

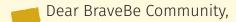
# BRAVERY (noun)

brav•ery | 'brāv-rē

1 : the quality or state of having or showing mental or moral strength to face danger, fear, or difficulty

2 : the quality or state of being brove





As we reflect on the past year, we'd like to extend our gratitude to our donors, partner agencies, and supporters like you who make our work possible. Your belief in our mission has fueled real change, and we are excited to share the impact we've made together in our 2024 Impact Report.

**This year, BraveBe provided critical support to 7,468 children**, a milestone that reflects the growing need for our services. Of those, **5,233** children received response services, ensuring they had the care and advocacy they deserved in the aftermath of abuse. Another **2,235** children were reached

through prevention efforts, helping us take meaningful steps toward breaking the cycle of trauma before it begins. **Additionally, we provided 22,009 advocacy sessions**, guiding families through the challenges of healing with compassion and care.

2024 also marked the launch of **Brave fACEs**, a bold new initiative focused on understanding and addressing trauma in our community. This program expands our efforts beyond response, equipping professionals, caregivers, and advocates with the tools to recognize, prevent, and mitigate the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). By fostering awareness and resilience, Brave fACEs will shape a future where fewer children experience the devastating impact of trauma—and those who do receive the support they need to heal.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing in a future where all children are safe, heard, and supported. Together, we are making that vision a realized

All the best,



Paige Piper, MA Executive Director





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Community Support Financial Health

**Board of Directors** 

# Children served through response & prevention 5233 children served through response services

2235 children served through prevention services

#### **Reason for Referral**

(Response Services)

**50% Sexual Assault** 

16% Physical Abuse

13% Neglect

**10% Domestic or Family Violence** 

**6% Drug Endangered** 

**3% Commercial Sexual Exploitation** 

1% Child Pornography

1% Other Victimization

### **Ethnicity of Child Served**

(Response Services)

59% White/Non-Latino

14% African American

10% Hispanic

8% Multi-Racial

**4% Native American** 

2% Asian

3% Not Reported

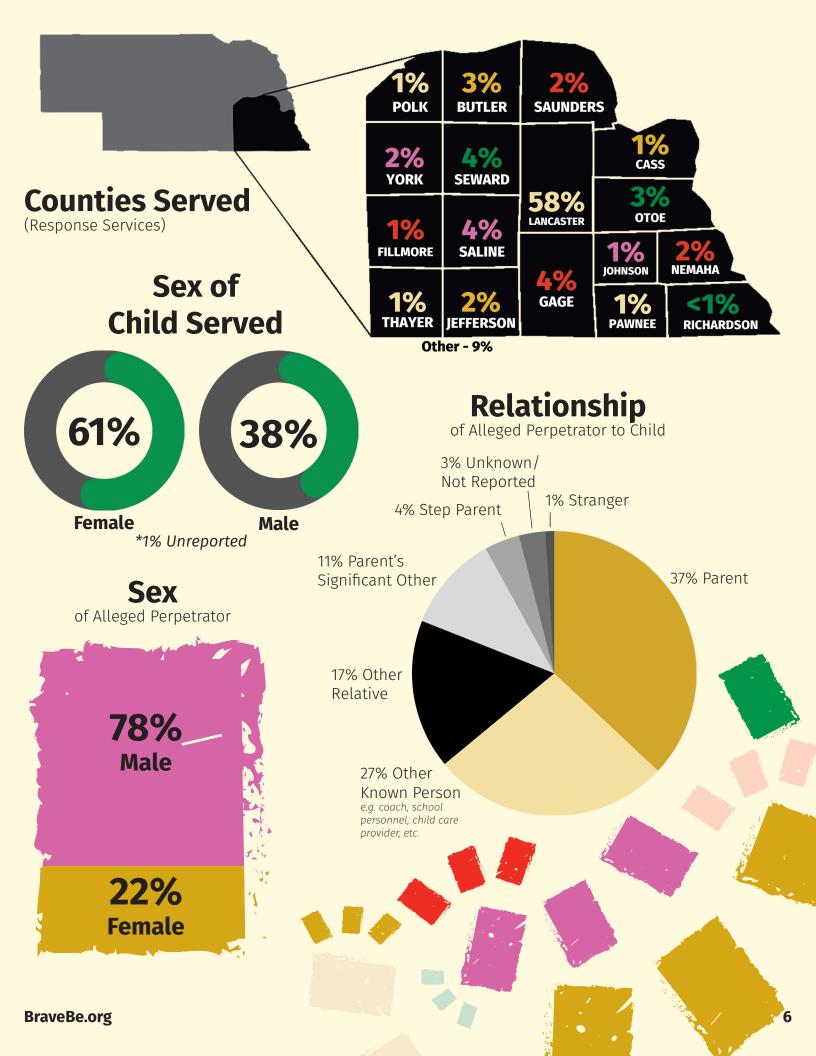
## **Age of Child Served**

30% 0-6 **Years** 

38% 7-12 Years

**Not Reported - 1%** 







"Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today."

-Thich Nhat Hanh

# FAMILY ADVOCACY 22,009 Advocacy sessions completed in 2024.

Family Advocates offer vital support and guidance to children and families impacted by abuse. As compassionate allies, they amplify the voices of children and prioritize their needs, providing emotional support, resources, and empowerment through the legal process. This approach aids in immediate recovery, contributes to breaking the cycle of abuse, and fosters resilience, laying the groundwork for a brighter future for every child.

51% of cases were court involved.

Court School is a specifically designed curriculum used to make the court process less intimidating for children. Court School helps children understand the importance of their testimony, and allows them the opportunity to practice being a witness and answering questions not related to the case. Court School helps children become familiar with the courtroom process and the people they will meet there.

# **COMMUNITY RESPONSE**

Brittany is available each day to assist caregivers, therapists, school personnel, and other community members with concerns for their children or children they know. She connects caregivers and other supportive adults to resources including therapy, housing, basic needs, and legal services. Brittany is an incredible advocate for concerned individuals who are unfamiliar with the reporting and investigative processes.

Brittany works closely with investigative partners to coordinate a response once a report of child abuse or neglect has been made. In situations where investigative agencies are not involved, Brittany provides individualized education to callers and offers alternative interventions and referrals.

Families often feel isolated due to the nature of their concerns. Brittany is able to provide the guidance and support families need when they're at their most vulnerable.



424
Community
Response Calls
in 2024

## THE IMPACT

We recently received a call from a family seeking support in addressing sexualized behavior in one of their children. Our primary aim is to ensure that these families are connected with the necessary services and resources.

We diligently assessed the situation and provided referrals tailored to the specific needs of the family. Following up with this family was integral to our approach; we regularly checked in to see whether they had successfully accessed the services we reccommended.

It is heartening to hear from families who have been able to utilize the resources we suggested to them. We often receive updates from families, sometimes months later, sharing progress or simply expressing gratitude for our help during a challenging time. These interactions reaffirm the importance of our work in supporting families and children in need.

-Brittany Mandery Community Response Family Advocate



## **MEDICAL SERVICES**

Medical examinations at BraveBe are conducted with sensitivity and compassion and are essential for ensuring the safety and well-being of children. All children with concerns of abuse or neglect are offered medical care to detect and address any health concerns, collect forensic evidence, and to provide education, reassurance, and support. BraveBe medical providers create a safe space for children to ask questions about their bodies. By emphasizing the importance of their health and well-being, our providers strive to empower children, instilling in them a sense of control over their bodies.



412

medical examinations completed



77%

of medical examinations completed related to sexual abuse



63

foster care examinations completed

#### **MORE HIGHLIGHTS**

In 2023, BraveBe began offering on-site acute sexual assault exams, enabling the collection of evidence kits within critical timeframes—72 hours for prepubescent children and 120 hours for adolescents following instances of sexual abuse.

BraveBe strengthened partnerships with Bryan Health, CHI Health, Lincoln Police Department, and the Attorney General's Office through a protocol that enhances collaboration between hospital nurses, family advocates, and medical providers. This includes 24/7 consultation with BraveBe nurses to determine if examinations can be deferred to BraveBe for specialized care in lieu of the traditional hospital response.

In collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services, BraveBe's medical team now conducts entry exams for children entering the foster care system. This allows for prompt identification of urgent medical needs and connects children with community resources for ongoing care; ensuring children enter foster care in good health.





BraveBe has expanded its reach by opening a satellite location in Beatrice, NE. This new site brings trauma-informed, no-cost services closer to families in rural communities, removing barriers to care for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. This expansion reflects BraveBe's continued commitment to providing compassionate, accessible care for children across Southeast Nebraska.

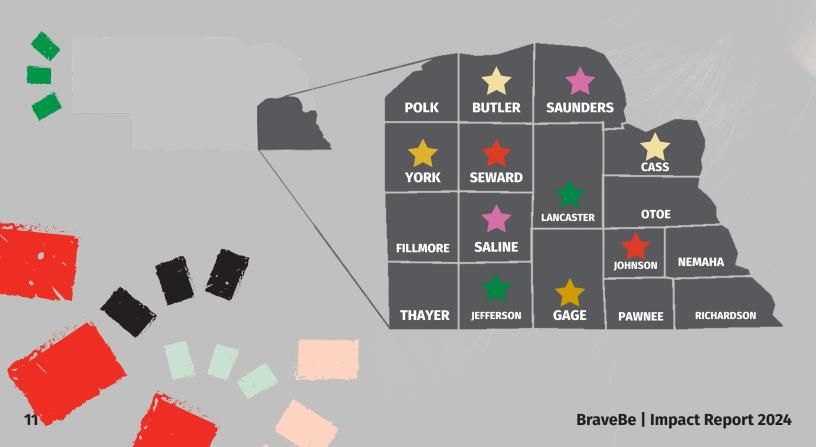




# Team Response to Anti-Trafficking & Child Exploitation

Lancaster County's T.R.A.C.E. team is a coalition of law enforcement and child welfare experts who provide a coordinated response to child victims of sex and/or labor trafficking, and children who are at high-risk of exploitation. The T.R.A.C.E. team provides direct intervention through case coordination and advocacy, as well as extensive community outreach and education. This team provides training for investigative personnel and civilians alike at local, state, and national levels. This commitment to education has expanded BraveBe's anti-trafficking efforts to 11 counties in Nebraska. In 2024, BraveBe T.R.A.C.E. staff evaluated 226 cases, emphasizing both individual intervention and systemic reform to prevent child trafficking.

# youth were identified as survivors of human trafficking.





Throughout the investigation, trial, and eventual sentencing of her perpetrator, Kaeleigh remained strong. Her Advocate, Aubrey, walked alongside her and her family every step of the way—offering support, building trust, and creating moments of connection that allowed Kaeleigh and her sibling to just be kids again. The day of sentencing brought a mix of emotions: grief, relief, and a deep sense of justice.

Kaeleigh's journey reflects the resilience and strength of so many children served by BraveBe. With the support of a multidisciplinary team, advocates, and a trauma-informed approach, children like Kaeleigh are seen, heard, and believed as they begin their paths toward healing.

Scan the QR code to hear directly from Kaeleigh as she shares her powerful story and how BraveBe helped her find hope and healing.

# **THE IMPACT:** Outcome Measurement Surveys



BraveBe collects feedback from children and their caregivers through Outcome Measurement Surveys, leading the national standard with about 85% of families participating. These surveys help us understand the family's experience and are used in strategic planning. In response to the 2022 survey results identifying mental health services as a crucial need for families, BraveBe expanded its mental health facilities and providers.

100% of surveyed caregivers said they believe their child felt safe at BraveBe.

99%

of surveyed caregivers said after meeting with the BraveBe team, they knew what to expect with the situation facing them and their child. 99%

of surveyed caregivers said BraveBe staff provided them with resources to support their child.

#### **CAREGIVERS TELL US...**

We never imagined our family would be here! So Thankful that there are rescources like this that bring so much help. Thank you all.



Please keep doing what you are doing. You all are amazing and help more than you realize.



We appreciate everyone's kindness and compassion. Thank you so much for making this an enjoyable place for our child.

95%

of surveyed youth stated BraveBe staff made them feel safe 99%

of surveyed youth stated BraveBe staff were either good or very good at listening to them. 97%

of surveyed youth felt that BraveBe staff cared about them.

#### **YOUTH TELL US...**



I didn't feel scared or nervous once I met the people.

They were so kind.

They people understand what I am saying.
They actually listen.



They really make you feel comfortable. I was nervous at first, but it shortly eased.







"Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today."

-Thich Nhat Hanh

# NEW Brayese LEADERSHIP

At BraveBe, Leading with Integrity is one of our core values—rooted in transparency, trust, and a commitment to doing what's right, even when it's hard. In 2024, we welcomed two exceptional leaders to our team to help us live out that value every day. These new roles were created not only to strengthen the services we provide to children and families but also to better support our growing staff. Get to know Molly, and Ruthi—leaders helping guide BraveBe into the future.



Molly McDowell, Advocacy Program Manager, supports
BraveBe's Family Advocates and Program Support Staff,
ensuring they have what they need to navigate the fast-paced,
ever-changing nature of their work. She thrives in the variety
her role offers—collaborating with multidisciplinary teams,
addressing challenges, and helping staff grow in confidence
and skill. Molly finds the greatest reward in witnessing hope
and healing take root in the families BraveBe serves. For her,
leading with integrity means modeling honesty, ethical
decision-making, and trust, always keeping the well-being of
children and families at the heart of every action.

Ruthi Thompson, Senior Director of Programs & Culture, leads BraveBe's direct service teams with a focus on collaboration, accountability, and recognition. She mentors and supervises staff, supports problem-solving, facilitates multidisciplinary case reviews, and helps drive organizational initiatives alongside leadership. Ruthi finds deep fulfillment in leading passionate teams and creating a workplace culture where everyone feels valued and supported. For her, leading with integrity means making decisions grounded in BraveBe's mission, modeling ethical leadership, and fostering a culture of trust, mutual respect, and shared purpose—all with the belief that kids come first, always.





# **PATHWAYS**

Mental health plays a vital role in healing for children who have experienced abuse. BraveBe Family Advocates made 843 referrals for mental health services through the Pathways program which connects families with:

- Emotional Support
- Trauma Recovery
- · Improved Mental Health
- Enhanced Coping Skills
- Prevention of Long-Term Effects
- · Empowerment and Self-Esteem

Many families have found BraveBe to be a nurturing environment for their healing journey. To further accommodate the demand, BraveBe has collaborated with private therapists and Project SAFE from the University of Nebraska to bolster our on-site mental health services. In 2023, Family Advocates made 508 referrals to our on-site providers. These providers offer trauma-informed, evidence-based treatment methods tailored to the specific needs of children and families.

843

Mental health referrals though Pathways

296

Team meetings facilitated with partner agencies

# **TEAM FACILITATION**

BraveBe's MDT Coordinators work closely with partner agencies to coordinate a collaborative response to the investigation and treatment of child abuse. They facilitate investigation and treatment team meetings in 17 counties. In 2023, the various multidisciplinary teams reviewed 3,173 cases of alleged child maltreatment involving 7,075 children. Our partner agencies include local, state, and federal law enforcement, Department of Health and Human Services, prosecuting attorneys, Juvenile Probation, schools, medical and mental health professionals, and other victim and child serving organizations.

#### PEER REVIEW FACILITATOR FOR FORENSIC INTERVIEWS

Accreditation through the National Children's Alliance requires all forensic interviewers to participate in a structured forensic interview peer review process at least two times per year. Peer review serves as a quality assurance mechanism that reinforces the methodologies utilized and provides support and problem-solving for participants. Structured peer review encompasses opportunities for review and performance feedback in a professional and confidential setting, as well as opportunities for networking, relevant research and training in the field.

In 2024,BraveBe staff member, Jake Hedden facilitated 9 peer review sessions for the Midwest Regional Child Advocacy Center (MRCAC). There was an average of 9 forensic interviewers per session, representing at least 6 different states, including Alaska and Hawaii.



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#### Brayebe FACILITY DOG Education FACILITY DOG E



Eevee, BraveBe's beloved comfort dog, has now been with us for over a year—and she has truly become everyone's favorite teammate. Whether sitting quietly with a child during a forensic interview, offering a calming presence in the lobby, or greeting staff with a wagging tail, Eevee brings a unique kind of support that words often can't. Her gentle nature helps ease anxiety, fosters trust, and provides moments of lightness during difficult days. Beyond her work with the children we serve, Eevee is a source of comfort and connection for our staff and partners, reminding all of us that healing happens in many forms—including four paws and a kind heart.

**THE IMPACT:** Each week, six-year-old Jonathon and his foster mom return to BraveBe for therapy, and a consistent source of comfort in his healing journey has been Eevee. The bond Jonathon has formed with Eevee extends far beyond our walls—his foster mom recently shared that one of our Eevee stickers now hangs in his room. On tough days, when emotions feel overwhelming, they go to the sticker together and talk to it, as if Eevee were right there beside them. This simple ritual has become a powerful tool for helping Jonathon regulate his emotions, a reminder that Eevee's calming presence continues to support his healing, even from afar.





Donate to Eevee!



Follow Eevee's Instagram!





# COMMUNITY TRAINING

# 325 Individuals Trained



# TRAINING FOR PARTNERS & PROVIDERS: Child Abuse & Neglect 101

This course trains mandatory reporters to effectively identify and report child abuse and neglect. Participants learn through discussions on reporting challenges, practicing minimal facts interviewing, accessing resources, and gaining confidence in recognizing and reporting abuse promptly. Activities cover defining abuse, understanding reporting obligations, questioning techniques, and the roles of child protective services, law enforcement, and child advocacy centers. The course targets school personnel, healthcare professionals, youth organizations, and the public, empowering a wide range of individuals to protect children in our community.



BraveBe's team traveled across the country in 2023, presenting at two international conferences, during which they shared pioneering insights and strategies to protect children and advocate for justice reform. Their impactful presentations illuminated critical issues at the forefront of child welfare and inspired audiences nationwide.

#### **2024 National Conferences:**

- · International Symposium on Child Abuse Huntsville, AL
- · Krimes Against Kids Conference Orlando, FL



# 5090 Adults Trained



## **TRAINING FOR YOUTH:**

BraveBe now offers Digital Citizenship as a school-based prevention program for youth. The goal of this training is to help keep youth safe while they are exploring online platforms. The program empowers youth to understand the impact of their digital footprint and how to spot and respond to cyberbullying and digital dangers.

These dangers are explored through the following content:

- · Digital Awareness & Self-Management
- · Concept of the Invisible Audiences
- Oversharing & Your Digital Footprint
- Presenting Yourself Online | Fake Profiles
- Cyberbullying
- Sexting & Sextortion
- Online Chatting & Red Flags & How to Protect Yourself
- Risky Platforms: Games, Apps & Meeting Off-line





Building Resilient Families is a free educational course focused on equipping families with practical tools to navigate challenges, strengthen relationships, and support overall physical and mental well-being. The course covers a range of topics, including strategies for managing stress, promoting emotional health, and fostering connection within the family unit.

In addition to structured learning, the course emphasizes peer interaction. Participants engage with others in their cohort, exchanging experiences and learning in a collaborative setting. This shared approach helps families gain multiple perspectives and feel supported by others facing similar circumstances.

For more information about BraveBe Child Advocacy Center's training opportunities or to request a training, please visit our website:

Bravebe.org/Training

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Brave fACEs focuses on preventing, recognizing, and responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), informed by the landmark study by Kaiser Permanente and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). ACEs encompass abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction, with high ACE scores correlating with severe health risks such as ischemic heart disease, strokes, and mental health challenges.

BraveBe's Brave fACEs crafted a strategic plan with five primary goals for ACE **prevention** and **intervention**:



These priority areas will employ the CDC's six strategies to enhance economic supports, promote social norms, ensure childhood well-being, educate families, provide mentorship for youth, and integrate trauma-informed care across sectors. By emphasizing prevention, resilience, and trauma-informed approaches, the Institute aims to address health disparities at their root, focusing on holistic well-being and positive childhood experiences.

Through a powerful partnership with Community Health Endowment (CHE) and Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI), BraveBe Child Advocacy Center successfully launched the Brave fACEs initiative to the public in November 2024. Since its launch, Brave fACEs has offered a series of well-attended community trainings centered on ACEs, the impact of trauma, and practical strategies for building resilient families. Recognized by CHE as a Legacy Project, Brave fACEs reflects a shared commitment to addressing the root causes of trauma and creating lasting change. Together, BraveBe, CHE, CHI and other community partners are supporting a healthier future for all children and families in our community.

### **Advisory Board Members:**

Missy Bartels, Bryan Health
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- Amara Madsen, Cedars Kids Bill Michener, Lighthouse
- Dr. Marilyn Moore, Retired Russ Uhing, Retired
  - Dr. Eileen Vautravers, Retired
     Dr. Michelle Walsh, Pediatrics PC
     Carly Woythaler-Runestad Mourning Hope

A sincere thank you to the Community Health Endowment and Catholic Health Initiatives for their generous support of Brave fACEs. Their commitment to prevention efforts in our community is both innovative and vital.











# Harvest of Hop









BraveBe Child Advocacy Center's 2024 Harvest of Hope event marked its 7th year with an unforgettable evening at Junto Wine. Harvest of Hope serves as an inspirational platform to raise awareness nd funds for BraveBe's mission. Through the generosity of attendees and supporters,

# over \$114,000 was raised

in support for child victims of abuse in Southeast Nebraska.

The highlight of the evening was hearing from a caregiver who shared her journey and experiences with BraveBe. Her strength and resilience underscored the importance of BraveBe's services and the impact it has on individuals and families in our community.

Attendees also enjoyed live and silent auctions that offered an array of exclusive items and experiences while enjoying the beautiful scenery and celebrating the harvest.

The success of Harvest of Hope is not possible without the generosity of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. The overwhelming support and solidarity demonstrated at Harvest of Hope, inspires the BraveBe team as we continue providing vital services to child victims of abuse and neglect in our community.

# **HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING**

BraveBe is honored each year to connect our community's spirit of generosity with local families in need during the holiday season through our annual Holiday Gift Giving program. 2024 gift donations brightened the lives of 537 individuals across 134 families, spreading joy far and wide.

To the 94 donor groups who generously contributed, we express our deepest gratitude. Your kindness has created lasting memories and moments of joy for hundreds of people in our community, embodying the true spirit of the holiday season.

A special acknowledgment goes out to the 122 volunteers who gave their time and energy to wrap thousands of gifts. Volunteer groups from United Way, Nelnet, Union Bank & Trust, and others transformed our holiday gift area into a full-scale Santa's workshop. Your passion and hands-on involvement help make this program a success, bringing smiles (and happy tears!) to the faces of children and families in need.

The Holiday Gift Giving program will start accepting donor applications in November. For more information or to be added to our donor or volunteer list got this program, please email Rachel McConnell at: Rachel@BraveBe.org.



134

**Families** 



537

**People** 



94

**Donors** 



122

**Volunteers** 

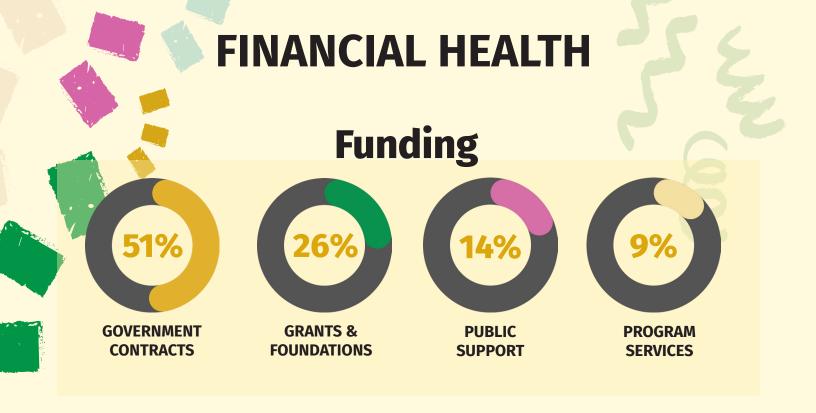


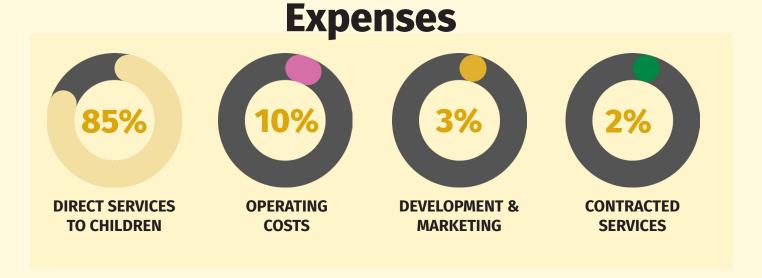






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