



MAINE CHILDREN'S TRUST

Annual Report 2020



Our Mission

To prevent the abuse and neglect of Maine's children

Our Vision

To lead a statewide effort to prevent child abuse and neglect by organizing a strong unified voice that abuse is preventable and to facilitate collaboration to accomplish this goal

Our Values

We believe:

That child abuse is preventable;

In fostering collaboration;

Our work must respect and engage differences;

We must be resource conscious.

Maine Children's Trust envisions a world where all children thrive, and all people are treated with dignity and respect. We recognize that communities of color face disproportionate effects of adversity. The Maine Children's Trust commits to looking inward and outward to do our part toward eliminating systemic racism and discrimination. We believe Mainers want the best for all children. We all have a role to play in ensuring equity and eliminating the disparities that impact our children's futures.

History

Maine Children's Trust was originally created by Statute in 1985 as a part of State Government. In 1994, legislation was enacted that transformed the Trust into a 501(c)3 non-profit governed by a Board of Directors and designated the Trust as a Maine income tax checkoff recipient. The Trust's governing guidelines remain in statute. The Trust provides leadership and coordination of efforts throughout Maine to prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs. The Trust provides funding and supports for prevention programming, as well as coordinates several statewide collaborative initiatives to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Affiliations

- **Office of the Administration for Children & Families Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention | State Lead**
- **Parents as Teachers | State Office**
- **Brazelton Touchpoints Site | Maine Touchpoints Project**
- **Circle of Parents | State Chapter**
- **National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds | Network Affiliate**
- **Prevent Child Abuse America | State Chapter**
- **National Family Support Network Affiliate | State Network Lead**
- **Association of State and Tribal Home Visiting Initiatives | Member**

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Renee Whitley*

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***Represents a local Prevention Council**

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

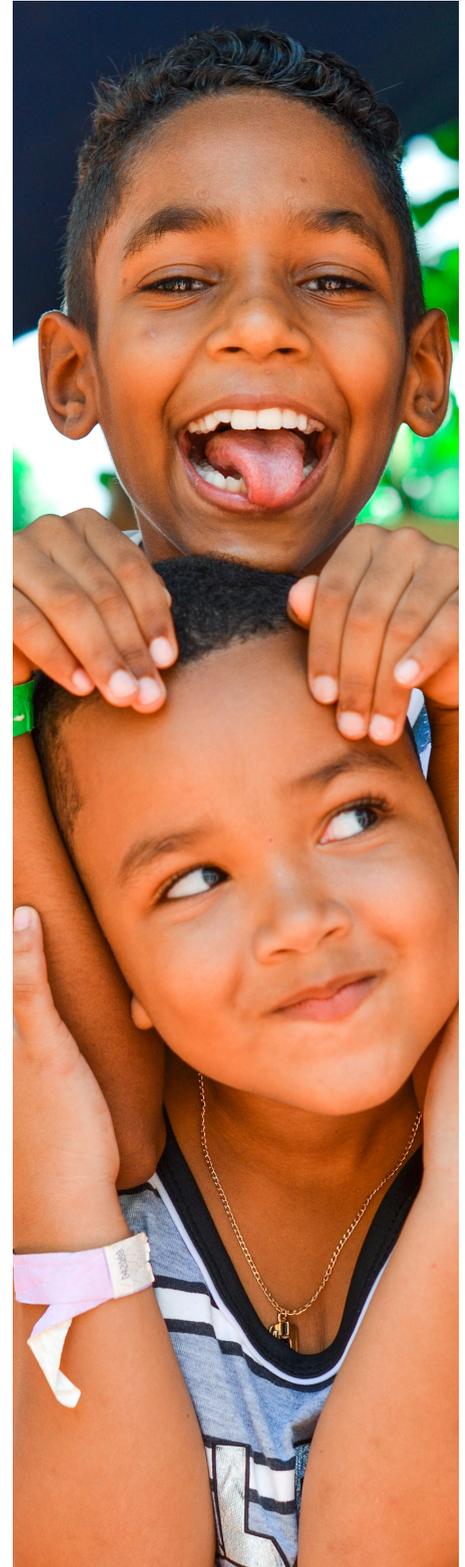
This has been an incredibly difficult year, with many families facing hardships that they have never before experienced. We have worried about the increase in family violence that has largely been invisible due to the isolation brought on by the pandemic. We have worried about families being able to meet their basic needs with the interruptions in employment and inability to find childcare in order to work. We have worried about the inequities that the pandemic exposed. We have worried especially about families that were already under-resourced and over-burdened prior to the beginning of the pandemic.

These worries spurred action. Maine Children's Trust provides central coordination for two of Maine's strongest prevention efforts – the Maine Families Home Visiting Program and the Prevention Councils. In response to the pandemic, Maine Children's Trust supported the local providers in quickly adapting their work so that they could continue to provide services consistently to families. Family visits have continued to take place using interactive video conferencing, as have many parenting classes, parenting support groups and family groups. Maine Families visitors and Prevention Council staff have done contactless drop-offs of urgently needed food and diapers that families had no other way to access. These services have been lifelines for many families that otherwise would have had no supports. We have been in awe of the strength and resilience that the prevention workforce has shown, while at the same time weathering many of the same challenges as the families they served.

We also launched the In It Together media campaign to help parents navigate parenting challenges during this uncertain time by connecting them with local parenting resources and fostering social connections. We are about to launch an exciting new community-based initiative that provides community members with the knowledge, skills, and encouragement they need to take an active role in preventing abuse and neglect before it occurs. There is a role for everyone in preventing abuse and we thank all of you who contribute to making Maine a place where all children can grow and thrive in safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments.

Charles Soltan, Esq.
Board Chair

Pam LaHaye
Executive Director



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Executive Director

Pam LaHaye

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What We Know From Science

Experiences during the prenatal period and the first two to three years after birth affect lifelong health at least as much as they affect school achievement. Policies and programs that reduce stress, prevent toxic exposures, and provide support for pregnant mothers and families with infants and toddlers will result in better health outcomes across the lifespan and save billions in health care costs. Taken another way, if we delay early investments until later in the preschool period, we will miss a critical opportunity to build a stronger foundation for a healthier and more productive adult population.¹

Toxic stress:

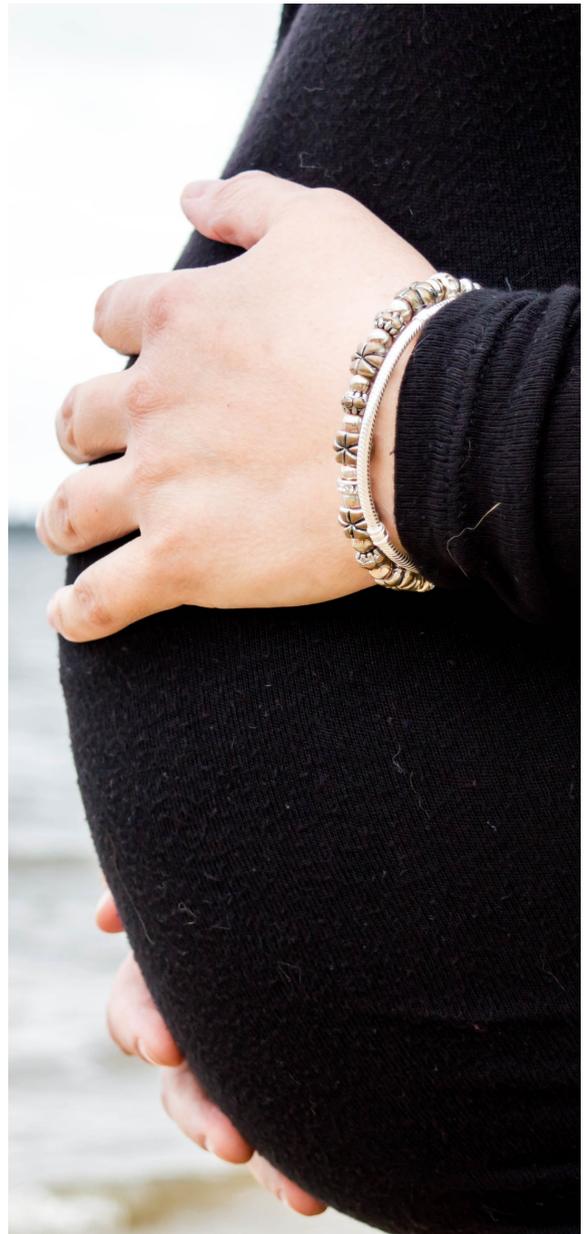
- weakens the architecture of the developing brain, which can lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health.
- can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse and chronic neglect—without adequate adult support.
- or prolonged activation of the stress response systems, can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into the adult years.
- experienced as childhood trauma- including being the victim of child abuse and neglect—is associated with increased risk of health and psycho-social problems later in life: alcoholism and alcohol abuse, illicit drug use, depression, intimate partner violence, adolescent pregnancy, unintended pregnancies, liver disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, ischemic heart disease, and more.²

If policies and services can reduce sources of ongoing, excessive stress for young children and their families—such as poverty, racism, violence, housing instability, and food insecurity—we can dramatically reduce the need for costly treatments for a wide range of health conditions.³

1 <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/health-and-learning-are-deeply-interconnected-in-the-body-an-action-guide-for-policymakers/>

2 <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>,

3 <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/findings.html>



Our Call to Action

Every year, thousands of Maine children ages 0-17 are victims of child maltreatment including neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

Of the 11,057 child abuse assessments conducted during the calendar year 2019, 4,547 children were determined to be victims of maltreatment.

- 62.5% of children were neglected.
- 35.0% were emotionally abused.*
- 29.5% were physically abused only.
- 7.9% were sexually abused only.

*Percentages add to over 100% because children can experience more than one abuse type.



Maine **babies under 1 year of age** are, by far, the age group most often found to be victims of child maltreatment. In 2019, 523 Maine babies, ages 0-11 months old, were found to be victims of substantiated neglect and/or abuse.

From Report to Maine Children's Trust, Information Services Unit, Office of Child and Family Services, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, February 19, 2020.



The Importance of Prevention

Child abuse prevention efforts have never been more critically important than they are now as families face unprecedented stressors. Prevention programming that supports parents when parenting is stressful reduces the likelihood of maltreatment, reduces isolation, and offers resources to help families be more resilient. This individual support creates a springboard for other positive developments and actions and correlates directly with a decrease in societal problems such as substance abuse, crime, and other health-related issues. Foundational causes of childhood trauma, including exposure to substance misuse, domestic violence, and abuse and neglect, can lead to significant challenges in adulthood. Supporting families to reduce their stress so that they can focus on supporting their child's healthy development is key to reducing the potential of child trauma. Child abuse prevention research strongly supports primary prevention efforts as an effective deterrent to the human and financial impacts associated with child maltreatment.

The prevention programming efforts led by the Trust are proven strategies for strengthening families and saving funds that might otherwise be needed for intervention or treatment service. The Trust focuses on primary and secondary proactive prevention strategies to stop maltreatment before it occurs. All families can benefit from primary prevention activities, while secondary prevention efforts focus on families that have identified risk factors. The Trust provides a solid infrastructure to help local community-based organizations deliver these high-quality prevention services and activities in ways that fit local needs. Child abuse prevention creates a society that places value on supporting one another, the importance of child wellbeing, and nurturing our next generation.

Protective Factors



For many years, the child abuse prevention field focused primarily on risk—how likely abuse or neglect might occur when risk factors are present. Risks, such as poverty, trauma, and disabilities, among others, are known to contribute to the likelihood that a child might be abused or neglected. Yet most families, including those at risk, do not abuse or neglect their children. Certain conditions, when present in families' lives, help them to overcome the odds that could otherwise lead to tragedy. Those conditions are protective factors. Outcomes for children affected by trauma can be improved by helping their families build protective factors. In other words, protective factors help to mitigate risks; they can help families to weather life's stress and trauma with less damage. Through building protective factors we can help families develop assets and skills for handling life's challenges more effectively.*

Strengthening Families is a research-informed approach, developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five key Protective Factors, which is at the core of all Maine Children's Trust initiatives.

- 1) Knowledge of Child Development:** Information on how kids grow and how to help each unique child thrive
- 2) Parental Resilience:** The ability to bounce back from stress and cope with challenges in a positive, constructive way
- 3) Concrete Supports in Times of Need:** Access to services and resources that keep a family safe and healthy, such as food, shelter, and healthcare
- 4) Social-Emotional Competence of Children:** Children know that they belong, know they are loved, understand their feelings, and can get along well with others
- 5) Supportive Social Connections:** Having friends, family, and community that provide emotional support in tough times and help celebrate good times

* <https://friendsnrc.org/prevention/protective-factors/>

Our Action Areas

The Trust focuses our efforts to support Maine communities and families in three areas:



- **Strengthening Communities** - We know when communities are strong, inclusive, and supportive then children and families thrive. Support is provided to communities through partnerships, resources, and evidence-based strategies.
- **Supporting Families** - Programs and assistance to families are tailored to the community needs by utilizing various data sets, evaluation results, community feedback, requests, and ongoing involvement by community leaders.
- **Leading Primary Prevention Efforts** - The Trust is leading child abuse prevention efforts in Maine through training and expertise to guide proven prevention programs both locally and statewide.

Examples of Our Impact

Strengthening Communities:



- The Protective Factors Framework is used to guide our efforts in all initiatives including Maine Families, Prevention Councils, and all other prevention initiatives.
- Prevention Councils utilize the CDC's Socio-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention tailored to the unique needs in each county in Maine.
- Prevention Councils also offer specific programming chosen from 16 curricula based on community feedback from 16 local Advisory Boards made up of 257 local community leaders, as well as from referrals and community requests.

Strengthening Communities Continued:



- Working with partners in over 20 local organizations, we know that no single individual, organization, or government agency working alone can stop child maltreatment. It is imperative that we work together, sharing best practices and expertise in learning communities, training, and resources.
- The Trust provided ongoing training to our contracted partners resulting in 55 trainings. In turn, our partners provided trainings to family-serving professionals resulting in 279 trainings that included 1,083 educators, 860 childcare providers, and 156 medical professionals.

Supporting Families:



- Family (Home) Visiting, offering individualized parenting education and support, was provided to 1,770 enrolled families with 1,850 children through 19,150 home visits last year.
- Families were assisted with everyday parenting challenges through multi-session parenting education. Specifically, parenting education helped 903 mothers, 476 fathers, 14 grandparents, and 6 foster/adoptive caregivers. Additional resources, support groups, and information resulted in 11,827 caregivers supported.
- Additionally, results of parenting education survey demonstrated parenting education is building protective factors. When asked to what extent the statement "the future looks good for my family" was true for caregivers, 78% said it was "quite a lot" or "just like their life" after participating in a Prevention Council program, compared to 41% who responded that way before they participated. Among caregivers who provided feedback on whether the statement "My family takes time to listen to each other" represents their experience, 81% said that was "quite a lot" or "just like their life" after participating in Prevention Council programs, compared to 44% who said the same before participating.
- Providing supportive environments for families to connect and share resulted in 1,205 caregivers participating in support groups.
- Many community referrals to local resources were provided.
- Concrete supports provided directly to families through our partners included 151 portable cribs through our Cribs for Kids initiative.

Our Primary Prevention Efforts:



- The Trust provided 24 community grants focused on child abuse prevention efforts distributed through an annual granting process to local agencies.
- Offering evidence-based child abuse prevention trainings, the Trust strengthens the capacity of local programs to deliver high-quality services.
- A social norms campaign with media messaging was developed to focus on normalizing the need for support for all families.
- To demonstrate quality in all we do, we utilize the National Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support, evaluation, a continuous quality improvement process, and earned endorsement of programming.
- Unifying local, state, and regional organizational efforts, the Trust convenes a statewide Infant Safe Sleep & Period of Purple Crying Coalition to share data, best practices, resources, and expertise to protect our most vulnerable population, infants under one.



Maine Families Home Visiting

Central Coordination

Maine Children's Trust has supported home visiting in Maine since the 1990's through advocacy, grants and training. In 2010, the Trust assumed responsibility for providing system coordination, quality assurance and technical assistance with all the State contracted home visiting sites. Eight years ago, all home visiting system supports came under the Trust's umbrella – quality assurance, quality improvement, training, technical assistance, staff credentialing, along with data collection and reporting. The Trust became the home of the Parents As Teachers State Office, the national model utilized by Maine's home visiting system. During this time, more in-depth Standards of Practice were created that allowed for even greater consistency in services offered by the local contracted agencies delivering the program.

In 2016, the Maine DHHS consolidated all home visiting contracts and the system supports (infrastructure) into one contract with the Trust. The Trust has managed the direct service contracts with the local agencies since that time for no additional cost to the grant beyond the infrastructure costs. All Maine Families sites have achieved and maintained Blue Ribbon Affiliate status with Parents as Teachers (PAT) after undergoing a rigorous endorsement process. Maine was the only state to have achieved this distinction for all PAT sites.

Local Contacts

Androscoggin & Oxford
Community Concepts, Inc.
207-783-3990

Aroostook
Aroostook Council for Healthy Families
207-532-1141

Cumberland
The Opportunity Alliance
207-553-5801

Franklin
Franklin County Children's Task Force
207-778-6960

Hancock
Maine Family Planning
207-667-5304 Ext. 225

Kennebec & Somerset
KVCAP
207-859-1577

Knox, Lincoln & Sagadahoc Counties
The Parent Program of MidCoast Maine
207-832-0343

Penobscot & Piscataquis
Penquis
207-974-2481

Waldo
University of Maine Cooperative Extension
207-342-5971

Washington
Down East Community Hospital
207-225-0438

York
Southern Maine Health Care
207-490-7704

Evidence-Based Services to Families

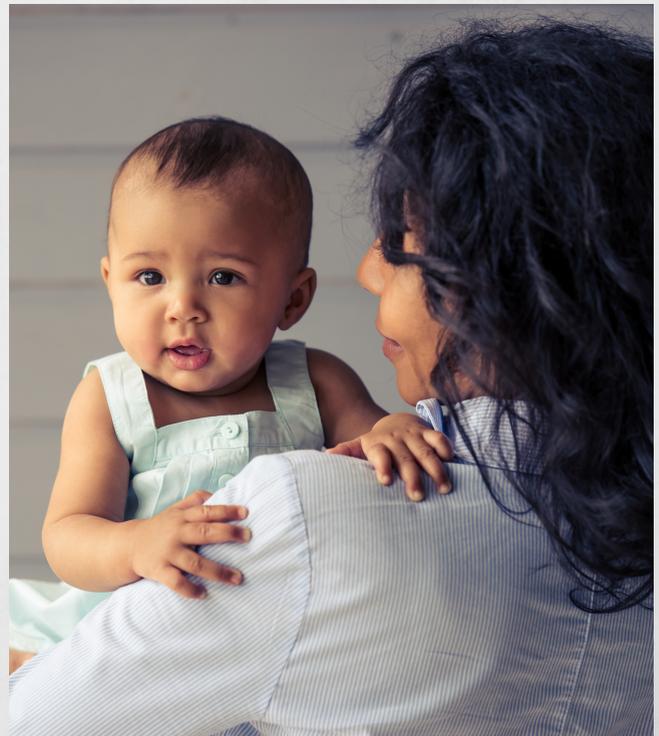
Offered in every county of the state through a well-established and rigorously accountable system of performance-based contracts with local agencies, Maine Families Home Visiting is a voluntary program available for pregnant women, expectant couples, and parents or primary caregivers of children from birth to age three.

As affiliates of the international Parents as Teachers (PAT) evidence-based model, services are delivered by highly-trained specialists to ensure safe home environments, promote healthy growth and development for babies and toddlers, and provide key connections to needed services. Family visitors use a non-judgmental and compassionate approach that empowers parents with skills, tools, and confidence to nurture the healthy growth of their baby.

The intensity and length of service is matched to family needs in response to an individualized needs assessment. This allows for careful optimization of resources, in which highest-need families receive more frequent visits over a longer period of time. Maine Families consistently delivers positive outcomes for Maine's youngest children and their families in areas such as maternal and child health, child development, safety, and family well-being.

Maine Families Pandemic Response

When the emerging pandemic made visits in the home unsafe last March, Maine Families quickly shifted to working with families virtually. Maine Children's Trust provided training and guidance in using an interactive video conferencing (IVC) platform for family visits and families were able to continue to receive services by phone or IVC. Families were connected with needed resources and continued to have the support of their family visitor as they faced new and additional stressors. Many families described this connection to their visitors as a lifeline. With participating families' and visitors' safety at the forefront, visits will continue to be virtual until it is once again safe for the visitors to be in families' homes.



Funding for Maine Families is provided by the Department of Human Services: Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. This program is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$17,023,033 with 22% financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov).

Prevention Councils

Central Coordination

Maine Children's Trust has supported the prevention efforts of the Prevention Councils since the 1990's with grant funding, public awareness, and technical assistance. Since 2015, the Maine Department of Human Services has executed agreements with the Trust to lead and coordinate a statewide project to prevent child abuse and neglect. Through this effort, the Trust supports the Councils in their statutory role as the county-level coordinating entity to lead and deliver child abuse prevention efforts.

The Prevention Council statute guides the Trust in providing central statewide leadership, strengthening the network, and ensuring ongoing delivery of free evidence-based and evidence-informed child abuse programming in every county in Maine. A toolkit has been developed to guide data evaluation, integrate data with community feedback, and develop prevention plans and priorities. The Trust provides a centralized data system, core programming training, and technical assistance to ensure consistency in service delivery, as well as model fidelity.

Funding for the Prevention Councils is provided by the Department of Human Service: Office of Child and Family Services.

Local Contacts

Androscoggin & Oxford
Community Concepts, Inc.
207-783-3990

Aroostook
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207-532-1141

Cumberland & York
Kids Free to Grow
207-985-5975

Franklin
Franklin County Children's Task Force
207-778-6960

Hancock & Washington
Sunrise Opportunities
207-225-3426

Kennebec & Somerset
KVCAP
207-859-1577

Knox, Sagadahoc & Waldo Counties
Midcoast Maine Community Action Program
207-859-1577

Lincoln
Healthy Kids
207-563-1818

Penobscot & Piscataquis
Penquis
207-974-2481



Prevention Councils

Evidence-Based and Informed Services to Families

The Prevention Councils use a structured approach to build a system of support for local communities and the families that live in them by:

- Focusing on primary and secondary child abuse prevention strategies
- Utilizing the social-ecological model
- Using the Protective Factor framework, a strengths-based approach developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy's
- Delivering evidence-based curriculums and supports
- Conducting an annual Needs Assessment
- Creating an annual Prevention Plan that is informed by OCFS Child Maltreatment data
- Offering activities in response to unique county-specific needs and use SMART objectives for each county in Maine
- Encouraging active participation from the community through an Advisory Board comprised of diverse community leaders, as well as leveraging community partnerships
- Evaluating parenting education and professional training to ensure families voices are heard

The Prevention Councils also serve special populations identified through prevention planning and offer programs for fathers, substance-affected families, co-parenting/separated families, prenatal families, as well as offering education in child sexual abuse prevention. In addition, the Prevention Councils provide training to family-serving professionals in each county in the following trainings: Infant Safe Sleep, Protective Factors, Mandated Reporting and Period of PURPLE Crying, an abusive head trauma prevention training.

Prevention Council Pandemic Response

Prevention Councils supported families during the pandemic by:



- **Decreasing isolation** through social connections, which are positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental support.
- **Increasing knowledge of child development** parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.
- **Providing access to concrete supports** and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.
- **Providing support and understanding of parental resilience**, which helps in managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.
- **Providing information and support to strengthen the social-emotional competency of their children through parent-child interaction** that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain a relationship.



Maine Children's Trust is coordinating and funding a new primary prevention program, The Front Porch Project® of Maine, sparked by community needs expressed due to recent tragic child losses as a result of abuse. After thorough research, planning, and training, the Prevention Councils are set to deliver the training directly to the community, with a goal to encourage community members to be committed and engaged in protecting children while supporting families in their community.

The Front Porch Project® is a community-based primary prevention initiative based on the belief that everyone can – and should – become more aware of how to help protect children and support families in their own community. It provides community members with the knowledge, skills, and encouragement they need to take an active role in preventing abuse and neglect before it occurs. The Front Porch Project® is flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of a specific community.

With education, support, and training, community members can help prevent abuse and neglect before it occurs. The Front Porch Project® facilitates supportive discussions and interactive activities to help community members navigate difficult situations involving children and families. The training sessions are provided free by a local Prevention Council and open to anyone. The goal of the Front Porch Project® is simple – to engage and train the community to help protect children, support families, and prevent abuse and neglect.

The Front Porch Project® was developed by the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance. Maine Children's Trust is the first organization to make this project available on a statewide basis. Funding for this project in part comes from community donations made on behalf of Marissa Kennedy.

Social Norms Campaign



Launched in the midst of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, the In It Together Maine campaign provides supports to help parents navigate parenting during the uncertainties of this difficult time by connecting parents with local parenting resources the Prevention Councils provide, as well as fostering social connections. Beyond the span of the pandemic, the campaign hopes to make a lasting effect in the way that Maine families consider the resources available to them, and to cultivate a community of parents that stay in touch and support each other long after the retreat of the virus. The campaign is comprised of a TV commercial, radio ads, social media campaign, and local promotional efforts by Prevention Councils, as well as an online map of resources.

To achieve these goals, the campaign has four specific objectives:

- Change parental attitudes around reaching out for help
- Promote the free services of Prevention Councils as a parenting resource for all parents
- Normalize the idea that parenting is hard
- Provide supports to families during a difficult time

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A CHILD'S LIFE

Help support community programs that prevent child abuse and neglect by making a tax-deductible donation to Maine Children's Trust with three easy options:

- 1** Simply "check off" a donation on your Maine Income Tax Return Schedule CP/Voluntary Contributions and Park Passes
- 2** Mail a check to our address below:
56 Leighton Road
Augusta, Maine 04330
- 3** Go to www.mechildrenstrust.org and click to donate by credit card or PayPal.



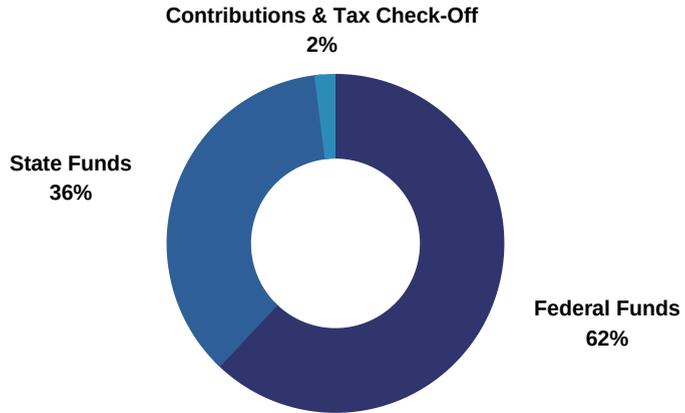
For more information:
Phone: 207-623-5120

Email: info@mechildrenstrust.org

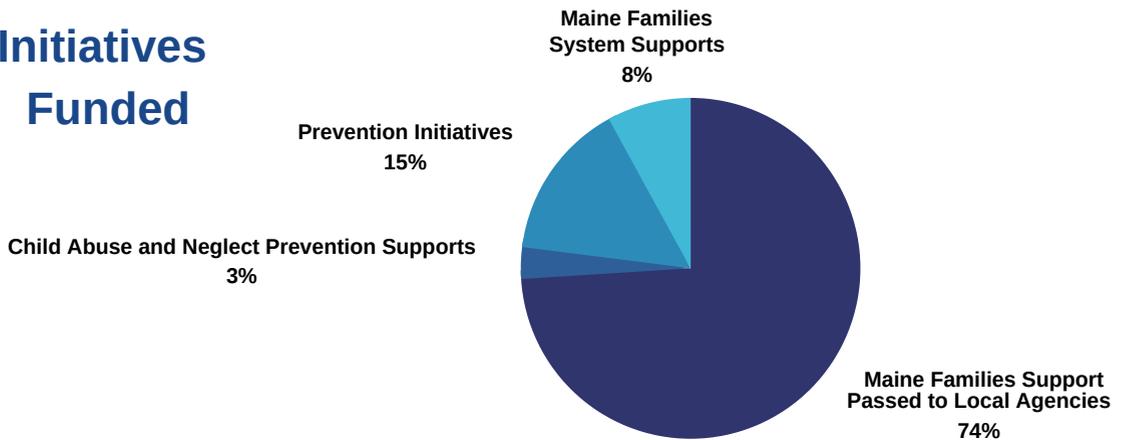
FY20 Financial Overview

Maine Children's Trust receives funding from both the federal and state governments, as well as individual donors, in support of our mission to prevent child abuse and neglect. Below is an overview summary of our agency funding sources and initiatives funded for FY20 beginning on July 1, 2019.

Agency Funding Sources



Initiatives Funded





SPEAK UP FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES!

You can make
#GreatChildhoods happen.



56 Leighton Rd., Augusta, ME 04330

207-623-5120

info@mechildrenstrust.org

www.mechildrenstrust.org

 MaineChildrensTrust

 MaineFamilies



