



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024





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# Introduction

## Message from the President



Dear friends,

It has been my honor to serve on the Board of Directors of Kids First for the past six years, and as its President these past two years. Having also attended programs as a participant, I certainly feel I speak from experience when I say that this agency truly embodies the spirit of “The Little Engine That Could.” With small, efficient staffing and a modest budget, Kids First has continued in 2024 to thrive and creatively serve the families of Maine (and beyond) as they work through the many challenges of raising children while living apart.

As an enthusiastic member of their active and dedicated Board, I know how important it is for an agency to be forward-focused and for its people to feel supported and prepared to meet whatever challenges the new year brings. In 2024, it was no different. A strategic new hire of a Client Coordinator with MSW credentials helped to round out staffing needs, and a larger-than-usual grant from the Maine Judicial Branch helped us keep our promise of never turning any parent or child away from a program due to a financial hardship.

Continuing with one of our mission goals of uniting professionals from the legal and mental health fields to collaborate toward a shared objective of minimizing children’s exposure to conflict, Kids First is proud to have launched an important initiative in 2024, the Kids First Institute. The Institute serves as a central location for professional learning opportunities, and a five part series on Reimagining Parallel Parenting commenced online in October and will conclude at an in-person conference in the Fall of 2025.

Another important development in 2024 was the reboot, and reimagining, of our in-person Kids First for Kids! Program. Coordinating with Portland’s University of New England to provide space for the four-hour group, kids of all ages are being welcomed by facilitators excited to be a part of this vital offering.

As we look ahead into 2025 and consider the successes and the challenges the year may have in store for us, the Board of Directors remains strong and dedicated to the mission of Kids First. Serving parents, children and the professionals who work with them during some of the most important periods in family’s lives is something that we all take very seriously, and ensuring that our programming remains accessible and relevant to all will continue to be our goal moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Pallozzi".

Jennifer Pallozzi  
Board President, Interim Director

# Our Story



## Purpose

The Kids First Center is a safe place for moms and dads to learn how to peacefully co-parent and how to keep children from the middle of adult disputes. Raising healthy and resilient children begins with a nurturing home environment free of ongoing parental conflict.

Through educational programming for parents, children and allies, the Kids First Center strives to support families during difficult transitions and teach resilience skills that last a lifetime.

## Mission

- Give children a neutral place where they can freely express their feelings about the separation or divorce of their parents and better understand the changes in their families
- Equip parents with the skills they need to work together to raise healthy and well-adjusted children through the transition of separation and divorce, and beyond
- Provide resources, continuing education, and collaboration opportunities for professionals who work with separating families

Kids First  
incorporated in **1998**

# Impact



## WHAT PARENTS HAVE TO SAY

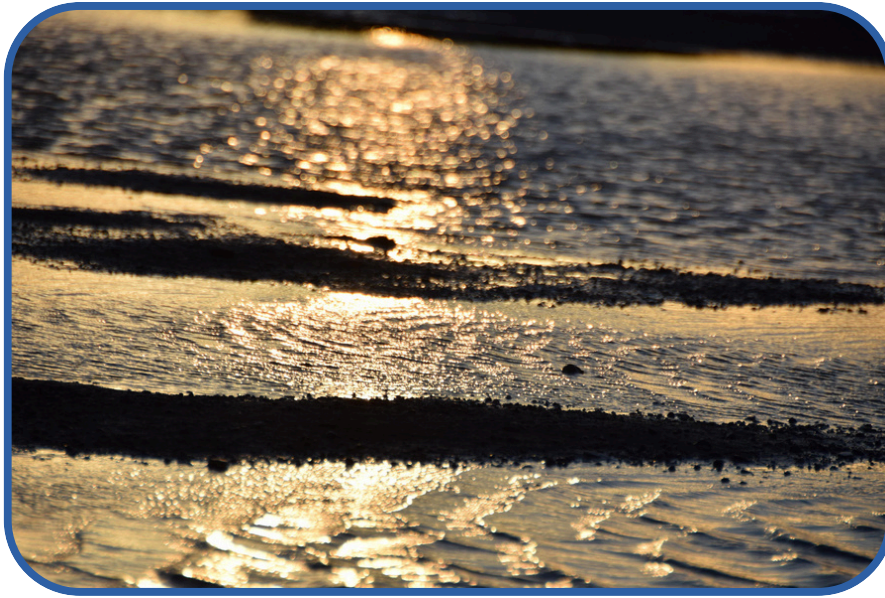
**Acceptance and forgiveness are just a few of the many ways that parents who attend our programs are showing up for themselves, their co-parents and their kids!**

- I need to forgive myself for ignoring real signs and symptoms that something was wrong for a very long time.
- When we had kids, I put so much into them and not enough into us, you and me. I am sorry.
- I held onto anger and frustration for longer than I should have and allowed it to spill over into unrelated areas unhealthily.
- I am committed to working on forgiving myself for not being the partner I wish I had been.
- I am sorry that I stopped making an effort to include you in the parenting of our children during the last years of our marriage.
- To the kids, I am sorry that we've been in conflict and we'll do better. You deserve better. And it will be better.

**49**  
programs offered

**1491**  
program participants

**~2782**  
children impacted



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Kids First provided over \$86,000 in scholarship assistance to parents in partnership with the Access & Visitation grant program through the Maine Judicial Branch
- *Kids First for Kids!* returned as an in-person support group run at the University of New England Portland campus
- Launched the Kids First Institute with a multi-webinar professional development series to culminate in an in-person conference in the fall of 2025
- Hired a client coordinator with MSW credentials and 10 years of non-profit experience
- Partnered with Caring Unlimited to provide domestic violence training to staff and others
- Held most successful fundraiser to date at Aura
- Recipient of the largest Access & Visitation Program grant from the Maine Judicial Branch in agency history
- Executive Director continued to serve on the Family Law Advisory Commission and on the Board of Maine Resilience Building Network (that transitioned to Maine Youth Thriving)

# Finances

## REVENUE:

Workshop/Conference Fees: \$165,243.12  
 Access & Visitation Grant (Maine Judicial Branch):  
 \$71,958.00  
 Other Grants: \$52,973.00  
 Donations: \$40,118.67  
 Fundraising Events: \$83,623.06  
 Misc. Income (rent, publication fees): \$5,746.72  
 Other Income: \$7,411.72

## EXPENSES

Administrative: \$53,521.66  
 Office: \$28,221.73  
 Outside Services: \$52,505.06  
 Personnel: \$246,817.07  
 Programming: \$44,559.74  
 Fundraising: \$26,378.43  
 Other Expense: \$41.43

\$456,934

our annual budget

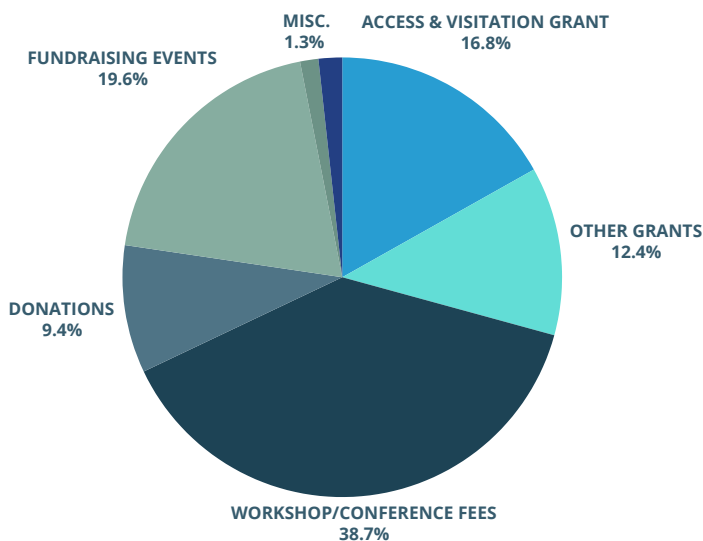
>\$86,000

provided this much  
financial assistance to  
program attendees

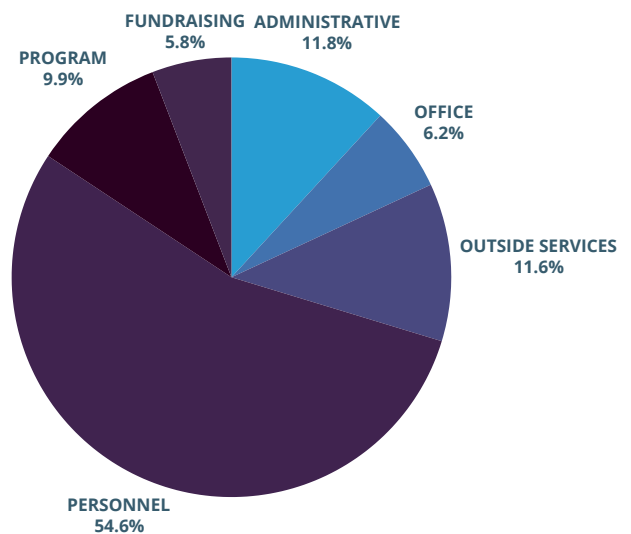
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number of participants  
turned away due to  
inability to pay fees

REVENUE 2024



EXPENSES 2024



# Educational Programming

## For Parents, Kids & Allies



### 1

#### **Kids First Program: The First Step**

This four-hour online workshop introduces the foundational skills necessary for an effective co-parenting experience. This workshop will explore topics including basic family and parenting law concepts, what role a child's development plays in building resilience, how to care for yourself during a divorce/separation, and what skills are helpful for parenting together while living apart.

### 2

#### **The Next Step Program: Putting Conflict Aside**

This comprehensive twelve-hour online workshop offers an in-depth exploration of the concepts covered in the *First Step Program*. Throughout four weeks, small groups will collaborate on exercises aimed at refining communication and conflict management skills. Attendance of the *First Step Program* is required prior to joining this workshop.

# 3

## **Kids First for Kids!**

This is a free, four-hour in-person group just for kids! Children join with their peers for an engaging and interactive group designed for kids in grades one through seven whose families are experiencing a separation, a divorce, or a difficult post-separation time. Parental consent from both parents is required to attend.

# 4

## **Kids First Program for Women**

This six-hour online workshop is designed for female-identifying parents who have left relationships where intimate partner violence or domestic abuse is present. This program provides information about parenting and co-parenting under these circumstances, about abuse and its often-changing form after a separation, as well as safety planning and community resources.

# 5

## **Kids First for Parents with New Partners**

This four-hour workshop outlines challenges faced in parenting and co-parenting when new partners are introduced into the family. The impact of a new relationship on family systems is discussed, along with strategies for making this transition successful for children and to enhance the family experience for all.

# 6

## **Intensive Co-Parenting Education (ICOPE)**

This nine-week (27 hour) online program provides intensive co-parenting training. Participants must be ordered by a Maine court to attend. ICOPE is designed to build co-parenting skills for parents in high-conflict situations or who have little or no effective communication, either during the initial parental rights litigation or post-judgment.

# 7



## Kids First Institute

Throughout the year, the Kids First Institute for Professional Learning explores important topics for professionals supporting families with children raised by separated parents. This initiative includes four 2-hour webinars and a culminating in-person conference planned for Fall 2025, gathering experts to enhance co-parenting practices across various disciplines. The Institute also offers free, one-hour workshops open to parents, professionals and allies.

## 2024 Institute Calendar

Professional Conferences:  
Reimagining Parallel Parenting: Insights from Research: A Review of Academic Literature and Case Law

Free Workshops:  
Good Digital Co-Parenting

Celebrate Every Tradition: Co-Parenting Through the Holidays



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