



Annual Report 2025





Welcome

We are proud and excited to share Families Matter’s 2025 annual report, highlighting the growth, resilience and successes of the families and individuals we support. This year, our programs reached thousands of parents, caregivers and children, providing the skills, confidence and connections they need to thrive, today and in the future.

Inside, you’ll find inspiring stories and key impact metrics that show how our values in action are making a difference every day. Thank you for exploring the work we do and the lives we touch.

Land Acknowledgement

Use with permission from the Calgary Foundation

In the spirit of respect, reciprocity and truth, we honour and acknowledge Moh’kinsstis, and the traditional Treaty 7 territory and oral practices of the Blackfoot confederacy: Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Stoney Nakoda Nations: Chiniki, Bearspaw, Goodstoney and Tsuut’ina Nation. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta Districts 5 and 6. Finally, we acknowledge all Nations — Indigenous and non — who live, work and play on this land, and who honour and celebrate this territory. This sacred gathering place provides us with an opportunity to engage in and demonstrate leadership on reconciliation. Thank you for your enthusiasm and commitment to join our team on the lands of Treaty 7 territory.

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Message From the Director

As I reflect on 2025, I always feel gratitude and pride for the community that surrounds Families Matter. This year reminded us again that strong families are the foundation of a healthy, connected community, and that when we invest early, intentionally, and compassionately, the impact ripples far beyond the moment.

Throughout 2025, Families Matter continued to walk alongside children, parents, and caregivers during some of life’s most pivotal times. From welcoming new parents and supporting perinatal mental wellness, to strengthening family resilience, engaging fathers, and creating inclusive, culturally responsive spaces for learning and connection, our work remained grounded in prevention, and belonging.

What stands out most this year is not just what we delivered, but how we delivered it. Guided by our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and reconciliation, we deepened partnerships, listened closely to community voices, and continued evolving our programs to better reflect the families we serve.

None of this would be possible without our incredible staff, facilitators, and peers, whose dedication, creativity, and compassion show up every single day. Their work is supported by a committed Board of Directors, generous funders, donors, and community partners who believe like we do, that prevention matters, families matter, and connection changes lives.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on building capacity within families, supporting mental wellness, and creating spaces where every family feels seen, valued, and supported. The challenges families face continue to evolve, and so will we, rooted in learning, collaboration, and hope.

Thank you for being part of the Families Matter community. Together, we are building a future in which families are nurtured to be happy, healthy, and resilient.

With gratitude,



Lisa Barton
Executive Director

Message From the Board Chair

Serving as Board Chair of Families Matter Society of Calgary continues to be both an honour and a privilege. Family and community are at the heart of my values and experiences, and as a parent I have seen firsthand the impact that a supportive family environment can have on children and caregivers alike. This perspective makes the work of Families Matter especially meaningful to me.

Families Matter plays an important role in helping families access the resources, guidance, and connections they need to thrive. Through parenting education, early childhood programs, and family supports, the organization empowers caregivers and strengthens relationships. When families are supported and empowered, individuals flourish and communities grow stronger.

Over the past year, the Board has remained focused on providing strong governance and supporting the dedicated leadership and staff who bring this mission to life every day. This year also marks a time of transition for our Board, as we recognize and thank several members whose terms are concluding. Their commitment, insight, and stewardship have helped shape the organization and strengthen its ability to serve families across our community.

On behalf of the Board, I extend sincere thanks to our staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners who make this work possible. It is a privilege to support the incredible team at Families Matter as they continue to create a lasting impact on the well-being of families in our community.



Lindsay Hogan
Board Chair

Board of Directors

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Our Culture: Where Values Meet Action

Our Mission

To empower families so that caregivers and children build resilience and thrive.

“Being a parent is the hardest job. This class helped me achieve my goals for my child and me quicker and more effectively.”
– *Be A Great Dad Program Participant*

Our Vision

A connected community in which children and families are nurtured and supported to be happy, healthy and resilient.

“Creating a community and safe space. It was amazing to feel heard, accepted and welcomed. I feel the skills and lessons learned will stay forever. Having childcare provided was so important! My daughter loved attending, and it gave me a break that was so needed to work on me.”
– *Postpartum Support Group Participant*

Our Core Values

We are an agency that lives its values in our work every day.

Respect *Playfulness*
Resilience *Self-Awareness*
Collaboration

“The ability to get messy in a safe and supportive environment where many parents and adults can relate to each other and express frustration, creativity and needs. I am a stress-nut but this program alleviated that so I could enjoy getting messy stress free with my child.”
– *Messy Fingers Participant (Family Development Centre)*



Who We Serve

PARENTS
We walk with parents through every stage of family life. From prenatal experiences to navigating complex family dynamics. We provide evidence-informed guidance and practical tools and supportive relationships that help parents build confidence and foster healthy child development.

MOTHERS
We support mothers to feel confident, connected and cared for throughout the parenting journey. Through perinatal mental health supports, in-home services and practical parenting strategies we create space for mothers to build resilience, strengthen attachment, and nurture their relationship with their children

FATHERS
We strengthen the capacity of fathers to be engaged, confident and connected caregivers with their children. Through in-home support, peer-based programs and group learning opportunities we support men in building meaningful relationships with their children and co-parent.

PROFESSIONALS
Families Matter builds capacity across the community to better support families by supporting our professionals. Through evidence-based training and collaborative learning, we equip professionals with the knowledge, skills, and empathy needed to respond to the evolving needs of children and families.

CAREGIVERS
We recognize and support the vital role of all caregivers in a child's life. By offering a number of ways for individuals to engage in support and services that are meaningful to them and the children in their life to continue to build nurturing environments.

YOUNG PARENTS
We support our young parents with compassion, respect and without judgement. Through tailored programming, we help young parents understand their own development as well as developing their parenting skills, creating positive pathways for themselves and their children.

NEW FAMILIES TO CANADA
We support newcomer families to feel welcomed, connected, and empowered in their new community. By honoring cultural identities while helping families navigate systems and access resources, we build bridges to belonging, reduce isolation, and support strong, resilient family foundations.

Our Impact in 2025



Finding the Path Back: A Mother's Journey

A mother of a six-month-old was referred to our Perinatal Mental Health Support Program by her family doctor. Experiencing significant postpartum anxiety and intrusive thoughts regarding her baby's safety, her condition was so debilitating she was unable to leave the house. This led to deep isolation, low parenting confidence, and difficulty balancing well-being with caregiving.

Her anxiety prevented her from allowing her partner to care for their child or letting the child explore their environment.

Early screenings indicated she was at the highest level of risk. A Support Worker provided weekly individualized in-home support, building trust to deliver psychoeducation and tools to help her understand her intrusive thoughts.

Support included coping and grounding strategies, guidance on realistic self-care, and an focus on how anxiety impacted her child's development and her relationship with her partner.

As her anxiety decreased, she transitioned to a support group and attended drop-in programs at Families Matter. This helped normalize her journey, addressed her child's developmental needs, and decreased her sense of isolation.

By the end of the program, her overall risk level decreased from high to low. She reported a significant reduction in anxiety, stronger emotional regulation, and a marked increase in parenting confidence.

She now participates in group sessions while utilizing childcare and has developed trust in her partner's ability to care for their child. This shift strengthened co-parenting and improved communication, helping her become the parent she hoped she would be.

Thriving Together: A Young Parent's Journey

Our new Breathing Space Respite Program support **44 unique families** that impacted **84 children**

A young mother was referred by Alberta Health Services when her baby was five months old. Despite an uncomplicated pregnancy, she felt isolated and overwhelmed after a recent move and was struggling to connect with her child.

Early screening identified significant concerns regarding postpartum depression and safety, including thoughts of self-harm.

Through regular in-home visits, she worked with a home visitor to build stability. They created a safety plan and focused on emotional regulation, self-care, and responsive caregiving. These sessions helped her understand infant development and her own strengths.

As trust grew, staff observed a shift in her confidence; her interactions with her baby became warmer and more engaged. Developmental screenings confirmed the baby was thriving through play-based bonding activities.

By the program's end, mental health scores improved from high-risk to low-risk, with no ongoing thoughts of self-harm. She reported strong gains in bonding, caregiving confidence, and overall well-being.

Now back to part-time work, she feels hopeful about her future, noting that the judgment-free support strengthened both her mental health and her relationship with her son.

92%

of parents felt **confident as caregivers** after taking the **PMH Program**



Breaking the Cycle: A Father's Journey

"I was initially pretty apprehensive about this course. But after last week's session, I walked away feeling something I didn't think I'd feel: connection.

I saw real commonalities between myself and the other participants. We're all trying to be better, present and to show up for our kids in ways that perhaps weren't modeled for us. What could have felt like just another structured course ended up feeling like a support group.

The exercise we did in Session 3—about the overlapping circles of our past, present and what we want for our children—was unexpectedly powerful. As we were prompted to name our childhood emotions, the one that stuck with me—and actually surprised me—was abandoned. I had never written down that word before. Never said it out loud in relation to my dad. And now that I can name it, I can begin to heal it. I know in my heart that I never want my children to feel that way.

My dad just left. Just absence. And I've carried that with me, mostly in silence, for decades. But I refuse to let my children carry that same silence. I'm not making the same choice my father made. I'm choosing to stay emotionally and mentally present even in physical absence.

When we were asked to write how we want our children to feel, I wrote: 'I want my children to feel that I fought for them.' That line means everything to me. Because that's what I'm doing.

Every moment I spend reflecting and writing and learning how to show up differently—that is me fighting for them. I'm working hard to become a father they can be proud of. A father who breaks the cycle. This is more than a program. This is a lifeline."

Growing Closer: A Father's Journey

A father joined Families Matter seeking the skills to support his children's emotional needs while navigating a separation and shared custody. His goals were to rebuild trust, strengthen communication, and adapt his parenting as work demands increased.

Initial sessions provided a safe space to explore his frustrations with co-parenting, while one-on-one coaching developed his skills in emotion coaching, active listening, and self-regulation.

Over several months, the client showed measurable growth in consistency and patience. Before seeking support, his children had limited contact with him outside of scheduled visits. However, as the father became more emotionally available, the children began advocating for themselves and initiating contact.

A significant milestone occurred when the children independently arranged to spend a birthday celebration with their father, despite a conflicting parenting schedule. This demonstrated a profound shift in trust and emotional safety.

The client continues to report increased confidence in his parenting and deep gratitude for the strengthened bond with his children.

234

parenting classes
were offered to
parents in 2025

884

fathers attended
Programs in 2025





From Crisis to Community: A Family Finds Stability

When a residential fire displaced one family, the challenges extended far beyond the loss of their home. Living in a hotel without a local support network, the parents struggled to navigate unfamiliar systems while facing significant language barriers.

Seeking stability for their young child, the father reached out to Families Matter for help.

Our staff began by building trust and identifying the family's immediate priorities. Developmental screenings revealed areas of concern for the child, while the mother faced deep isolation.

To bridge the communication gap, staff provided hands-on assistance with service applications, involving the father by phone to ensure both parents felt confident in their decisions.

The family was encouraged to join our Connect and Play programming, which provided a welcoming community and allowed for further developmental assessments. We also coordinated referrals to specialized community partners for formal support.

Through consistent relationship-based guidance, the family found their footing. Regular participation in drop-in sessions allowed staff to celebrate developmental milestones alongside the parents. Eventually, we supported a successful transition into a daycare program equipped to meet the child's ongoing needs.

What began as a crisis became a journey toward lasting connection, leaving the parents empowered to navigate complex systems with confidence.

Building Bridges: Navigating a New Diagnosis

A family was referred by the Calgary Board of Education during a period of significant transition. Their youngest son had recently reunited with them after living abroad and had received an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis.

Seeking to understand his needs, the parents worked with our Family Resilience Program to strengthen their connection and build a support network.

Through consistent in-home support, a home visitor helped the family explore what ASD meant for their son's unique strengths. They developed practical strategies for communication, emotional regulation, and daily routines using play-based learning and visual schedules.

This hands-on coaching helped the parents effectively support their son's growing social and independent skills.

Beyond the home, the family strengthened their community ties. With our guidance and advocacy, they secured an appropriate school placement and connected with a speech-language pathologist.

By the program's end, the family showed significant growth in resilience and confidence. Equipped with new skills and a deeper understanding of their son's needs, they are now better positioned to support his continued success.

937

newcomer families
supported in 2025

600

children served
across our
Development
Centres in 2025

2473

home visits
completed in 2025

From Silence to Speech: A Child's Big Leap

When a mother arrived in Canada in December 2023, her three-year-old daughter was not yet speaking. Navigating a new country without extended family, the mother worried that the transition would further hinder her daughter's development and increase their isolation.

Searching for support, she joined our newcomer-focused early learning program.

Attending twice weekly, the daughter began building communication skills in a welcoming, play-based environment. The transformation was remarkable: a child who once struggled to express herself began talking throughout the day.

Through creative activities like drawing and reading, she also developed strong motor skills, while her curiosity and confidence blossomed.

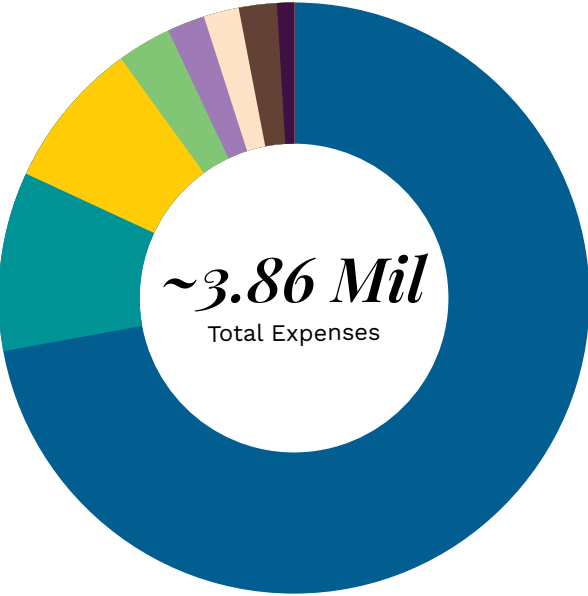
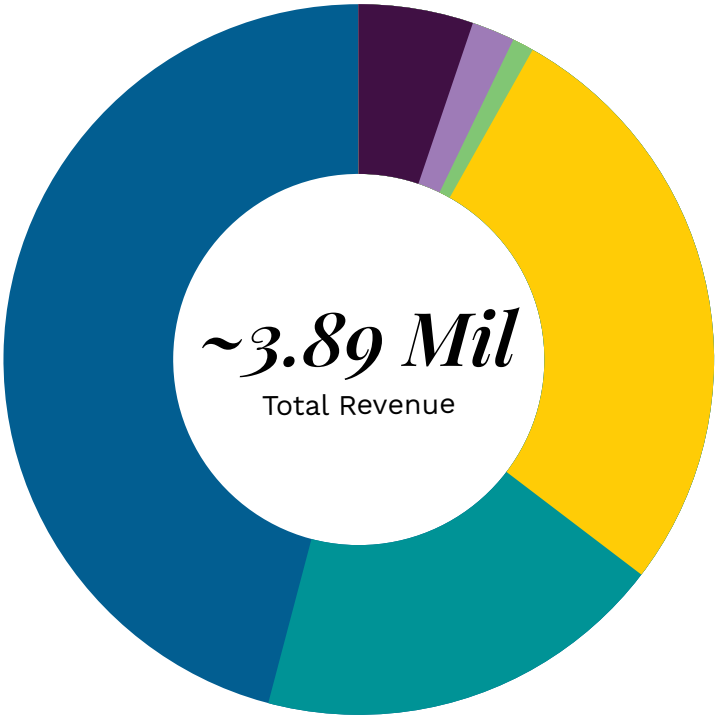
For the mother, the program provided a vital sense of community. Staff connected her with local resources and provided the consistent follow-up she needed to navigate life in a new country. "I don't feel so alone anymore," she shared.

Today, as she prepares her daughter for daycare, the mother feels confident. The routines and social experiences gained through the program have equipped her child with the skills needed to move comfortably into this next stage of her journey.

Our Financials

2025 Revenue

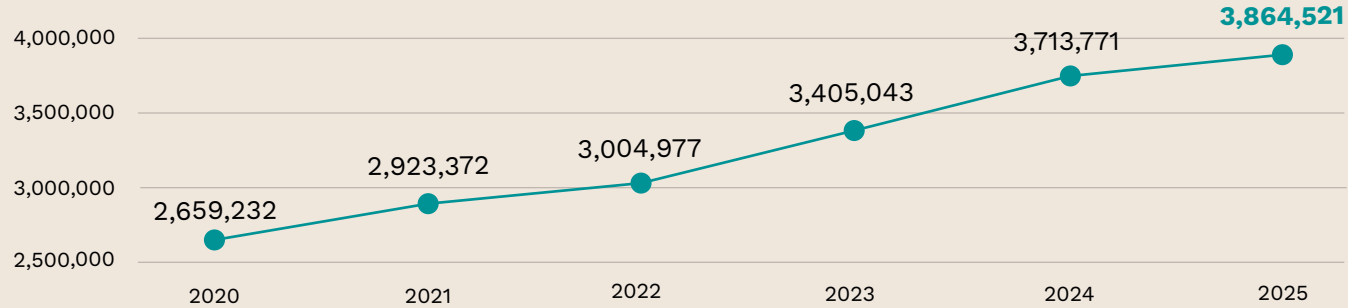
- Provincial (46%)
- Municipal (19%)
- Foundation (27%)
- Federal (1%)
- Donations (2%)
- Other (5%)



2025 Expenses

- Salary (72%)
- Occupancy (10%)
- Program Ops (8%)
- Contracted (3%)
- Admin (2%)
- Staff & Volunteers (2%)
- Marketing (2%)
- Amort and Other (1%)

Funding Revenue By Year





Together, We Make a Difference

We are deeply grateful to our funders, donors, and volunteers for your unwavering support this year.

Thanks to your generosity, we've been able to deliver programs that empower caregivers, nurture child development, and strengthen families across our community. Your partnership makes this work possible, and we couldn't do it without you.

We are excited to continue building a brighter future for families with you by our side.



Stay Connected

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www.familiesmatter.ca