

PENQUIS

ANNUAL REPORT
FY 2024



Dear Community Members,

OUR MISSION

is to assist individuals and families in preventing, reducing, or eliminating poverty in their lives and, through partnerships, to engage the community in addressing economic and social needs.

OUR VISION

is for a poverty-free Maine, where all people lead healthy lives full of opportunities to work and learn.

As we close out fiscal year 2024, Penquis reflects on a year of both challenge and progress. We are heartened by the strides made in addressing housing and homelessness. However, the reality remains that too many individuals and families are still struggling to find affordable housing and meet basic needs. Local businesses and service providers are grappling with rising costs and workforce shortages, while communities are facing growing uncertainty amid a deepening political divide.

An ongoing challenge we have faced this past year has been the uncertainty surrounding the region's Non-emergency Medical Transportation contract. It has been difficult to witness the toll these challenges take on the communities we care about, but we remain steadfast in our resolve. These adversities don't weaken us—they strengthen us.

Despite these challenges, we are also filled with hope. We have been deeply inspired by the accomplishments of the individuals we serve, as well as those who work alongside us. Our partnerships with people and organizations who share our commitment to Maine's communities have been invaluable. Together, we have not only addressed immediate needs but also reimagined systems and practices to better serve our state's most pressing issues. The vision of what's possible fuels our optimism for the future.

We are proud of what we've achieved so far. Thanks to the support of the community, we now have a plan to expand access to childcare through a beautiful new facility. In collaboration with the University of Maine's Advanced Structures and Composites Center, we are on track to create a neighborhood of fully recyclable, 3D-printed homes for individuals experiencing homelessness. And with the backing of MaineHousing and the City of Bangor, we're excited to see

Theresa's Place provide housing for those who are chronically unhoused or at risk of homelessness. Through these and other efforts, we are breaking down barriers to safe, affordable housing, healthcare, education, and opportunity.

This year has highlighted something crucial: success depends not only on what we do, but how we do it. We are incredibly fortunate to have people—both inside and outside of Penquis—who approach their work with passion, purpose, and a genuine commitment to their clients and colleagues. The way we carry out our work, with kindness, dedication, and collaboration, truly matters. When we work together in this spirit, everyone benefits.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Leonard". The script is fluid and cursive.

Mark Leonard
Board Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kara Hay". The script is fluid and cursive.

Kara Hay
President & CEO

OUR GOAL

is for all Maine people to be safe, healthy, connected and financially secure.

OUR FOCUS

is to increase financial stability through services that support housing stability, access to transportation, school readiness and healthy lives.

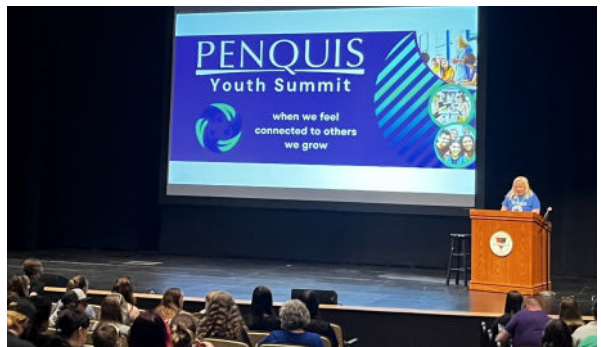
FY 2024 Highlights

Plans to expand Penquis' capacity to provide early childcare and education were announced. Bright Beginnings will consolidate several Early Head Start, Head Start, and childcare centers into a new 16-classroom facility in Bangor that will expand the available childcare slots by over a third to accommodate up to 200 enrollments.

Penquis' Domestic Violence Intervention Program launched its 17-week Caring Dads pilot program in collaboration with Partners for Peace and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. The program promotes child-centered fathering and includes fathers in efforts to enhance the safety and well-being of their children.

The Youth Engagement team hosted its first Youth Summit for middle and high school students in Penobscot and Piscataquis counties. Youth were directly involved in the planning process and chose the theme, "When we feel connected to others, we grow," with a focus on mental health and well-being.

BioHome3D, the world's first 100% bio-based 3D-printed home developed by the University of Maine Advanced Structures and Composites Center (ASCC), proved its ability to withstand one year of exposure to the elements. Penquis is partnering with the University of Maine ASCC to build a neighborhood featuring homes made with BioHome3D technology. These homes will help address homelessness while advancing new technologies in housing development.



The Maine Cancer Foundation awarded Penquis a two-year grant totaling \$60,000 in support of the Accessing Cancer Care program. Approximately 306 individuals in Penobscot and Piscataquis counties will be assisted each year with transportation for cancer treatment and support.



The John T. Gorman Foundation awarded Penquis \$20,000 in funding to support housing assistance for survivors of human trafficking. Penquis collaborates with Rape Response Services, Partners for Peace, and CourageLIVES to help survivors secure their safety and independence through housing and supportive services. The grant provides assistance to meet needs such as rent, home supplies, clothing, and food.



A USDA Rural Development Housing Preservation Grant in the amount of \$84,829 funded the repair and rehabilitation of housing occupied by families with very low and low income in eligible rural areas. The grant leveraged approximately \$275,000 in additional funding to assist 20 households in Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Knox counties.



Penquis CEO Kara Hay received a 2024 Maryann Hartman Award from the University of Maine. This award recognizes women who are trailblazers and strong advocates, have excelled in their volunteer and professional work, and have improved the quality of life for people in Maine.



30,892 individuals served

By the Numbers

Housing Stability

Increasing health, safety and stability through affordable housing access and availability

24,087 individuals received help heating their homes

3,849 individuals received emergency heating fuel

2 individuals participated in the Family Development Account matched savings program to increase assets

377 individuals received information and advice on buying a home, renting, defaults, forbearances, foreclosures, and credit issues

417 individuals received safe, affordable rental and home ownership opportunities

2 individuals acquired newly constructed, energy efficient homes to replace substandard housing

1,497 individuals received housing assistance to prevent foreclosure

4 individuals had their homes inspected for lead hazards

10 entrepreneurs received loans to build their businesses

470 individuals attended a homebuyer education class

93 individuals received heat pump assistance

124 individuals receive home repair services

89 individuals received home weatherization

333 individuals received tax preparation assistance

13 individuals received help with their electricity bills

144 individuals received central heating improvements

10 individuals increased knowledge of business ownership

4 individuals received home loans for purchase, refinance, or repair

111 individuals received energy education to help reduce energy usage and manage energy bills

339 individuals who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness secured housing



There's No Place Like Home

“John,” an older gentleman who spent many years working in maintenance, first approached Penquis in May. For several years, he had lived in the same Knox County apartment, which was affordable on his fixed income. Unfortunately, the landlord decided to sell the property and John was left homeless. It had been years since John had needed to navigate the rental market, and he was anxious and unsure of where to begin.

Penquis, with its Housing Navigation program, was eager to help John through the process of finding a new apartment. The Housing Navigation program supports people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming unhoused. When meeting with the Penquis housing navigator, John explained that he had been able to temporarily move in with his sister, who lived several hours away from the town he had previously called home. He expressed his desire to return to the area he had lived in for years, since he had developed many natural supports and relationships in the community.

John explained that during his work in maintenance, he had been exposed to a variety of chemicals. This exposure eventually resulted in various health concerns, from lung disease to long-term skin issues. John had built strong relationships with his providers, enabling him to gain control of his health conditions. He was adamant that he not lose those relationships.

Over the next several months, John and his housing navigator met weekly to complete housing applications and submit them. While the process of finding housing in an unaffordable world was overwhelming at times, having help along the way made the journey a little less taxing.

The effort paid off in September when John signed a lease for a new apartment in Knox County. His new home was centrally located, which made it easy to attend appointments and run errands. Once he was settled into his new home, John was able to create a stable routine, which helped decrease the anxiety that he felt daily since having to move out of his previous apartment.

John continues to work with his housing navigator through monthly check-ins. After his lease was signed and his new apartment was made home, he sent a message to his housing navigator that said, “I just wanted to say thank you so much for everything. I am just about all moved in and this place suits me just fine. Thanks again for all of your help and hard work!”

Penquis’ Housing Navigation program is proud to help individuals like John find affordable and safe housing in their communities. We wish John many happy years in his new home!



Access to Transportation

Supporting health, independence and access to resources through safe, reliable transportation options

4,506 individuals received transportation to meet various needs

13,495 individuals received transportation to MaineCare-covered appointments

713,968 trips were made to help people reach their destinations

839 bus passes and **18,670** bus tickets were issued

196,738 taxi trips helped to meet transit needs

118 volunteer drivers traveled **4,831,460** miles transporting people to where they needed to go

15,372,959 miles were traveled to get people to their destinations



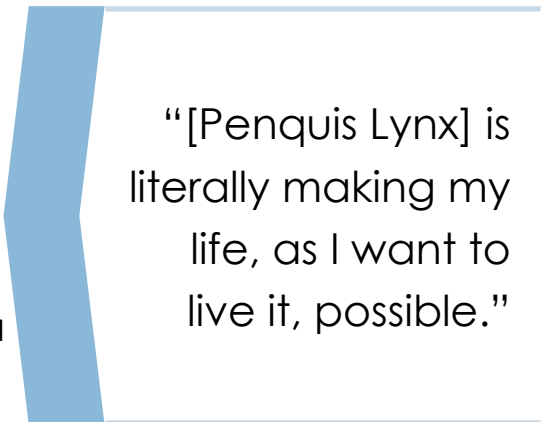
Life After Survival

In the summer of 2022, “Peter” was involved in a serious car accident that was considered medically unsurvivable. The medical professionals who attended to Peter as he was brought to the emergency room could not believe that he was still alive. Miraculously, after weeks of surgeries, Peter was stabilized and able to be moved to the hospital’s rehabilitation wing.

While working on his recovery, Peter began thinking about what his future would entail. For decades, he had worked jobs where he consistently traveled all over the world. When he was not traveling, he made his way back to his farmhouse in a very rural Maine town.

“I live out in the middle of nowhere,” said Peter. “I get my mail five miles away at the nearest post office, and I do my shopping at the nearest town twenty-five miles away.” However, after his accident, he could not afford a new vehicle, and he had no neighbors or other natural supports to assist him with traveling from his rural town to access necessities, such as grocery shopping and doctor’s appointments. Peter shared that, while in his room at the rehabilitation facility, “I felt like I should look at the signs on the wall across from the foot of my bed, and right in the middle of them was a sign that said ‘Need help getting around? Call Penquis Lynx Transportation Services.’”

Penquis Lynx helps people in Penobscot and Piscataquis counties meet a variety of transportation needs. Peter reached out to Penquis and talked with the program’s staff about setting up a ride to bring him home after he finished his in-hospital rehabilitation. It was a huge relief for him to have access to transportation services that he could rely on after moving back to his home. “I could not stay in that old farmhouse out in the middle of nowhere without Penquis Lynx,” Peter said. “I would have had to move to a town and into an assisted living facility because there are no resources, nobody nearby to help me.”



“[Penquis Lynx] is literally making my life, as I want to live it, possible.”

Now, more than two and a half years later, Penquis Lynx has continued to help Peter with his transportation needs. Whether it is for a trip to the store or a doctor’s appointment that is sixty miles away from his home, Peter knows that he can rely on Penquis Lynx for assistance. “Everything Penquis Lynx drivers and cars do for me, it’s *karma*,” Peter added, jokingly. While having transportation access itself is important, the rides have provided opportunities for some “fantastic and interesting conversations” with the different drivers as well. Most importantly, Peter said, “[Penquis Lynx] is literally making my life, as I want to live it, possible.”

Peter described Penquis Lynx as an “absolute godsend.” He added, “It is tremendously important work. [Penquis Lynx] is helping people in isolated areas, people who don’t have someone on whom they can depend to go get groceries or go to the doctor’s office; [Penquis Lynx] is helping them maintain their independence and quality of life. It’s a very important and honorable thing to be doing.”

Penquis Lynx is honored to support Peter and many others in accessing services and engaging in civic life. They make our communities stronger and more vibrant. We look forward to serving Peter and having many more interesting conversations in the future!

School Readiness

Preparing children for school through quality early learning experiences in safe and nurturing environments

375 children from 6 weeks to 5 years of age and their families received early childhood development experiences and family support services

93 providers received reimbursement for food expenses to lessen the cost of serving healthy meals

605 family members benefited from parenting information and support

The Five Domains

- Approaches to Learning — Self-Regulation
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy Development
- Cognition, including Math and Science
- Physical Development — Health

The percentage of Early Head Start children who are meeting typical developmental levels for their age in all domains of learning:

- Approaches to Learning: 91%
- Social/Emotional Development: 90%
- Language and Literacy Development: 90%
- Cognition: 85%
- Physical Development: 95%

The percentage of Head Start children who are meeting typical developmental levels for their age in all domains of learning:

- Approaches to Learning: 88%
- Social/Emotional Development: 94%
- Language and Literacy Development: 94%
- Cognition: 93%
- Physical Development: 98%



"Penquis is a loving, caring, supportive, and honest school. They put all kids first, they engage and recommend parent involvement, and they want your family and child to thrive. We would not be where we are today without Penquis."

The Father He Knew He Could Be

Life became “hectic and overwhelming” for “James,” a new father, and his family after becoming involved with Child Protective Services. To receive more support, he enrolled in a parenting class, which helped him feel more confident in his parenting skills and led him to take additional classes to continue building his confidence. These classes helped James care for his young son, “Luke,” and become the great father that he knew he could be. One aspect that was still difficult for James was allowing his son to go to an early childhood education program. “I was not ready to cut the cord,” James shared, “but I knew deep down my son needed to be around other kids, to thrive and be a kid.” That is when James learned about Penquis’ Early Head Start program from a teacher in the parenting education class he was taking. Early Head Start serves children from six weeks to three years of age and promotes school readiness by supporting children’s growth and development in a positive learning environment. The teacher shared that at Early Head Start Luke would be “safe, cared for, and [have] a chance for him to grow.”

When Luke was two and a half years old, James enrolled him in Penquis’ Early Head Start program. He saw the program as an opportunity to teach his son lessons that he could not do on his own, such as important social skills. Luke, who was born during COVID-19 and the era of “social distancing,” grew up without other children around, so having the chance to be around children his age was crucial to his development. “Early Head Start went beyond my expectation,” said James. “The staff were very kind, smiling, loving, honest, and open. They allowed me to feel safe, which, in turn, allowed me to understand that my son would be safe.”

After graduating from Early Head Start, Luke entered Head Start when he was three and continued to thrive. James also continued to learn and grow in his parenting role. When reflecting on his son’s time at Early Head Start and Head Start, James emphasized the care of the staff especially. He noted that even when he and one of the teachers or head coaches disagreed on a subject, he still felt like he was listened to and respected. “The head coach at Early Head Start knew our goal was the same for my son, even when I did not,” he said. “They were always upfront and honest...all the staff became family to our family.” With the care from the staff at Early Head Start and Head Start, James continued to build confidence as a parent and was helped with finding the perfect balance of keeping the special bond with his son without being too overprotective.

While Luke has now outgrown the early childhood education programs, he learned many crucial skills that he has taken with him to his new school. “He is continuing to make lots of friends,” James shared. “He is caring, empathetic, and helpful.” James added that he, too, learned a lot from his son going to Penquis’ education programs. “Because Penquis helped me build trust in knowing my child is safe and taken care of, I was able to allow him to go to this new school and develop who he wants to be, not just who I wanted him to be. Without the love and support from Penquis, he would not be going to this new school that he loves so much.”

When asked if he would recommend Penquis’ Early Head Start and Head Start programs to others, James said, “I absolutely would recommend [them] and I do,” and mentioned there is a family whose children are currently enrolled in the program because of his recommendation. “Penquis is a loving, caring, supportive, and honest school. They put all kids first, they engage and recommend parent involvement, and they want your family and child to thrive. We would not be where we are today without Penquis.”

The staff at Penquis’ Early Head Start and Head Start programs were thrilled to see the growth that Luke and James made while Luke was enrolled. We know that they both have wonderful futures ahead of them!

Healthy Lives

Building stronger, healthier and more self-sufficient lives through services and supports that enhance well-being

45 adults aged 55+ volunteered in their communities

91 individuals received daily support to live independently

401 individuals impacted by sexual violence received advocacy and support from Rape Response Services

166 individuals received education and training to prevent and respond to sexual violence

166 families received children's advocacy services in cases of suspected child sexual abuse

224 men learned about the dynamics of power and control to decrease relationship violence

254 individuals were assisted to access mental health services and other community resources

40 children with a mental health diagnosis or intellectual disability received services to improve behavior and functioning

165 youth engaged in activities to improve relationships and increase leadership skills

92 youth received life skills training to support financial literacy and healthy decision-making

18 children received materials to support their behavioral health treatment plans

27 youth received restorative justice services to repair the harm caused

8 youth experiencing homelessness received support to obtain housing and resources

171 individuals experiencing financial hardship received assistance for household expenses

328 families with children in DHHS custody received supportive visitation services

44 families with children in DHHS custody received coaching services

13 adults with a cognitive or developmental disability acquired long-term residential living arrangements

21 individuals with disabilities received community integration support

451 individuals received behavioral health treatment plans

92 individuals received comprehensive case management services

27 women in recovery and their children were housed and supported

1,957 participants received education and training to support healthy children and families

1,226 children received backpacks and school supplies for the new school year

975 coats were distributed to keep people warm

6,761 families received Thanksgiving meal assistance

1,817 children received holiday gifts

526 families received support to explore educational and employment options

31 individuals in Knox County received support for basic needs

278 individuals received Goodwill gift cards for clothing needs

90 youth affected by someone else's opioid use took part in activity groups and received resources and support

23 individuals with behavioral health diagnoses received residential services

54 individuals from working families and at-risk youth received education and support to prevent homelessness

A New Beginning

When speaking with their case manager, “Riley,” a 17-year-old who had been experiencing strenuous family conflicts, expressed that they felt physically and emotionally unsafe at home and were contemplating running away and going to a shelter. Upon hearing this, their case manager began looking into available supports and connected Riley with Penquis’ Host Homes program. Host Homes provides supportive services in the greater Piscataquis region to youth experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness to offer stable housing with an approved host in the community.

As Riley and their case manager learned more about the program, Riley expressed an interest in applying. Once an application was completed, the next step was to meet with an approved host in the program to determine whether they would be a good match to share living space together. At the interview meeting, both Riley and the potential host got to know each other, and the two were happy to find that they shared some similar interests. Both Riley and the host felt this arrangement could work well and were willing to move forward in the process of having Riley move in. The host was eager to provide a safe space for Riley to work towards their educational and employment goals.

Once they were settled into their new space, Riley worked with the Host Homes project coordinator to identify goals that they wanted to achieve. Riley shared that they had been out of school for a few years due to the stressors and conflicts at home. Riley said, “I started the [Host Homes] program as a dropout of high school, with no plans of going back,” but once they had moved out of that home, they had a desire to return to school with the goal of obtaining a high school diploma. The project coordinator reached out to the local high school and helped Riley get enrolled.

Since Riley had been out of school for so long, they were enrolled as a freshman with only a few credits that transferred to their new school. Riley was told that in order to graduate on time, they would need to attain all of the remaining credits to graduate. While this was a heavy workload, Riley took on the challenge. They enrolled in adult education classes alongside an alternative education program at the high school and graduated with the senior class of 2024. This was an enormous accomplishment for Riley.

When reflecting on the Host Homes program, Riley said, “This program has helped me so much. When I first got involved with the program, I was completely lost and confused about what was going to happen over the next few years...Through the stability that the program provided, I was able to restart high school and was told that I would need to make all four years up. In under a year, I have made everything up, and I am graduating with my class of 2024.” When looking towards the future, Riley was excited to share, “I have been accepted to the psychology department at UMaine. I couldn’t have done it without the help of this program and particularly Jennie [Host Homes project coordinator]. This program is a godsend.”

We at Penquis are so proud of Riley’s accomplishments and excited to see what the future holds as Riley begins the next step of their journey at the University of Maine!

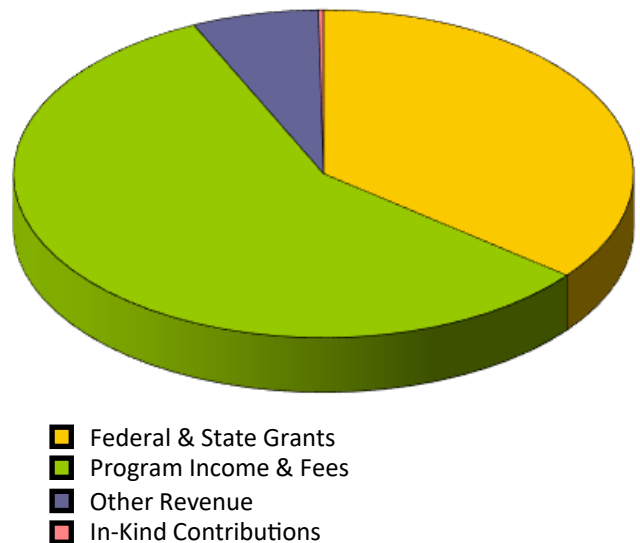


Financial Summary

CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

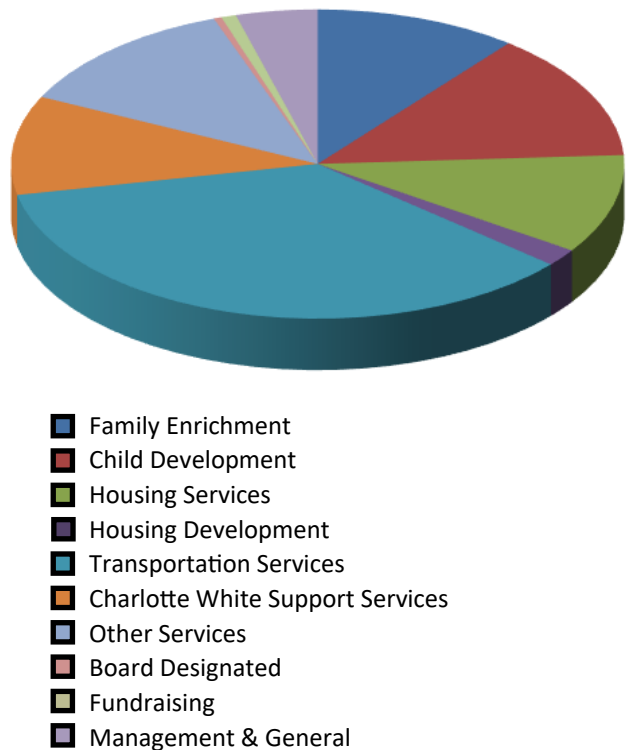
SUPPORT & REVENUE

Federal & State Grants	\$	25,819,437
Program Income & Fees		41,607,630
Other Revenue		4,780,830
In-Kind Contributions		<u>195,842</u>
	\$	<u>72,403,739</u>



EXPENDITURES

Family Enrichment	\$	7,826,984
Child Development		9,752,495
Housing Services		7,570,869
Housing Development		1,318,260
Transportation Services		25,929,261
Charlotte White Support Services		7,566,163
Other Services		9,021,619
Board Designated		-299,788
Fundraising		573,632
Management & General		<u>3,144,244</u>
	\$	<u>72,403,739</u>



Governance & Leadership

Board of Directors

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Connie Putnam, Secretary
Heather Blackwell
Angela Fileccia
Brent Folster
Cynthia Gardner
David Green
Kevin Gregory
Joseph Leonard
Amy Sue McGill
Laura Mellits
Patrick Polky
Mary Prybylo
William Thompson

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Angie Alfonso	Joseph Hufnagel
Cindy Freeman Cyr	Tom Lizotte
Jane Danforth	Jake Miller
Natalie DiPentino	James Pullen
Kayla Dunn	Chris Rector
Rebekah Falla	Stephen Rich
Kara Frye	Charles Shaffer
Cynthia Grass	Kimberly Turner
Danielle Hewes	Joanie Withee

Executive Leadership

Kara Hay
President and Chief Executive Officer

Denice Conary
Chief Financial Officer

Heidi LeBlanc
Chief Operating Officer

Jason Bird
Housing Development Director

Janeen Feero
Development Director

Jennifer Giosia
Housing & Energy Services Director

Mark Glovin
Regional Programs Director

Danielle Goodale
Human Resources Director

Aimee Kerrigan
Charlotte White Support Services Director

Tamar Mathieu
Family Enrichment Services Director

Staci Provost
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Steven Richard
Transportation Services Director

Andrew Whitten
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