



Around here, we don't look backwards for very long... We **keep moving forward**, opening up new doors and doing new things because we're curious... and curiosity keeps **leading us down new paths**.

- Walt Disney

Dear Friends,

Children's Friend is thrilled to celebrate a monumental milestone: 190 years of dedicated service to nurturing children and empowering families in our community. We are excited to unveil our new organizational brand in the coming months, symbolizing our enduring commitment to making a difference in the lives of those we serve.

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense gratitude for the dedication of our entire Children's Friend community. With great pleasure, I share the 2023 Annual Report, a testament to our remarkable journey together.

At Children's Friend, we believe every child deserves the very best start in life, regardless of the challenges they may face. This belief has been at the heart of our mission since 1834, guiding us through times of change and uncertainty. In 2023, we continued to adapt and innovate, ensuring our commitment to nurturing children and empowering families' well-being remained steadfast.

The pages of this report showcase our accomplishments and achievements from the past year. From expanding our Early Childhood Education programs, to reaching even more families in need, to the incredible dedication of our staff and volunteers, who tirelessly worked to positively impact children's lives, the stories within these pages demonstrate the power of our shared mission.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that our work is far from done. In a rapidly changing world, the challenges children and families face continue to evolve. Our commitment to adapt, innovate, and respond to these challenges remains resolute as we look to the future.

I would like to thank our donors, partners, board members, employees, and the entire Children's Friend family for your dedication, compassion, and unwavering support in nurturing children and empowering families. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of thousands of children, offering them hope, opportunities, and a chance for a better future.

In 2024, let us continue to work hand in hand, bringing positive change to the lives of children and families in our community. Our efforts are not only affecting present-day families but also leaving a lasting impact on future generations. Together, we can shape a world where every child has the chance to thrive and reach their full potential.

Thank you for being a part of Children's Friend. Your support is the driving force behind our success, and together, we will continue to build a better tomorrow for all.

With warmest regards,

David Caprio President & CEO

David

Our Principles

FAMILY-CENTERED

Discovering child and family needs and working with families to best meet them. Providing opportunities for families to be meaningfully engaged in the design of services.

Being committed to serving families of diverse cultures and lifestyles in a non-biased and non-judgmental way.

SEAMLESS

Coordinating and integrating our services to ensure that families receive the support they need, regardless of point of entry to the agency. When our families face challenges outside our expertise, we partner with other high-quality organizations.

OUTCOME-DRIVEN

Thoughtfully measuring the impact and effectiveness of our services. Engaging in ongoing learning and innovation to ensure we are offering effective services to children and families. Consistently identifying what we can improve, doing what we can do best, and measuring ourself against national benchmarks.

STEWARDS

Taking responsibility for growing and sustaining our human and financial capital. Demonstrating respect and cultural sensitivity for our community, staff, and Board.

ADVOCATES

Taking a leadership role in educating policymakers and the public on the needs of the youngest and most vulnerable children, even when it means taking risks for the benefit of children.







MISSION

Children's Friend is the innovative leader in improving the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable young children.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Too many of the youngest and most vulnerable children in Rhode Island are experiencing devastating outcomes, including death, as a result of abuse and neglect. As stewards of the resources entrusted to us, Children's Friend is realigning itself to proactively respond to this crisis.

Children's Friend is a founding member of the Child Welfare League of America and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and the National Head Start Association Program of Excellence.

The names of children and families we serve have been changed to protect privacy and confidentiality.



Gold Transparency 2023 Candid.



Improving Access to High-Quality Child Care

High-quality child care is essential for the healthy development of children during their formative years. The early years of a child's life are crucial for cognitive, emotional, and social growth. Providing an environment that fosters healthy development is not only beneficial for the child but also contributes to the well-being of families and society as a whole. However, achieving high-quality (and the ratings to prove it) is a significant challenge with the lack of public investment in early care and education, compared to other wealthy countries.

Despite the odds, five Children's Friend sites earned a five-star rating from the Rhode Island quality rating entity, BrightStars. BrightStars measures quality through the implementation of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System that assesses early care and education programs in the following standards: learning environments, teacher/child ratio, maximum group size, teacher qualifications, leadership qualifications, child assessment, curriculum, inclusive classroom practices, continuous quality improvement, and family engagement.

"A five-star rating for our sites shows that we have the highest quality rating in all 10 standards," said Kristen Caine, Manager of Early Childhood Partnerships. "We are so proud of our staff at the Althea, Dean, Dorcas International, King, and Friendship sites, which all achieved five stars. A five-star rating is proof that these sites are offering the highest quality care and education to our children and families."

King, which opened its doors in 2022, was one of the sites to achieve a five-star rating for the first time this year. This facility is embedded in a mixed-use building that includes affordable housing.

"There's enough to worry about when you're a parent," said Dominique, whose child attends Early Head Start at King. "Knowing my baby is getting the best care possible gives me peace of mind."

To take part in BrightStars, child care centers conduct annual self-assessments to determine strengths and weaknesses. Then they plan how to improve to reach a higher star level. As of January 2023, 261 (82 percent) licensed child care centers, 326 (83 percent) licensed family child care homes, and 27 (47 percent) public schools with preschool classrooms had a BrightStars rating. Eighty-four (26 percent) licensed early learning centers, four (1 percent) licensed family child care homes, and 18 (32 percent) public schools had met the benchmarks for a high-quality rating of four or five stars.

"Making child care available and accessible to families is one part of the challenge. Making that care high-quality requires experience, coordination, and a deep dedication to the children and families we serve," said Tanya Anderson, Child Development Supervisor at King. "We were very excited when we received the news from BrightStars. Our hard work paid off."



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Tanya Anderson,
 Child Development
 Supervisor





The playground
symbolizes a collective
commitment to our
children's happiness
and development.

- Georgina Rodriguez, Lead Head Start Teacher Our community came together in support of its youngest members during 401Gives, a statewide day of giving, making it possible for Children's Friend to install a playground at our King center in Providence. This new space is not just about slides and swings; it represents hope, unity, and the boundless potential of play to enrich the lives of children.

"The playground symbolizes a collective commitment to our children's happiness and development," reflects Georgina Rodriguez, a dedicated educator at King.

Play is the language of childhood and a building block of healthy development. It enriches cognitive abilities, ignites creativity, strengthens physical capabilities, and enhances emotional well-being.

The generosity of our donors and supporters continues to make dreams like these playgrounds a reality. The space is more than an area for children to play; it's a launchpad for joyous exploration and a vibrant classroom without walls, enabling children to discover the world and their potential.

"I feel brave," exclaimed Mariana, a Head Start student, as she climbed on the structure.

Engaging in play equips children with essential problem-solving skills, promotes overall physical health, and fosters emotional resilience. In every laugh, every leap, every brave climb children like Mariana make, the playground embodies the spirit of our community's dedication to nurturing the next generation.



Project Connect: Celebrating Thirty Years of Keeping Children Safe and Families Together

Children's Friend celebrated the 30th anniversary of Project Connect in 2023. Project Connect started as a pilot made possible by a small grant from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The goal was to explore whether wraparound intervention services for substance-affected families could help keep children safely in their homes or provide for successful reunification.

Today, Project Connect successfully addresses the challenges of substance use disorders on families through a tested and replicated model of service. The intensive, home-based program provides support for an average of one year. Project Connect staff are specially trained in substance misuse and child welfare risk assessment.

"We connect families with resources and providers, ensuring families are not facing barriers to treatment. We really are an advocate all the way around," said Tiffany Rezendes, Family Preservation Worker.

In April 2020, the Project Connect program began working with the Urban Institute on a randomized treatment control evaluation. Between 2020 and 2023, clients who met program criteria were randomly selected to receive Project Connect services. Children's Friend and Urban Institute also conducted meetings with various partners such as the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) social caseworkers, supervisors, family court judges, and attorneys from the Rhode Island Public Defender and Rhode Island Legal Services. And researchers conducted focus groups with

clients who received Project Connect services. The next phase of the evaluation will explore outcome data to elevate Project Connect from a "promising practice" model to an evidence-based model within the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (CEBC). Achieving evidence-based status will further qualify the Project Connect approach for children and families involved in the child welfare system due to substance use disorder.

Consider Nelson's story: Nelson was referred to Children's Friend by his case worker at the DCYF, just as he was beginning his recovery journey. He was eager to find resources to support him and his son as they worked to build a new life. "I was open-minded and willing to put the work in. I was connected with a real-life person—not just a case worker—an amazing person, and I hope our friendship lasts for a lifetime," Nelson shared. He attributes his capacity for healthy parenting to using the skills he learned through his involvement in Project Connect, particularly crediting his relationship with his case worker, Geneva. Today, Nelson is in recovery and has full custody of his son. As a single parent, he navigates the stress and challenges of juggling school and work schedules.

Project Connect is nurturing children and empowering families by increasing child and family safety and improving child well-being. These remarkable outcomes have led to the replication of Project Connect in all eight Washington, D.C., wards and two Pennsylvania counties.





Children's Friend

connected the pieces

when it came to parenting.

They gave me advice and

skills that I still use.

Nelson,
Project Connect Client



The success stories we witness serve as a testament to the efficacy of our approach, reaffirming our commitment to nurturing children and empowering families for generations to come.

- Christine Crohan, MSEd., Early Intervention Manager

NURTURING CHILDREN. EMPOWERING FAMILIES

Nurturing Growth: Empowerment Through Early Intervention

Children's Friend's dedication to nurturing and empowering families, led us to Adam and Michelle. Adam was referred to Children's Friend after he was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). At the time of diagnosis, Adam's mother, Michelle, had recently become a single parent. She was navigating this major life transition and supporting Adam and his two siblings as best she could. Despite her resilience, the family did not have the support it needed.

Their lives were transformed through the dedication of our Early Intervention team. Over a six-month period, our compassionate workers, Shanik Pimentel and Marilenis Perez—along with their supervisor, Liz Lanni—helped the family deal with the multiple challenges that can accompany an autism diagnosis. They helped Michelle access Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) resources and collaborated with the school department to ensure tailored support for Adam's educational needs.

Michelle was also empowered by workers at Children's Friend to reach out to neighbors and explain Adam's diagnosis, which helped resolve misunderstandings. Today, the family has greater support within their community.

Early Intervention provides services to children under age three with developmental delays or disabilities. Over the past two decades, Children's Friend has reached thousands of children and families through Early Intervention, nurturing the potential of every child.

Our multidisciplinary approach and family-centered services ensure every child receives the support they need to thrive. Stories like Adam's serve as a testament to our ability to empower families as they navigate adversity.



Donors Make It All Possible

Thanks to your support, Children's Friend provided essential services to the most vulnerable children throughout Rhode Island.

20,040 Individuals participated

in our services

Families received healthy food, nutrition, and education referrals from

Substance-affected families participated in intensive home-based services through Project Connect, designed to help parents overcome addiction while safely parenting their children

WIC

Children were placed in safe and stable foster

homes



Children and their families participated in our high-quality Head Start program





Families received routine home visits, through Nurse Family Partnership

Families received quality bilingual child care services

Children with developmental challenges were supported through Early Intervention

Hello! Hola!

High risk moms and their children, from birth to age three, were served through **First Connections**

240,476

Nutritious meals were provided for children in our classrooms



NURTURING CHILDREN. EMPOWERING FAMILIES

Our Thanks to You!

Thank you to the generous donors who made Children's Friend a philanthropic priority in 2023. Children's Friend is grateful to the individuals, businesses, foundations, and organizations who are dedicated to ensuring the well-being and healthy development of our state's most vulnerable children and their families. This commitment to our work enables us to provide essential and life-changing services to children throughout Rhode Island. Our donors made an investment in the future of our community. Thank you to every one of you who made a difference!

We appreciate the generous support of our donors. The following lists were prepared with great care. If you feel as though your name has been listed incorrectly or omitted, please accept our apologies and let us know by emailing fundraising@cfsri.org.

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Luis Hunt and Jeuris Ledesma found Head Start at our Berkshire Center when they were first starting their business. They needed somewhere for their two young sons to be nurtured during the day so they could focus on building their company. Their children thrived under the guidance of teachers Ms. Cindy and Ms. Judy, opening up a world of possibilities in the warm and inviting classrooms.

As their business prospered, the Ledesma-Hunt family consistently supported Children's Friend. They have provided hands-on experiences for fathers in our Dad's Program, participated in the Holiday Drive, and provided in-kind support through the donation of some of their services to maintain our welcoming spaces. Their nearly 20 years of dedication reflects a belief in the potential of children and families, the power of community, and the hope for the future.

The Ledesma-Hunt family exemplifies the reciprocal spirit of giving and receiving, nurtured over time, that has allowed Children's Friend to continue making a difference for Rhode Island's children.



Whatever I'm
donating, Children's
Friend is going to
make sure they use it
for the children.

for the chitaren.

- Luis Hunt



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Members of The Harriet Ware Society, demonstrate their care and commitment to Children's Friend's mission to ensure its enduring impact across generations. Harriet Ware, the organization's founder, planted seeds that have grown for almost two centuries. Our financial stability guarantees ongoing support for children and families during difficult times.

A heartfelt thank you to the current Harriet Ware Society members. Your commitment, and dedication to our cause and the well-being of children today, tomorrow, and beyond is truly appreciated. Your foresight in making planned gifts, including us in your estate planning, and prioritizing philanthropy for our organization, ensures our continued success in serving the community.

Curious about joining this dedicated group? Notify us of your planned gift intent, whether through an estate provision, naming Children's Friend as a beneficiary in your retirement plan or life insurance policy, or other means. We would be honored to acknowledge your generosity and include you as a valued member.

In the future, the demand for crucial services will persist. Thanks to past donors and those who have chosen to leave a lasting gift to Children's Friend, we have the confidence to meet these needs for years to come.

If you are interested in exploring planned giving options with Children's Friend, please contact us at fundraising@cfsri.org.



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Children's Friend would like to thank our tribute donors for honoring or memorializing those who selflessly gave back to improve the lives of others.

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The *Investing in Our Children Luncheon*, in its 21st year during 2023, remains a cornerstone event for Children's Friend. The event raises over \$200,000 annually to support the agency's vital work. Hosted at the Friendship center in Providence, this esteemed gathering underscores the community's commitment to nurturing and supporting our youngest children. Through the generosity of attendees, sponsors, and organizers, the luncheon celebrates the achievements of Children's Friend and ensures the continuation and expansion of programs that make a difference in the lives of children and families.

Interested in joining the planning committee or becoming a sponsor, contact fundraising@cfsri.org.

Children's Friend would like to express our appreciation to those listed below for their generosity to our Investing In Our Children Luncheon.

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Foster Care is Community Care

It is crucial for children to grow up in secure and nurturing environments. In their early years, children are in the process of forming connections, learning to communicate, and expressing affection. They are also building self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. Children's Friend's foster parents fulfill a fundamental need and sow the seeds for a healthy future. Our foster parents come from diverse backgrounds but share a common dedication to positively impacting a child's life. A heartfelt thank you to our devoted foster parents who generously open their homes and hearts to children in need.



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If you would like to learn more about becoming a foster parent, visit www.cfsri.org/foster-care.

Holiday Drive

The Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive by Children's Friend, a tradition for over 30 years, reached more than 1,060 families and 2,500 children in 2023, providing them with clothing and toys. This initiative stands out for its personalized support, ensuring gifts meet the specific needs of those served, and extends its care beyond the holiday season.

A family where the mother is struggling to provide her children with essentials such as food and clothing. A family of four where both parents are working, but with the ever-increasing cost of living, they are barely getting by. A family of three where the mother has significant health issues and medical bills are piling up. These families, and many more, benefited from the overwhelming generosity of our Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive donors. A heartfelt thank you to all supporters who embody the true spirit of giving and strengthening our community.

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Illuminating the Holiday Season Through Volunteerism

This holiday season, the spirit of generosity shone brightly at Children's Friend, significantly magnified by the remarkable dedication of Bank of America volunteers. Their participation went beyond mere volunteerism; it was a powerful demonstration of compassion and a shared mission to brighten the holidays for those in need.

Bank of America's team did not just contribute their time and effort; they brought an outpouring of smiles, compassion, and a deeply rooted commitment to ensuring that every child and family experienced the joy and warmth of the season. By sorting, packing, and personally sponsoring families, they guaranteed that the Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive was not only a success but a memorable occasion for both the receivers and the givers. Each child received thoughtful gifts, carefully selected and delivered with care, transforming the drive into an event

filled with heartfelt warmth and lasting memories.

This collaboration between Children's Friend and Bank of America stands as a profound example of what is possible when the corporate sector and nonprofit organizations unite for a common cause. It underscores the significant impact that such partnerships have on the community—amplifying the reach of charitable initiatives, enriching the fabric of our society, and fostering a growing network of support that extends well beyond the holiday season.





NURTURING CHILDREN. EMPOWERING FAMILIES

HOLIDAY DRIVE CONTINUED

Kaushal Joshi Elizabeth Judge Kahn, Litwin, Renza & Company, Ltd. Christine Karolyshyn Patricia Kausel Sharon Kav Arthur and Dorothea Kazianis Robin Keeley Scott Keenan and Lisa Devine-Keenan Deb Kelleher Susan Kelly John Kephart Anne Kerkian Victoria Kermen JoAnne Kessinger Jessica Ketrow Emilee Kilburn Katherine and Joe Killilea Katlyn Kimball Charlotte King The Kings Cathedral Sozo Groups Danielle Korell Advait Kothare KPMG, LLP Jason Kulak Jackie Kulis Jacob and Abigail Kuntzleman Nancy LaChance Pauline Lacharite Donna Lafontaine Scott Lajoie Ronald and Shirley Laliberte Rachel Lanci Danielle Lang and James Mello Marilyn and William Lang

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North Kingstown and East Greenwich Book Club Amanda Notarantonio Nancy and Emilio Notarantonio Jeremy Nunes John Nunes Marina Nysten Denise Ober Melissa Obstfeld Ocean State Charities Trust Robert Odoardi Robert Ogle Old Navy Olivia Knighton Foundation Oliver Day School Kait O'Mealey Omni Providence Hotel Orchard Farms School Jimmy O'Rourke Jenn Oyle Shawnece Pacheco Nichole Paciello and Andrew Leach Rebekah Page Wade Palazini **Paolino Properties** Pappas OPT Elizabeth Paroli and Wayne Kezirian Dylan Parrow Jim Partington Partridge Snow & Hahn, LLP Amy Paul Susan Pavao Stephanie Peduto Lori Pemberton Robin Pena-Brown

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St. Mary's Catholic Church

St. Mary's Parish

St. Michael's Church

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Scott Soucie

Roberta and Michael Soucy

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Paola Speciale

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Joseph Spokis

Amee Spondike

Joe and Christa Spremulli

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Danielle Trombino

Richard and Christina Turcotte

Robert and Linda Tyler

UCT-Narragansett Council 699

Sandra Umbdenstock

United Way of Rhode Island

University of Rhode Island Police

1 Otic

US Sailing Association

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Zach Vallante

Franchesca Vargas

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Jyoti Verma

Matthew Vieira

Nellie Vieira

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Warwick Neck Elementary

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The 1834 Society is our leadership giving program that recognizes donors who make a deep investment in Children's Friend through annual contributions of \$1,000 or more. They are making investments in creating a lasting impact on children we work with today and generations to come. They champion our mission and choose to make Children's Friend a philanthropic priority.

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instead where there

is no path and

leave a trail...

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our Team - The Children's Friend Staff

In challenging times, the dedicated team at Children's Friend is changing the world one child at a time. Through 2023, our team banded together to provide the highest quality services to children and families across all our programs. Their dedication to our mission, vision, and values is apparent each and every day.

Children's Friend is proud to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of our valuable employees. Thank you for your hard work and continued commitment to our success. This list is current as of May 1, 2024.

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There is nothing more beautiful than someone who goes out of their way to make life beautiful for others.

- Mandy Hale

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Impact Of Investments

Annual Income Statement

Revenue	
Contracts	27,567,799
Fee for Service	6,158,857
Investment Income (losses)	1,015,868
Contributions/Grants	1,540,621
Donated Goods, Services, Facilities	928,070
Other Income	33,083
Total Operating Revenue	\$37,244,298

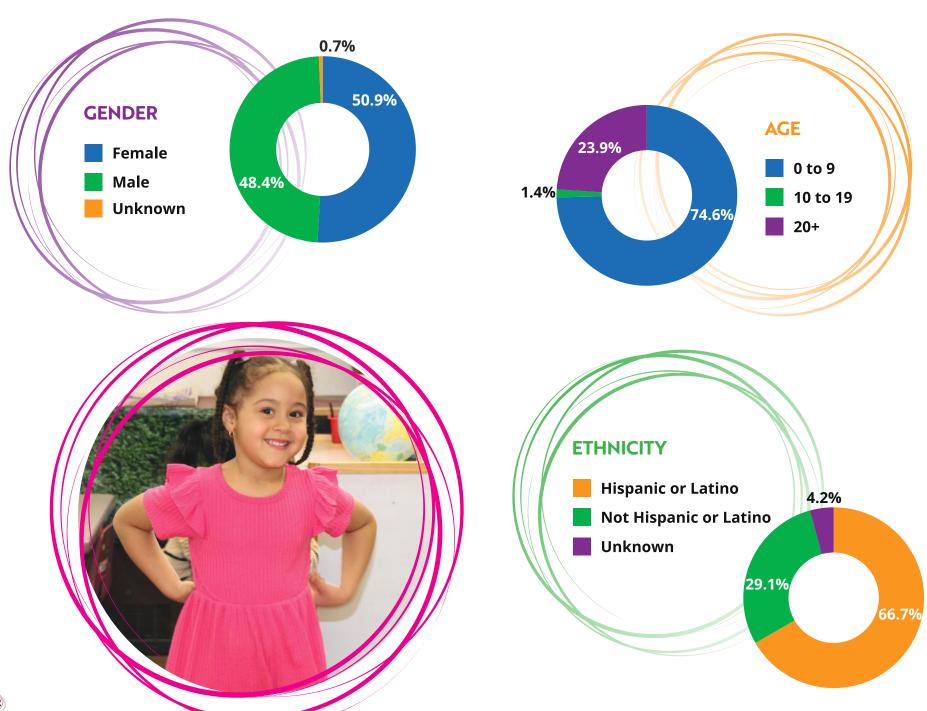
Expenses	
Early Intervention	2,536,538
Family Preservation	3,287,069
Family Support	24,240,392
Health and Nutrition Services	5,881,008
Total Program Expenses	\$35,945,007
Administration/Development/ Fundraising	1,750,074
Total Operating Expenses	\$37,695,081

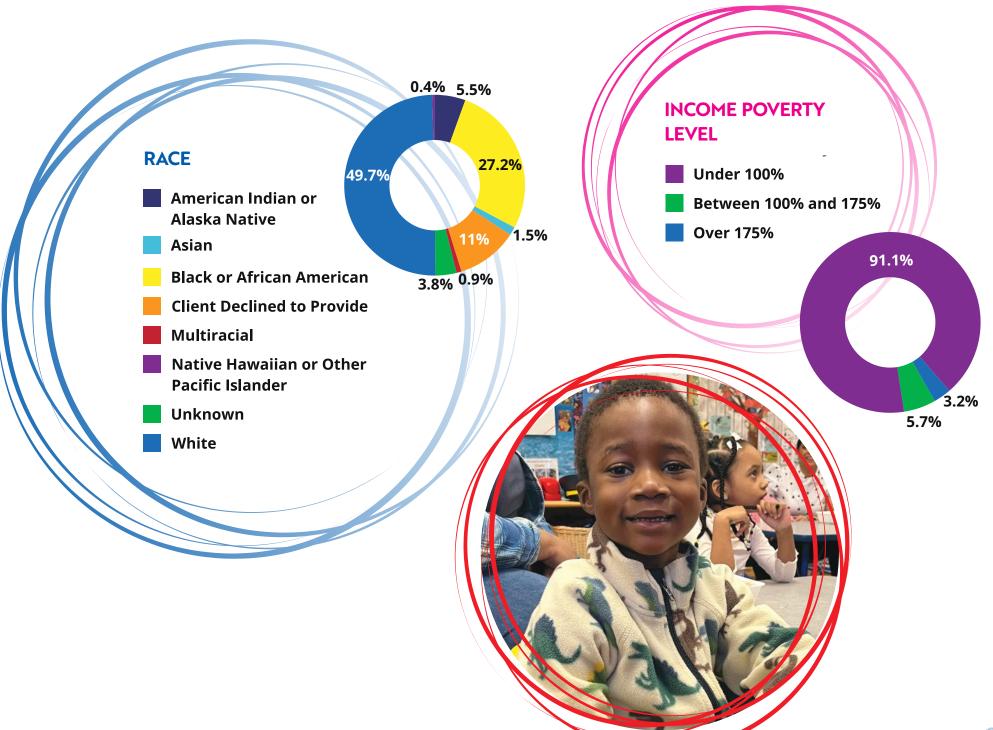
The agency's audited financial statements are available upon request. For more information, please contact info@cfsri.org or 401-276-4300.



This annual report was written and designed by the philanthropy team at Children's Friend.

A BREAKDOWN OF THOSE WE SERVE







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