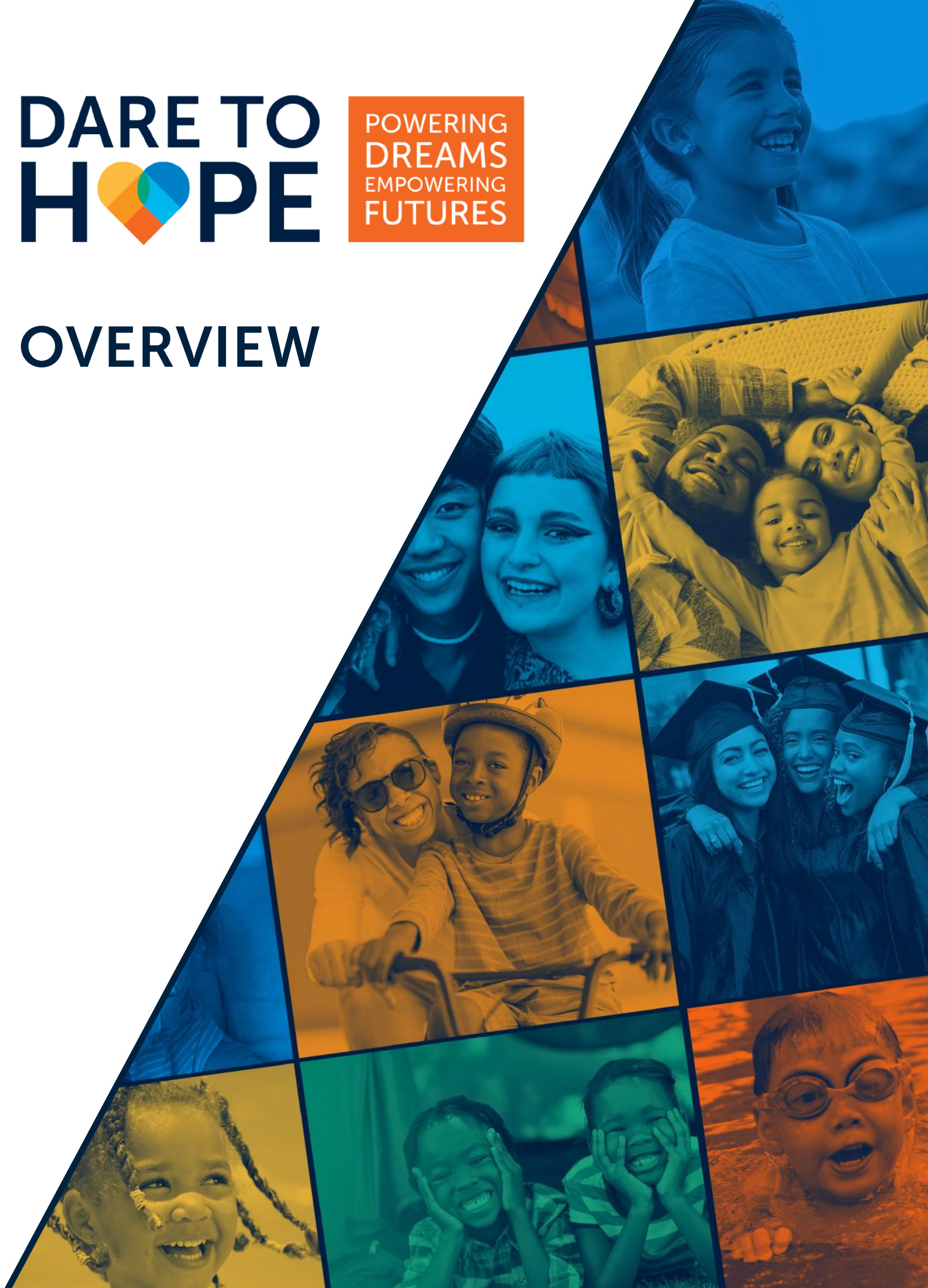


# DARE TO HOPE

POWERING  
DREAMS  
EMPOWERING  
FUTURES

## OVERVIEW





# Join us in powering dreams and empowering futures.

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## **The challenges surrounding child welfare are complex — but solvable.**

From poverty and housing instability, to fractured systems and institutional racism... solving these interconnected challenges seems daunting, and state funding only covers the bare basics. But we see a path forward.

We envision a child welfare system that keeps most kids *out* of foster care and provides the highest-quality supports for those who find themselves in it. A combination of research and HopeWell's six decades of experience working in communities has taught us about key levers for **improving outcomes for children and families** — including strong, stable relationships; educational attainment; economic self-sufficiency; and coordinated supports from best-in-class professionals. Approaches that are grounded in these levers have the power to transform lives.

HopeWell's impact is a testament to that. In Massachusetts, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) directly manages care of the vast majority of children who have been removed from their homes (~70%). HopeWell manages the care of around 8% of children served *outside* of DCF. Although our caseload is small in comparison to DCF, we are the **largest nonprofit provider** of comprehensive foster care in the state and well-positioned to lead change. Despite the state's challenges with foster

care, HopeWell has made great strides: In recent years, we've launched a first-of-its-kind program to help K-3 students experiencing foster care succeed in school, and helped over 100 young people launch into adulthood and achieve their goals after "aging out" of the foster care system.

Programs like these are **common-sense innovations** that ensure children in foster care have the opportunities they deserve in life. They are bright spots, but they are just a starting point: By expanding these programs and sharing what works with others, we **move the entire field forward** and improve the lives of thousands more.

**The result is that instead of working to help some children and families involved in the foster care system beat the odds, we work together to change the odds by changing the game.**

This is why we are launching **Dare to Hope**, a campaign to fund the work we know will move the needle for kids and families.

Learn more at [hopewellinc.org/dare-to-hope](https://hopewellinc.org/dare-to-hope), and join us in *powering dreams and empowering futures*!



# DARE TO HOPE

POWERING  
DREAMS  
EMPOWERING  
FUTURES

## OUR GOAL

RAISE **\$12 MILLION**  
BY **2027** TO FUEL  
**3** KEY PRIORITIES

1

DO  
WHAT  
WORKS  
PROGRAMS

2

SHAPE  
THE  
SYSTEM  
POLICIES

3

CHAMPION  
OUR  
WORKFORCE  
PEOPLE

# HOPE IN STAYING TOGETHER

This year, our Family Support & Stabilization program provided well over 1,000 children, teens, and family members with intensive in-home services.



# HOPE IN LEARNING

Over the last 2 years, our RISE program has spent 1,700+ hours working directly with children in foster care to strengthen their early literacy skills.



# HOPE IN SELF-SUFFICIENCY

This year, our My First Place™ program supported youth “aging out” of foster care in Greater Boston and Greater Springfield as they worked to achieve their personal, education, and employment goals.



## HOPEWELL'S IMPACT

**The work we do is critically important — and full of joy and possibility.**

# HOPE IN STABILITY

Each year, our Comprehensive Foster Care program recruits, trains, and supports loving foster homes across the state.

We ensure hundreds of children receive the resources, supports, and opportunities they need and deserve.

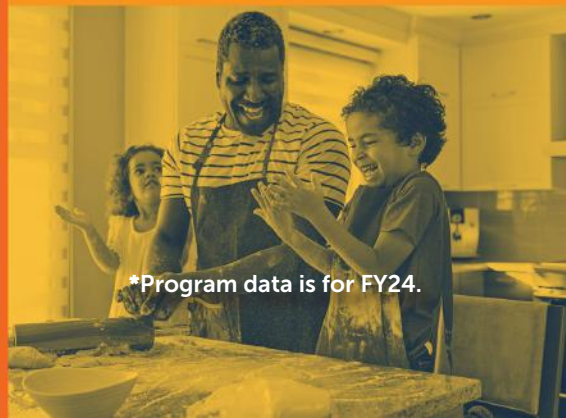


# HOPE IN CHANGE

This year, our Policy & Advocacy team submitted testimony for 7 key improvements to the Massachusetts child welfare system, including reducing racial disparities, protecting benefits owed to youth, and more.

# HOPE IN REPRESENTATION

People with lived experience in foster care work at every level of our organization, including on our Board.



\*Program data is for FY24.



# Investing in a Brighter Future

# TOGETHER

As we celebrate 60 years of impact and turn toward the *next* 60 years and beyond, HopeWell is ready to continue building **a future for children and families that is vibrant and full of opportunities**. We know that closing the existing gaps for children experiencing foster care is the right thing to do. It's the smart thing to do. And as far as we're concerned, it's the *only* thing to do.

Massachusetts is known as a leader among states in many areas, like medicine, technology, and education. But there is an outlier; an area in which Massachusetts consistently falls short: foster care. Every kid is supposed to have a fair shot at success, and we believe that no society — particularly one with Massachusetts's resources and history of innovation — should tolerate anything less.

Every day, HopeWell makes a difference in the lives of children and families across Massachusetts. We have the right combination of experience, vision, and focus to raise the standards for what is widely-treated as acceptable across the state's child welfare system. ***What we need are the resources.***

State contracts only fund the bare minimum and often fall short of meeting even the most basic needs of the children, adults, and families we serve. They deserve better. ***That is why we need your help.***

## THE PROBLEM

In Massachusetts, the foster care system struggles to provide children what they need to grow and thrive<sup>1</sup>:



### SAFETY

Children enter foster care because their parents are unable to take care of them at that point in time, most often due to substantiated reports of neglect.

Each year, 8,000-10,000 children ages 0-18 experience foster care, and another 600-900 young adults “age out” of the system.



### STABILITY

Massachusetts ranks toward the bottom of all states for foster care stability — nearly half of children experience more than 2 placements during their time in foster care.



### LOVE & CARE

There is a shortage of foster homes available for kids. Between 2019-2023, the number of licensed foster homes dropped nearly 20%.



### STRONG SYSTEMS

Black and Hispanic children are 2x more likely to enter foster care than their white peers. They also spend longer amounts of time in care, are less likely to reunify with family, and are more likely to age out when they turn 18.

# Doing the same old thing isn't working.

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### **Many of life's milestones are cumulative and intertwined**

— from learning to read, to graduating from high school and going to college, to getting your own apartment and starting your career. These milestones can be tough for anyone to navigate. But they're even more acute for young people experiencing foster care — and without the right set of supports at the right time, it's no surprise that many fall short of reaching their full potential.

Imagine trying to master all the skills needed to learn how to read while changing schools every six months. Imagine graduating from high school while struggling to read or while moving from place-to-place with all of your possessions in trash bags. Imagine finding a well-paying job with benefits without having your high school diploma or GED. Imagine trying to navigate the labyrinth of complex systems like housing, health care, and higher education without the support and stability of a permanent family or home.

## A SNAPSHOT

# The Cost of Inaction

# = \$8+ Billion

THE PUBLIC COST TO  
COMMUNITIES NATIONALLY\*

Potential justice system involvement

Difficulty finding safe, stable housing

Difficulty finding and maintaining employment

Decreased access to post-secondary education

Disruption of early education opportunities

Trauma associated with family separation

\*Conservative estimates place the public costs to communities that result from these disparate outcomes and opportunities at more than \$8 billion nationally, and more than \$200 million each year right here in Massachusetts. These estimates include costs such as incarceration and public assistance. However, more accurate estimations would likely be significantly higher than noted due to the amount of time that has passed since the most recent body of comprehensive research on this topic was published in 2013.

This is a crisis, and it is the responsibility of adults to ensure **all** children have access to opportunities to grow and thrive.<sup>2</sup>

### Trauma associated with family separation can have devastating effects on a child's development:

- **Approximately half** of youth who've spent time in foster care have chronic health conditions, such as malnutrition. **1 in 4** experience PTSD.
- Physical and mental health issues often grow over time due to a lack of adequate access to health services. **1 in 3** who age out of foster care have no health insurance as adults.



### **The very nature of being in foster care affects children's early educational opportunities:**

- Each foster care placement change can disrupt learning by **up to 6 months**.
- In Massachusetts, 3<sup>rd</sup>-graders experiencing foster care are **~2x less likely** to be "on track" in reading than their peers overall — one of the largest academic gaps among any group of students.
- These disparities persist and grow throughout their schooling:
  - By 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students in foster care are **3x less likely** to be "on track" in reading.
  - By 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the gap widens to **nearly 5x**.
  - **Nearly 1 in 5** drop out of high school.



### **...And foster care affects later educational opportunities too:**

- Many youth who age out of foster care face significant challenges accessing post-secondary opportunities, such as navigating the complexities of the college admissions process without reliable support, obtaining dependable housing and technology, and building a financial safety net to use in case of emergency.
- Nationally, **more than 75%** of youth experiencing foster care have college-related dreams and goals. But **less than 20%** enroll in college, and **less than 5%** graduate with a 4-year degree.



### **These disparate education outcomes often translate into increased difficulty finding and maintaining gainful employment:**

- By age 26, only **~50%** of youth who aged out of foster care are employed. Among those who are employed, **less than half** receive employment benefits, such as paid sick days or retirement benefits. Low-wage jobs often lead to more low-wage jobs and fewer opportunities for advancement.



### **Financial challenges and a lack of support make it difficult for many young people aging out of foster care to find safe, stable, and affordable housing:**

- Nationally, **~28%** experience homelessness within a few years of aging out of the foster care system. In Massachusetts, this number is even higher at **49%**!



### **Further, young people aging out of foster care are more likely than their peers to become involved in the criminal justice system:**

- **82%** of men and **59%** of women who experienced foster care will be arrested at some point before age 26, and **74%** of men and **43%** of women will be incarcerated.

## What does successful foster care support look like?

It's about providing the right interventions at pivotal times throughout the course of a child's life.<sup>3</sup>



### **Fewer children enter or remain in foster care when families receive specialized supports to help them safely remain together:**

- ✓ Working with a trusted social worker or clinician who can help the family navigate the child welfare system and engage in problem-solving. For example, helping them access educational supports in school, such as an individualized education plan (IEP), so their child can make greater academic strides.
- ✓ Getting connected with resources in their community, such as a food bank, the public library, or mental health services.



### **If a child enters foster care, we know good support starts at home. Better experiences and outcomes are possible when:**

- ✓ Foster parents receive high-quality training to understand what is developmentally-appropriate and how to help children work through big emotions in a safe environment.
- ✓ Child welfare agencies are thoughtful and intentional about matches — a good foster care placement is more than just a place to stay.
- ✓ Children participate in experiences that help them bond with their foster family, explore their unique interests and strengths, and have fun.



### **Like all kids, children in foster care need a quality education:**

- ✓ Early literacy is particularly important because it is a gateway skill. When children struggle to read early on, it can affect their cumulative learning across subject areas and grade-levels, making it difficult to access future learning opportunities. It is also tied to many long-term outcomes, including health and wellness, incarceration, and income.
- ✓ For children in foster care, education supports must prioritize consistent access to services, even if a child moves homes or schools.



### **Aging out of foster care and transitioning into adulthood is a pivotal time when youth need targeted supports, such as:**

- ✓ Stable housing, first and foremost. Having a safe place to call home allows youth to focus on their goals and build a sense of possibility.
- ✓ Trusted guidance around healthy living skills, like financial literacy, managing physical and mental health, and parenting.
- ✓ Help navigating education and employment systems as they work toward developing pathways to self-sufficiency.





**Child  
welfare's  
complex  
challenges  
*are* solvable.**

## Simply put, kids experiencing foster care deserve better.

**We know that kids — all kids — are curious, creative, joyful, and uniquely brilliant.** The disparate outcomes for children and teens experiencing foster care do *not* reflect limits in their potential. Rather, these outcomes reflect persistent gaps in opportunities, resources, and support.

Kids come into foster care through no fault of their own. Yet, they are our nation's most systemically marginalized group of young people. This is a fundamental injustice — one that we refuse to accept, and one that inspires us to seek creative and collaborative solutions.

**HopeWell is a difference-maker for kids because we “keep our head in the clouds and our feet on the ground.” As we work to achieve better outcomes, brighter futures, and more equitable systems for those in our care, we balance being visionary dreamers and pragmatic doers.**

Because of this approach, we are able to deliver high-quality programs that meet the most pressing needs of kids and families, while also seeking bold, new approaches that move the whole sector forward.

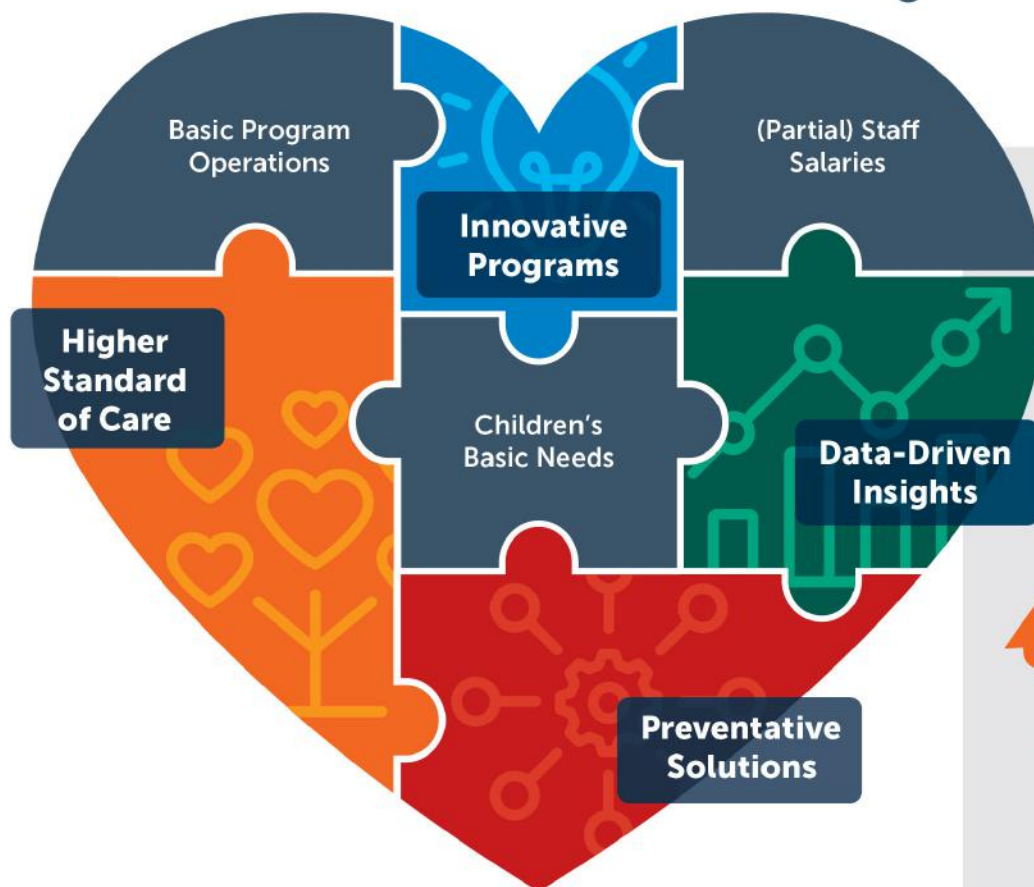
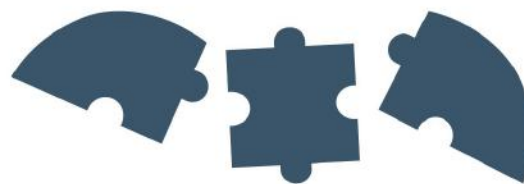
We know the priorities we set now will play a big role in determining what the coming years and decades will look like for children and families involved in the child welfare system in Massachusetts and beyond — **and we can't write this story without you.**

# Philanthropy makes a BIG difference in the lives of the children and families we serve.

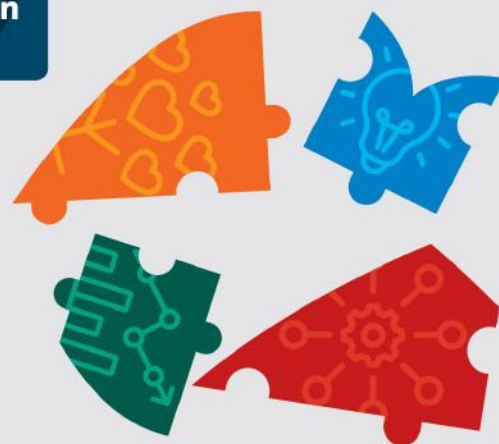
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## THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY

**State funding only covers the bare basics.**



**Your support helps fill in the missing pieces.**



State funding only covers bare basics, such as:

- Basic program operations for services such as Comprehensive Foster Care and Family Support & Stabilization.
- Expenses to help meet children's basic needs, such as medication and clothing.
- The cost to run required foster parent training sessions.
- Partial staff salaries for some positions. Other roles are not covered at all.



As a result of this funding approach, the same expectations and the same practices are used year-after-year across the state. Without addressing underlying structural problems or *improving* services (rather than just *providing* them), the foster care system becomes self-reinforcing. It churns in place and can harm children and families, instead of helping.

**Your support can change this.**

At HopeWell, we want to do things differently. We strive to sustain four crucial aspects of social services work that *aren't* covered by state funds:



### Higher Standard of Care

Raising the bar beyond basic needs to help kids learn, grow, and discover their full potential.



### Data-Driven Insights

Analyzing data to evaluate the impact of interventions, inform practices, and continuously improve.



### Preventative Solutions

Improving policies and sharing strong practices to fix issues on a big-picture scale.



### Innovative Programs

Developing new and better approaches to address unmet needs and move the entire field forward.

# How **Your Support** Powers Dreams & Empowers Futures

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## OUR GOAL

RAISE **\$12 MILLION**  
BY **2027** TO FUEL  
3 KEY PRIORITIES

1

DO  
WHAT  
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THE  
SYSTEM

POLICIES

3

CHAMPION  
OUR  
WORKFORCE

PEOPLE

PRIORITY

1

PROGRAMS

## DO WHAT WORKS

GOAL: \$8 MILLION

Our programs are the heart and soul of our work, providing essential support to children, adults, and families. Our services improve outcomes, expand opportunities, and strengthen communities.



POLICIES

## SHAPE THE SYSTEM

GOAL: \$2.3 MILLION

We go beyond meeting immediate needs. We advance better practices, address inequities, and include the insights of those with lived experience. Our impact multiplies because we work to move the whole child welfare system forward.

PRIORITY

2

PRIORITY

3

PEOPLE

## CHAMPION OUR WORKFORCE

GOAL: \$1.7 MILLION

When social services workers grow and thrive, so do kids and families. We're committed to making nonprofit social services an attractive, rewarding, and sustainable career choice.





**Every kid  
needs someone**

**IN THEIR  
CORNER.**

HopeWell changes lives and works to energize the system at-large by infusing it with better policies, practices, and partnerships. It's because of the big hearts and talented minds of our incredible team of staff, partners, and supporters like you that we're able to say our ambitious goals are not only possible — they're probable!

We invite you to join us in building a future for children and families that is vibrant and full of opportunities.

Please visit [hopewellinc.org/dare-to-hope](https://hopewellinc.org/dare-to-hope), make a gift of any size, and let's make this happen!

HopeWell is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible in accordance with current federal and state law. HopeWell respects your privacy. We will never sell, rent, or trade information about you.



