foundation's intensive focus on ensuring all Maine children are resilient and ready to succeed.

In a year shaped by uncertainty and shifting conditions, we responded to urgent needs while remaining committed to this ambitious goal by leaning into a two-generation (2Gen) approach to strengthen the well-being of children and their families. As this Progress Report reflects, it's making a difference.

Over the last year, we focused a growing share of our grantmaking toward developing and testing effective 2Gen strategies that support children and their caregivers simultaneously. At the same time, we sustained strong levels of support for partner capacity, leadership development and learning networks, research and evaluation, communications, and basic needs. We also deployed additional resources through three Program-Related Investments to fund critical projects aligned with our mission.

As we have worked alongside partners to strengthen the systems children and families need to thrive, we are seeing encouraging signs that meaningful progress is possible with the right strategies. This report profiles how the Foundation and partners are testing approaches to address critical issues of early childhood support, child homelessness, child and caregiver mental health, and workforce connections for parents. It also examines initiatives with a housing authority, hospital

system, and school district that show what is possible when comprehensive strategies are incubated and scaled at a systems level.

Importantly, this report shares what we are learning from this work. Our intention is not only to make a positive difference for children and families, but to elevate strategies and lessons that can strengthen broader practice and policy. We hope the findings in this report are valuable to all those who are striving to help children and families create a brighter future.

As we reflect on the year, we remain grateful to the partners, stakeholders, and families who make this work possible. In a time of uncertainty and change, they have demonstrated incredible resilience, creativity, and flexibility. In their enduring commitment to improve the well-being of Maine's children, they continue to find opportunities among challenges. Looking ahead, the John T. Gorman Foundation feels privileged to work alongside them.



Nicole Witherbee  
President and CEO, John T. Gorman Foundation

## Overall Grants and Program-Related Support 2025

**\$8,329,924**

**195 GRANTS &  
CONTRACTS AWARDED**

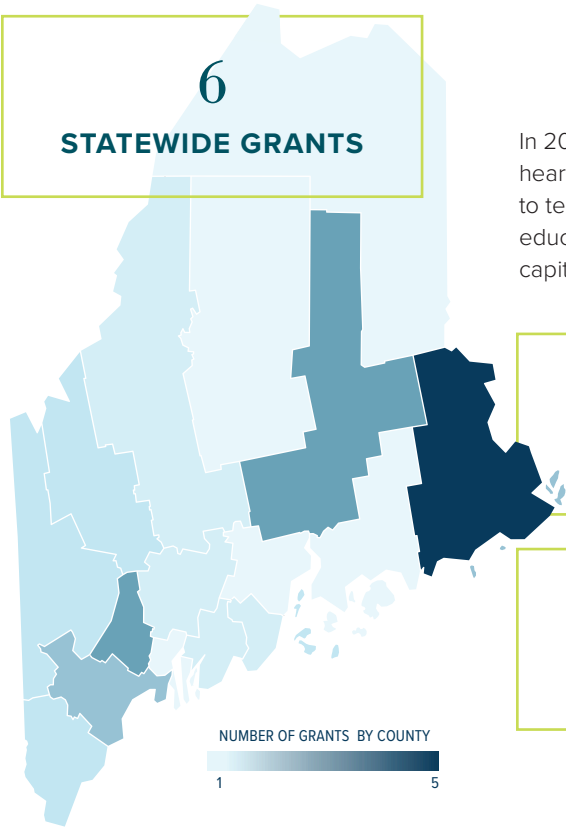
**\$2,000,000**

**3 PROGRAM RELATED  
INVESTMENTS**

**\$10,329,924**

**TOTAL  
INVESTMENT**

# Finding Proof Points



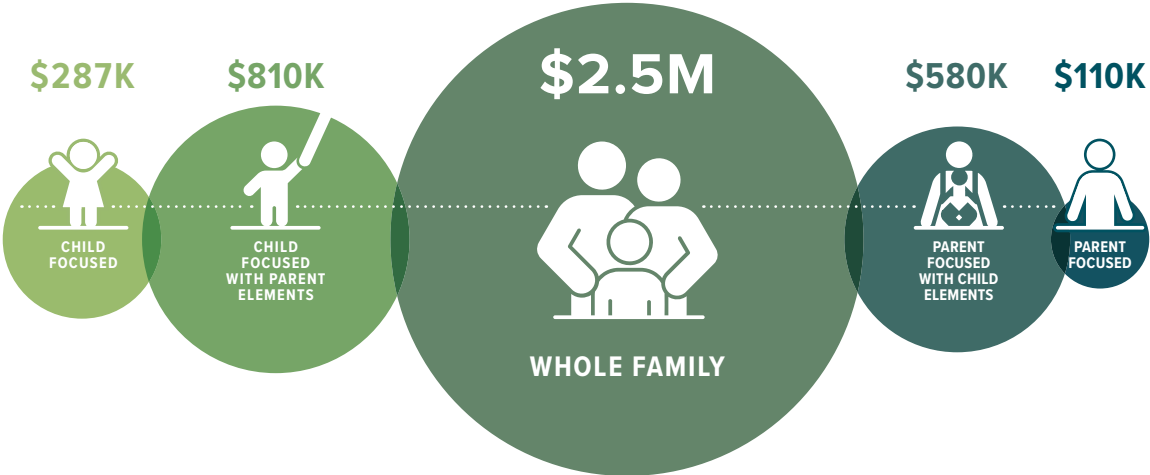
## WHOLE FAMILY STRATEGIES AND ACCESS EXPANSION

In 2025, investments in Whole Family Strategies and Access Expansion were at the heart of our grantmaking. Centered on 2Gen approaches, these grants are designed to test strategies for improving outcomes in five areas of child and family well-being: education, employment navigation and supports, physical and mental health, social capital, and wealth and assets.



## INCREASED INVESTMENT IN 2GEN STRATEGIES

Over the last year, the Foundation continued to increase investment in 2Gen initiatives that serve children and their parents simultaneously. These strategies may differ where supports are emphasized – whether more toward parents or children. Plotting 2025 grants along this spectrum finds that more than half of our total investment lies in the middle, with programs delivering services to children and adults more or less equally.





# Growing Leadership, Knowledge, & Partnerships

## STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

This key area of grantmaking strengthens the capacity of critical organizations that serve children and families in ways that advance the Foundation's mission. Among others, grants over the last year helped provide:

- Support for kinship caregivers through Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine
- Coordination of the Maine Child Welfare Action Network by the Maine Children's Alliance
- Grant writing assistance for federal funding
- Support for families experiencing domestic violence
- Coordination of Maine's Right from the Start early childhood coalition

**17**  
**GRANTS**

**\$1,059,000**  
**AWARDED**

## GRANTEE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In 2025, we engaged grantees and stakeholders in several ways to increase their capacity to improve outcomes for children and families:

- 12 leaders completed the fifth cohort of the John T. Gorman Fellowship – bringing the total number of Fellows to 54. This network celebrated the Fellowship's 10th year as the program continues to support their work with convenings and opportunities for learning.
- 140 state agency leaders, policy makers, nonprofit leaders, and parents attended the second Maine 2Gen Summit, hosted with Ascend at the Aspen Institute.
- 4 virtual trainings and briefings grounded participants in 2Gen program measurement, parent voice in program design, federal and state funding changes, and nonprofit contingency planning.
- Multiple partners received assistance to connect, learn, and share knowledge with others across the region and country. Among other examples, Family Futures Downeast representatives traveled to Alaska to present on 2Gen strategies at a Partners for Rural Impact conference; six Fellows visited national programs; a team of 2Gen partners participated in a national Ascend at the Aspen Institute convening; and York County partners connected with Boston organizations to learn about their efforts to prevent student homelessness.



**16**  
**GRANTS/  
CONTRACTS**

**\$267,553**  
**AWARDED**

## RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATIONS

To inform and influence practice and policy decisions, our research and communications focused on evaluating our grants for lessons and insights, raising awareness on key challenges facing Maine children and families, and highlighting strategies and partnerships that are making a difference.

- We worked with the Portland Press Herald to produce and publish Building Brighter Futures, a series of articles highlighting 2Gen partnerships that are working to help Maine families. The collection of six articles had over 5,000 pageviews.
- The Foundation released a report on addressing transportation barriers for Maine families, generating significant media attention and being cited in policy discussions.
- Third-party evaluations helped the Foundation and grantees measure the effectiveness of initiatives and adjust strategies to deepen their impact.

**11**  
**GRANTS/CONTRACTS**

**\$282,446**  
**AWARDED**



**Portland Press Herald**

## 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.

**86**  
**GRANTS**

**\$1,980,000**  
**AWARDED**

FOOD INSECURITY  
**\$875,500**  
**38 GRANTS**

HOUSING/SHELTER  
**\$525,000**  
**20 GRANTS**

PHYSICAL/  
ORAL HEALTH  
**\$335,000**  
**9 GRANTS**

OTHER  
(SEXUAL ASSAULT/  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,  
MENTAL HEALTH,  
SUBSTANCE USE)  
**\$90,000**  
**6 GRANTS**

HOUSEHOLD  
OR HYGIENE  
NEEDS  
**\$80,000**  
**8 GRANTS**

TRANSPORT-  
ATION  
**\$75,000**  
**5 GRANTS**

# 2025 Program-Related Investments

Alongside grantmaking, the John T. Gorman Foundation has utilized a portion of its investment portfolio to invest in Program-Related Investments (PRIs), offering critical support to partners and projects aligned with the Foundation's mission and priorities.

Often working in combination with grants, these investments (loans) bring numerous benefits to partners – offering capital at low rates and with fewer restrictions than traditional lenders. This investment from the Foundation often helps leverage additional financing from other sources. Importantly, PRIs allow the Foundation to extend its support sustainably. As partners repay the investments, these recycled funds are used to invest in other projects.

In 2025, the Foundation worked with partners to make three PRIs totaling \$2 million to advance critical projects across Maine.

## PREBLE STREET FOOD SECURITY HUB

In 2021, a Foundation grant helped Preble Street launch its Food Security Hub – a space to meet the growing need for nutritious meals among Maine people experiencing food insecurity. The Hub has since become a vital resource in addressing hunger in Maine, providing industrial kitchen and food storage space to prepare and distribute up to 2,000 meals a day.

As Maine continues to deal with high levels of food insecurity, Preble Street has worked to expand its Hub significantly, increasing its kitchen size to 5,000 square feet and creating a 4,000-square-foot cold-storage space. With a \$1 million Foundation PRI, private and public contributions, and other financing, the expanded Hub opened in October 2025. The expansion allows the Hub to increase production up to 10,000 meals a day and store up to 50,000 frozen meals to respond to emergency needs statewide.



The newly expanded Preble Street Food Security Hub. *Courtesy Preble Street.*



## CEDAR FALLS MOBILE HOME PARK

When private equity investors were set to purchase Cedar Falls Mobile Home Park in Bangor, the families living there faced the possibility of steep rent increases and even the loss of their housing. While park residents owned their mobile homes, they rented the underlying lots. Thanks to a new Maine law requiring that they be notified of the pending sale, residents had an opportunity to buy the park property – if they could secure the financing needed to make a successful counteroffer.

The Foundation joined Genesis Community Loan Fund, Cooperative Development Institute, City of Bangor, Bangor Savings Bank, and MaineHousing to make it possible. A \$500,000 low-interest loan from the Foundation – through Genesis – helped cover the financing gap while a \$260,000 grant bought down the interest rate on other debt to lower rent for residents. A cooperative of the residents now owns the park, preserving 129 units of affordable housing and creating the potential to build another 82. Under the development of Bangor Housing, the new units will create home-ownership opportunities for graduates of its Moving Families Forward program.



Residents celebrate their purchase of the Cedar Falls Mobile Home Park in Bangor. Courtesy Bangor Savings Bank.



Investment is allowing Turner childcare center Kids & Co. to double in size. Courtesy Kids & Co.

## CEI CHILDCARE INVESTMENT FUND

Working to address Maine's childcare shortage, CEI's Childcare Business Lab supports aspiring providers through the process of becoming licensed and launching their businesses. With several years of grant funding from the Foundation, the program has been highly successful. Operating in Lewiston and rural areas of the state, the lab has supported the creation of 56 new childcare businesses, 1,281 new childcare openings, and 215 new jobs. Securing quality care for their children has also allowed 435 parents to start new jobs.

As CEI worked with entrepreneurs, a lack of access to business capital frequently surfaced as a barrier. In response, CEI created a revolving loan fund to help business owners renovate spaces for high-quality childcare, purchase educational materials, and create outdoor play and learning spaces. This year, a \$500,000 PRI from the Foundation is strengthening the fund, allowing it to continue supporting entrepreneurs and creating much-needed high-quality childcare capacity for families.



# What We're Learning



The John T. Gorman Foundation's work is grounded in a simple but powerful understanding: when systems are aligned around families – across health, education, economic opportunity, and overall well-being – children are more likely to be resilient and thrive. This resilience sets them on a trajectory for success in school, the workforce, and as future parents themselves. That understanding guides how we invest, partner, and learn. By testing new ideas, identifying what works, and promoting solutions that can be adopted at scale, we aim to improve outcomes for the greatest number of Maine families.

This work has been especially important in 2025. Pressures on children and families are mounting – so too for the organizations and communities working to serve them. Yet across Maine, our partners have continued to demonstrate flexibility, commitment, and ingenuity in supporting children's well-being. The following pages detail how the Foundation has worked alongside them to sustain this momentum, supporting strategies that respond to urgent needs while advancing long-term solutions.

The next section, **Aligning Strategies**, highlights four issues where the Foundation has concentrated resources: access to early childhood supports, child homelessness, child and

caregiver mental health, and workforce opportunity for parents. These areas lie at the intersection of significant need, committed partner capacity, and the opportunity to test innovative strategies with the potential for broader impact.

The following section, **Strengthening Systems**, shows what can be achieved when strategies are sustained and coordinated across larger systems that serve hundreds or thousands of people. These partnerships – with a housing authority, hospital system, and school district – highlight the breadth of supports being provided as well as the impact they are having on children and families.

Together, these sections offer a view of progress that goes beyond individual programs. They reflect an ongoing learning process about what it takes to meet the needs of children, support families in complex environments, and improve outcomes in meaningful and sustainable ways. In **Lessons & Recommendations**, we share what we are learning – insights we hope are useful to practitioners, policymakers, funders, and others who are working to strengthen outcomes for children and families across Maine.



# Aligning Strategies

## Innovative approaches to strengthen key areas of child and family well-being



### ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORTS

The years leading to kindergarten are vital for a child's health and development. With the right support and experiences from their caregivers and community, a young child can enter school ready to learn and thrive. However, this period can be challenging for families – isolation, lack of resources, disconnected services, and other barriers can keep them from getting the support they need.



*Maine's rate of 1- and 2-year-olds receiving early intervention services in Maine is the lowest in New England.*

Seeing the importance of early childhood supports, the Foundation has invested in several innovative strategies to clear barriers and expand the reach of services to families.

**Zero to School Starting Strong:** This effort implements a multi-tiered strategy to boost early supports for children and their families in Knox and Lincoln Counties. Addressing a severe lack of services in the region, the initiative has created a mobile team to conduct developmental screenings, work individually with families with identified needs, and provide a range of specialized interventions that children may not have been able to access otherwise.



*In the community of St. George, the team provided developmental screenings to 51 students ages 0-5 in 2025. Based on those screenings, the team's coordinator made 117 follow-up visits to further assess needs, resulting in 41 visits from the team's nurse practitioner, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, behavioral interventionist, and social worker.*

**Maine Community Integration:** Working with Lewiston families who face cultural barriers and unfamiliar systems, Maine Community Integration has deployed a team of Community Health Workers (CHWs) to build relationships and deliver early supports. Sharing the same lived experiences as the families they serve, these CHWs are uniquely positioned to build trust with families, facilitate their discussions with medical providers, and help them connect to resources.



*Over the last two years, CHWs have helped 125 families receive health care, early interventions, childcare, basic needs, and transportation services.*

**Supporting Families Growing Together:** At MaineHealth pediatric clinics in Portland and Rockland, this team has turned child checkups into well-visits for the whole family. Embedded Early Childhood Support Specialists work alongside medical providers to assess and address family needs that could potentially impact child health and development – including housing stability, nutrition, and parent health.



*Between January 2024 and October 2025, specialists worked with 848 patients, helping families address more than 1,000 needs that can affect child health and development, from diapers, food, and shelter to parent healthcare.*

## ADDRESSING CHILD HOMELESSNESS

Meeting a family's essential needs sets a foundation for children to build on. Without steady access to housing, for instance, children face numerous challenges in the long term – instability, impacts to health, toxic stress, missed education, and more.


 *In Maine's 2024 point-in-time survey of homelessness, about 20% of households experiencing homelessness had at least one child.*

York County has seen a steep rise in child homelessness since the pandemic. The Foundation is working to support a strong community response to address the trend with multi-pronged efforts to prevent child homelessness and mitigate its effects.

**Sanford School Department:** Schools are often the first to recognize the signs of a family's housing instability but usually have few resources to help students or families until after housing is lost. Utilizing funding from the Foundation as well as state and federal programs, the Sanford School Department is taking steps to prevent student homelessness and help families retain housing before the negative impacts can take effect. The district's efforts include screening incoming students and families for needs, partnering with community providers to connect families to resources, and working with families to keep students connected to learning.


 *In the 2024-2025 school year, the district helped 16 students and families move into stable housing and prevented homelessness for 55 more.*

**Whole Family Coaching and Housing Navigation:** York County Community Action Corporation has been a critical partner in addressing homelessness for families. Working with a consortium of schools across York County to identify students in need, its housing navigators have been highly successful in working with families to retain their housing and to quickly secure new housing when needed. With Foundation funding, the organization has also expanded its use of whole-family coaching – helping families achieve their goals and build long-term stability once their immediate housing needs have been met.

 *Since its work with schools began in early 2025, YCCAC has helped 83 families – including 157 students – secure housing.*

## CHILD AND CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH


When children – as well as their caregivers – have access to mental health supports, they are in the best position to build resiliency, mitigate the effects of adversity, and move forward. The need in Maine is clear: children and caregivers report high rates of mental health challenges, but affordability, lack of access, and an inadequate number of providers make it difficult for them to access the support they need.

 *The state's rate of children with anxiety (19%) is the highest in the nation and depression (7%) is the second highest. The rate of Maine mothers reporting poor mental health (11%) is the third highest in the country.*

Recognizing this critical need, the Foundation is working with partners to increase provider capacity, remove barriers, and more fully assess the health needs of Maine caregivers so supports can be more accurately targeted.

**MATCH:** Evidence Based Interventions (EBIs) have shown strong success in treating children with a range of behavioral health needs. In particular, an EBI called MATCH (Modular Approach to Therapy for Children) has not only been shown to be effective in treating anxiety, depression, and other issues, but in helping retain and increase the capacity of providers. Few providers in Maine have been trained in these treatment models, however. With funding from the Foundation, the University of Maine has embedded MATCH training in their Master's of social work and clinical psychology programs. Its first cohort of 16 graduate students completed the training in 2025 and are now utilizing the approach in child-serving field placements.

**MOMS Partnership:** Part of Bangor Housing's Moving Families Forward strategy has been offering support to caregivers who say their mental health has made it more difficult to care and provide for their children. Bangor Housing worked with the Yale Elevate Policy Lab to implement the MOMS Partnership, an established model designed to offer low-barrier mental health supports and stress management for mothers experiencing depressive symptoms and financial hardship.

 *Over the last two years, 60 Bangor mothers have participated in MOMS. Three months after completing the program, participants have continued to report significant increases in social support and use of positive coping strategies.*



**Maine Fatherhood Survey:** While a long-running public survey – the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System – has gauged the physical and mental health of mothers across the country, relatively little is known about fathers. Recognizing their important role in the health and well-being of children and mothers, the Lurie Children’s Hospital in Chicago has worked since 2018 to implement a fatherhood survey across eight states. With funding from the Foundation, Maine became the ninth state in 2025. Asking questions about mental and physical health as well as parenting habits, the survey will gain critical insights into practices and policies that could improve the well-being of fathers, mothers, and children alike.

## WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

When parents have resources, they are better able to provide the stability and support their children need to thrive – now and in the future. That connection is especially clear when it comes to employment. Starting or advancing their careers can help parents open the door to economic success and bring lifelong benefits for their children.


 **28% of Maine children live with parents who lack secure, full-time employment.**

In 2025, the Foundation supported several partnerships to offer assistance on those journeys. These include post-secondary supports for parenting students, career connections, and opportunities to build social capital.

**Rising Futures Maine:** Jobs for the Future is partnering with three rural Maine organizations – Franklin County Children’s Task Force (FCCTF), Maine Children’s Home, and Family Futures

Downeast – to develop community-driven strategies that advance the success of parenting students and their aspirations to secure family-sustaining careers. FCCTF is providing coaching and navigation, as well as peer support and connection, to a cohort of parents aiming to further their education. Maine Children’s Home is deepening support for young parents in its Journey program with a coordinated package of services, guidance, and support. Family Futures Downeast is tailoring its 2Gen offerings to engage more fathers and non-custodial parents in postsecondary and entrepreneurial pathways through its Start Up Downeast program.

**Industry Exploration Academy:** In its efforts to connect parents to meaningful employment, Bangor Housing has implemented the Industry Exploration Academy. In addition to providing coaching and skills training, participants in the eight-week program tour local businesses and organizations where they can learn about in-demand job opportunities and meet with potential employers. Barriers like childcare and transportation are addressed so parents can participate.

 **Four cohorts totaling 32 participants have completed the Industry Exploration Academy so far – 11 are now working full or part-time, 6 are enrolled in school, and several others are enrolled in work force programs.**

**Portland Connections:** Social capital often makes the difference in securing work and advancing in careers. With Foundation support, the City of Portland is working with the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, nonprofit partners, educational institutions, and local employers to help underserved populations make these vital connections. In this program, participants receive support to further their networking and professional skills while building one-on-one relationships with other local professionals.



# Strengthening Systems

## Comprehensive strategies to scale positive outcomes across whole systems

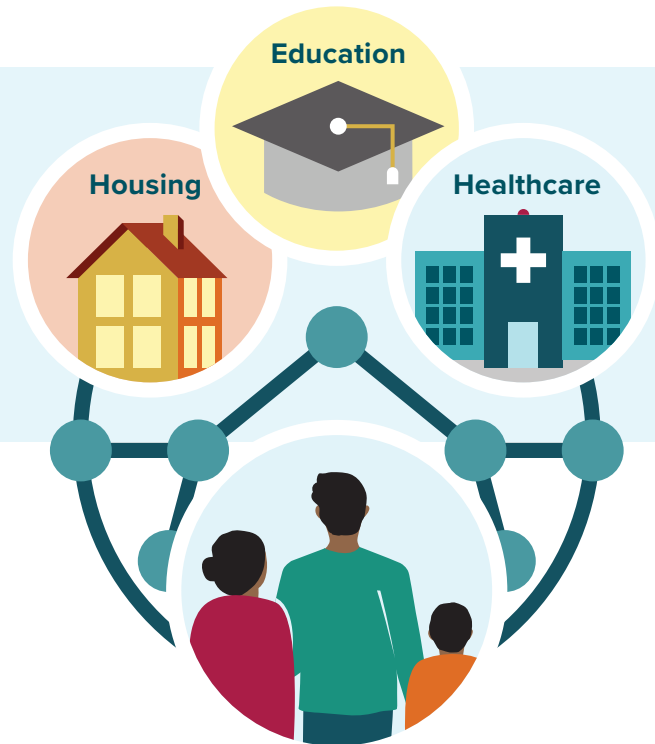
### MOVING FAMILIES FORWARD

Housing authorities play a critical role in stabilizing families through access to safe, affordable housing. The resources, partnerships, and relationships at their disposal also uniquely position them to support the broader well-being and aspirations of the families they serve. When these assets are intentionally aligned, housing authorities can help create transformative pathways for whole families.

Moving Families Forward (MFF), a partnership between Bangor Housing and the Boys & Girls Club of Bangor, brings this approach to life. By combining parent supports, family coaching, and youth development, MFF helps children and caregivers pursue their goals together.

The program currently serves 166 families with a total of 274 children. To help families overcome persistent barriers to stability and opportunity, build on their strengths, and support their aspirations, MFF provides access to programs and services across six components: (1) early childhood education; (2) social capital; (3) career and employment navigation; (4) out-of-school time learning, (5) economic asset building; and (6) health and well-being.

MFF's diverse strategies include: personalized, wraparound coaching to work toward goals and overcome barriers; opportunities to build savings through an Enhanced Family Self-Sufficiency Program; parenting workshops; financial literacy



classes; access to childcare; mentorship and afterschool/summer programming through the Boys & Girls Club; and partnerships with community partners to seamlessly connect participants to resources.

Regularly gathering input from parents, MFF remains responsive to emerging needs. In the last two years, it has launched several new programs – MOMS (Mental Health Outreach for Mothers) provides low-barrier mental health support; driver's education classes help youth and adults access transportation for work; and the Industry Exploration Academy allows parents to explore career opportunities and meet with employers.

#### Multiple outcomes demonstrate MFF's success and results for families:

- 67% of participants increased their income with an average increase of more than \$27,570 annually.
- 43% of caregivers have received job training or furthered their education.
- \$260,334 in escrow savings was distributed to 26 participants who graduated from the FSS program in the last year. Of those, six have gone on to purchase homes.
- 79% of BGC members feel supported and connected to mentors and staff.
- 78% of youth who completed a summer literacy program maintained reading levels despite the "summer slide," and 22% improved their reading


“The (MFF) program definitely created opportunities that never would have been possible otherwise.”  
– MFF Participant



## NORTHERN LIGHT HEALTH/MERCY HOSPITAL

From emergency care to prevention, hospital systems play a vital role in community health. Their deep understanding of how parent and child health is interconnected also makes them ideal settings for 2Gen strategies. At Northern Light Health/Mercy Hospital, two programs show how healthcare systems can use the approach to improve long-term outcomes for families facing complex challenges, including substance use recovery and high-risk pregnancies.

**McAuley Residence:** Mercy has long embedded a 2Gen approach in its work at McAuley Residence, a substance use recovery program where mothers can live with their young children. Over a phased process that can take up to two years, women receive recovery support, counseling, parent coaching and, for many, assistance in family reunification. Importantly, Foundation support has allowed the program to embed an Academic Success Coach to connect women to postsecondary education and family-sustaining career opportunities. Throughout, their children can access counseling, developmental support, and early childhood education.

 *The program currently serves 42 women with two residences in Portland and one in Bangor. With 1,600 enrollment requests a year, however, the program is working to open four more locations in rural areas of the state to meet an overwhelming demand.*

- 76% of all women who have completed the program remain in active recovery
- 100% of participants advance their education, earning their GED or working toward a college degree

“I’m thriving and my daughter is thriving.  
It’s all because of McAuley.”  
– McAuley Graduate

**Frances Warde House:** Since 2023, Mercy has also used a 2Gen approach to improve outcomes for those at especially elevated risk of adverse birth outcomes – women of color experiencing homelessness.

Through this residential program, expectant mothers receive safe housing during their pregnancy, along with perinatal care, access to doulas who see them through pregnancy and birth, and other essential services. Partners at In Her Presence also assist women in navigating cultural barriers, education, and employment systems with the goal of helping families secure long-term stability

 *Frances Warde has housed a total of 114 residents – 48 women and 66 children. Outcomes from the last year speak both to increased access to care as well as long-term stability:*


- 100 referrals were made to outside medical providers, connecting women at high risk of adverse outcomes with care before it became an emergency
- Program is starting to see reduced rates of C-Section, NICU stays, and hospital readmission among mothers
- 97% of women who have exited Frances Warde House currently live in permanent housing

## LEWISTON SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

When schools and community-based organizations work together intentionally, they can create an environment where students feel successful, supported, and understood before, during, and after the school day. In Lewiston, a unique and growing partnership between Lewiston Public Schools and Tree Street Youth Center is showing just how powerful that kind of collaboration can be.

Together, they have launched several innovative programs that are now in their second year of engaging students in new ways and making schools better spaces for learning and growth.

- **BRANCHES:** A mix of Tree Street staff and school educators at both the middle and high school offer students social-emotional and academic support, mentoring, and connection to resources
- **OWL:** Full-day academic support and coaching at Tree Street helps middle school students at risk of disengagement build skills to return to larger school settings.
- **RootED:** This restorative program supports students who have been expelled or suspended in developing and following through with a plan to return to school.
- **TreeSource:** A 10-week pilot codesigned by Tree Street staff and Montello Elementary leadership supported students with social-emotional coaching and calming strategies.

 *Combined, these interventions served nearly 700 students across the district last school year:*

- 558 students received BRANCHES program support.
- Participants in OWL’s pilot year saw a 70% reduction in behavioral incidents.
- 25 RootED students have returned to school after expulsion or long-term suspension.
- Over 10 weeks, TreeSource resulted in a 50% reduction in behavioral incidents.

“BRANCHES staff uplift my mood and help me do my work. It has changed my perspective on school.”  
– Student

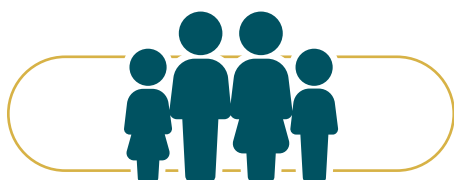






# Lessons and Recommendations

In addition to directly impacting children and families, the grants described in this report have yielded important lessons on how to address the challenges faced by Maine's children and families. Based on these insights, we offer several high-level recommendations for the consideration of practitioners, policymakers, and funders.



## **INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES:**

Parents and caregivers are the experts when it comes to what their families need to thrive. Partners who have invested time and energy to build relationships with families have seen greater success in the uptake of the services they offer. Best practices include co-designing with families; dedicating time and space to understanding what is most important to them; maintaining a strengths-and-assets orientation; honoring cultural values; building trust; and taking an adaptable approach.



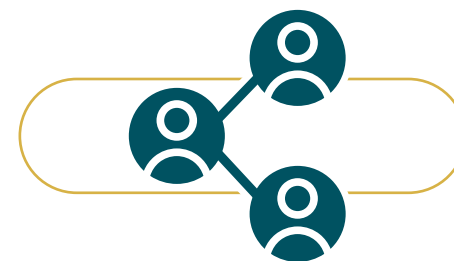
## **CULTIVATE ROBUST PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS:**

No single program or organization can do it alone. Robust partnerships can take the form of blending and coordinating funding, aligning and linking administrative systems, collaborating to advance family-supporting practices and policies, and committing to results-based work that tracks outcomes for children and the adults in their lives.



## **IMPLEMENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES THAT REMOVE BARRIERS:**

Families need assistance in navigating and overcoming the systemic barriers that keep them from accessing services and moving forward. Removing these barriers takes supports at multiple levels (wraparound, tiered, and tailored), funding to address economic barriers, access to childcare and transportation supports, and flexible offerings.



## **EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL:**

Families with young children often feel isolated and struggle to find natural places for connection in their communities. Opportunities to connect with other families and share their experiences reduce social isolation, build networks, and normalize the challenges that parents face. Community-based programs can play a vital role in bringing families together, enhancing a sense of community identity, belonging, and care. Community hubs – across the many different forms they take – can become trusted places for families to connect and access resources, while positioning partners to collaborate, align, and share resources and expertise.



## **INCREASE ACCESS TO NATIONAL BEST PRACTICES, DATA, AND SHARED LEARNING:**

Whenever possible, it's important not to reinvent the wheel. Using strong evidence or borrowing from lessons learned by others mitigates the need to start from scratch. Building on best practices saves time and resources, allowing children and their families to be reached in a more timely and effective way.



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