

IMPACT REPORT

JULY 1, 2022 -
JUNE 30, 2023

MY LIFE MY CHOICE PROVIDES SURVIVOR-LED SOLUTIONS TO END THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

In 2001, a young Bostonian was brutally murdered while being commercially sexually exploited. Latasha was 17 years old and living in a group home funded by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Unbeknownst to any of the caring adults in her life (her family, her DCF worker, the group home staff), she was being sold for sex. Following her death, city and state leaders came together to ask, "was this an isolated incident or the tip of the iceberg?" We quickly learned it was the tip of the iceberg. Out of Latasha's death, My Life My Choice was born.

GREETINGS!

We are thrilled to present our Impact Report for Fiscal Year 2023 (July 2022 – June 2023).

My Life My Choice supports individuals impacted by commercial sexual exploitation and serves as a model for communities across the country. We aim to change not only lives, but the structural inequities that give rise to trafficking. Our impact report is centered around the four pillars of our strategic plan which guide our efforts at individual, community, and systemic levels. Through our strategic plan, we are striving to serve as a catalyst for survivor leadership and opportunity, shift the norms that enable commercial sexual exploitation to exist in our communities, influence the systems most impacting marginalized youth, and ensure capacity and sustainability for current and emerging needs.

During this past fiscal year, we provided survivor-led mentoring to 220 youth who had experienced commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) or were suspected of having experienced exploitation. Additionally, we provided 50 of these youth with intensive case management, 29 with therapy from a My Life My Choice clinician, and 28 of these youth participated in our Leadership Corps programming.

We trained 2,275 individuals across the country to continue building a strong network of responsive and informed providers. We also expanded our training team capacity through a partnership with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services. The state of Texas will soon require all youth in congregate care to receive exploitation prevention education, and thanks to this partnership, we will be able to train even more providers in their state.

49 My Life My Choice Prevention Groups were run by us and partners, nationally reaching 255 youth who are at disproportionate risk of exploitation. We also brought on 13 new Prevention Solution Fellowship (PSF) Partners through our Massachusetts and National PSF Programs which cumulatively serve over 5,750 youth.

This past year, we have taken immense strides in our policy and advocacy work, bringing on our first-ever Policy and Advocacy Manager and promoting a Senior Survivor Mentor to the role of Policy Specialist. We have worked tirelessly with the EMMA (Equality Model Massachusetts) Coalition to work on passing the Sex Trade Survivors Act and critically engaged the youth we serve in our legislative work. Youth informed the development of our legislative agenda and worked on testimony for several of our policy priorities.

We have done all of this while furthering our commitment to our core values and strengthening our racial and LGBTQIA2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and Two-Spirit) equity work. 67% of the youth we served identify as BIPOC and 51% identify as LGBTQIA2S+. We hope you enjoy this report.

With gratitude and hope,



Audrey Morrissey,
Co-Executive Director



Lisa Goldblatt Grace, LICSW, MPH
Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director

ENDING EXPLOITATION.

Young people are bought and sold for sex in our communities. Every day. In every community. They are deceived, manipulated and coerced into sex trafficking. Most frequently, starting in middle school.

NO ONE SHOULD BE BOUGHT OR SOLD

Our holistic, battle-tested approach is grounded in survivor experiences and led by fierce, wise, and strong survivor leaders. We are a model for communities across the country set on changing not only lives, but the structural inequities that give rise to trafficking and sexual exploitation.

SOCIAL JUSTICE. NOT JUST SOCIAL SERVICES.

We offer a unique continuum of survivor-led services in four core program areas:

SURVIVOR EMPOWERMENT

We provide intensive, consistent support with a multidisciplinary, survivor-led team to provide community and stability for young survivors.

TRAINING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We provide introductory to advanced trainings to build a safety of informed youth-serving professionals.

PREVENTION EDUCATION & SOLUTIONS

Our nationally-acclaimed curriculum and strategic prevention solutions empower disproportionately vulnerable youth to protect themselves from predators and provide a blueprint for fostering shifts in behavior, practice, and policy for programs serving marginalized youth.

POLICY & ADVOCACY

We advocate for legislative change that codifies safety, rights, and resources for survivors of commercial sexual exploitation as well as for youth facing structural inequities which puts them at greater risk.

WHO WE SERVE

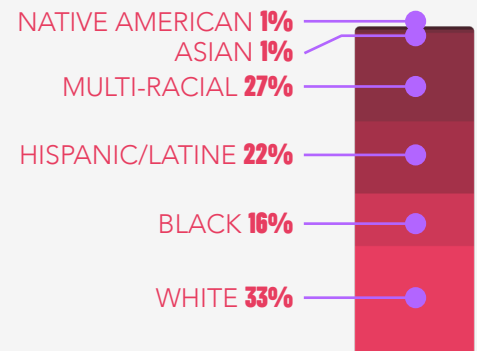
Young people are deceived, manipulated or coerced into the commercial sex industry in exchange for money, housing, food, clothing, and other items of value. It is well documented that exploiters often prey on youth who have been pushed to the margins, such as those who have experienced childhood maltreatment, violence or dysfunction at home, child welfare system involvement, juvenile justice involvement, and/or homelessness. The young people most vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation are living at the crosshairs of racism, sexism, classism, and often heterosexism or transnegativity. In FY23, the average age of first exploitation for the youth served by our program was 13 years old, 5% younger than last year. The average age at referral was 15 years old.

Black and Latine youth from low-income backgrounds are at disproportionate risk of commercial sexual exploitation. They represented 67% of the youth served in our Survivor Empowerment Program in FY23 even though collectively they only make up roughly 25% of the population in Massachusetts. LGBTQIA2S+ youth are also at increased risk for CSEC—not because of their identities, but because of the many intersecting and overlapping obstacles they often face. This can include increased risk of being rejected by their families, leaving them without shelter, basic resources, and/or crucial social support.

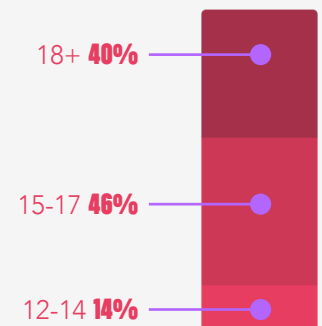
In FY23, 51% of the youth served through our Survivor Empowerment Services identified as part of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. This demonstrates a 6.3% increase in mentees identifying as LGBTQIA2S+ over last year. More specifically, transgender, nonbinary, genderfluid, and gender questioning youth accounted for 8.4% of our mentees in FY23, though the most recent Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS, 2021 shared by the Mass Commission on LGBTQ+ Youth 2024 Report) reports that 5.3% of high school youth identified as such.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF YOUTH SERVED

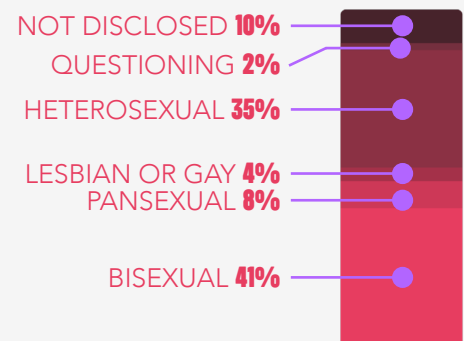
RACE & ETHNICITY



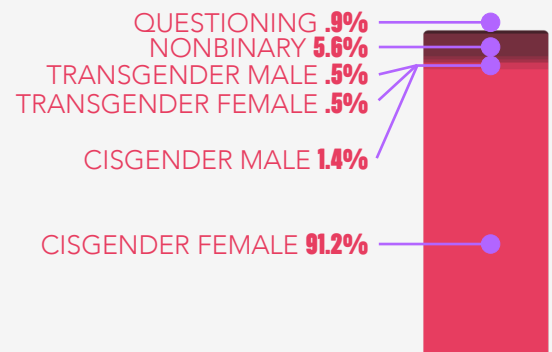
AGE



SEXUAL ORIENTATION



GENDER



SERVE AS A CATALYST FOR SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY

220

Youth received
**Survivor
mentoring**

50

Youth received **intensive
case management**

29

Youth received
**therapy from a My Life
My Choice clinician**

6

Peer support groups were
offered

28

Youth participated in
**My Life My Choice
Leadership Corps**

THIS YEAR WE:

1. Supported mentees in building **leadership skills**.
2. **Increased opportunities for success** for mentees through improved health, education, housing, and economic outcomes.
3. Ensured **equitable and culturally competent care** for youth at disproportionate risk of exploitation, including youth of color and LGBTQIA2S+ youth.
4. **Amplified survivor voices** in the movement.
5. **Expanded our impact through consultation** and opportunities for replication in other parts of the country.
6. **Increased survivor leadership** among staff.

LEADERSHIP CORPS

We provided 14 mentees with paid internships as part of our Summer Leadership Corps Program – ensuring our mentees do not miss out on key opportunities to learn and grow due to financial constraints.

Fall and Spring Leadership Corps worked on impactful projects including:

- “Do’s and Don’t’s for Therapists” for the **National Center on Child Trafficking** to share with mental health professionals serving exploited youth.
- Engaging in policy and advocacy at My Life My Choice. Participants received training on the legislative process and informed the development of the My Life My Choice Legislative Agenda. Leadership Corps participants also worked on **testimony for the Foster Youth Rights Act** which, if passed, would codify the right to safety and security for youth involved with the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

HIGHLIGHTS

We **expanded our clinical services** to help support mentees with complex trauma. Grant funding from Accelerate the Future allowed us to increase internal capacity to offer therapy services to more mentees, as well as supported the development of a survivor-centered online clinical course which will launch in the spring of 2024.

We hired an **Economic Empowerment and Housing Coordinator** to support transition-age mentees in job skills development and housing.

Our Katie May Fund **provided assistance to 74 mentees** who needed support ranging from a laptop for school, diapers for their babies, a dress for prom, utility bill help, and more.

5 Survivor Leaders on staff were promoted and Assistant Director of Prevention, Charel Murrell, delivered her first-ever keynote speech at the Valley Youth House Annual Meeting.

As part of our work with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI):

- We are creating **the state’s first ever handbook** on how to provide survivor-led mentoring to exploited youth.
- **We hosted a Survivor Leaders retreat with 19 survivor experts** present from My Life My Choice, LIFT (Living in Freedom Together), Legacy at RFK, Spectrum Health Systems, and RIA (Ready Inspire Act).

“DURING MY INTERNSHIP WITH MY LIFE MY CHOICE, I GOT THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN NEW THINGS AND BE AROUND OTHERS WHO ARE SUPPORTIVE OF MY DREAMS AND FUTURE.

I LEARNED TO WORK WITH EXCEL AND EXPANDED MY COMMUNICATION SKILLS. SHOWING UP EVERY DAY AND BEING PROFESSIONAL, MY INTERNSHIP PROVIDED ME SKILLS TO USE IN THE WORLD, AND I GOT PAID FOR MY TIME! I WOULD DEFINITELY RECOMMEND MLMC’S INTERNSHIPS TO OTHERS SO THAT THEY TOO CAN EXPAND THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND FEEL THE LOVE FROM MLMC.”

- T. AGE 16, SUMMER LEADERSHIP
CORPS PARTICIPANT



SHIFT THE NORMS THAT ENABLE CSEC TO EXIST IN OUR COMMUNITIES

2,275 People
trained

255

Youth participated in
prevention groups

2,529

People attended our
speaking engagements

49

Prevention groups
facilitated by
My Life My Choice
and partners

9

Men actively engaging in
our Male Allies initiative

THIS YEAR WE:

1. **Enhanced trainings, communications, and youth-led initiatives** to help people understand that CSEC can happen to anyone AND it disproportionately affects children of color and LGBTQIA2S+ youth.
2. Expanded our strategy on **male accountability**.
3. Supported youth in **building self-esteem and healthier self-identity**.
4. **Cultivated a community of supporters** who believe there is no such thing as other people's children—all children are our collective responsibility.
5. Continued to work to protect the most vulnerable by working to pass the **Equality Model** in Massachusetts and supporting efforts in other parts of the country.

EXPANDING OUR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Formed prior to the pandemic, this past year, our **Male Allies** initiative really took shape. The group is comprised of men from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds working together to elevate survivor voices and shift perceptions and behaviors among their peers that enable commercial sexual exploitation to exist in our society.

Men are situated in a specific and powerful position to help upend the patriarchal values that allow for this form of gender-based violence to occur.

Their key priorities are:

- Engaging parents around talking with their boys

2023 IMPACT REPORT

- Preventing recidivism through shifting offender dynamics
- Expanding impact and influence through community events and dialogue
- Advancing efforts to pass the Equality Model in Massachusetts

We launched our **Young Professionals Advisory Board** with 12 inaugural members. This initiative is a key extension of My Life My Choice's commitment to engage all sectors of our community in shifting perspectives and changing systems that give rise to commercial sexual exploitation. From phone banking, hosting events, advising strategic communications, and taking action in the policy and advocacy space, this group is poised to make a big impact.

We've continued to grow our digital presence and impact on social media with an **236% increase in engagement** on Instagram, one of our most popular platforms.

With the support of renowned radio journalist and producer, Stephen Smith, we had our first foray into the world of podcasts with **"Ending Exploitation," a 5-episode podcast** featuring members of our staff and several alumni mentees.

THE SEX TRADE SURVIVORS ACT

Serving as part of the **EMMA Coalition**, we have made tremendous progress towards our goal of getting the Sex Trade Survivors Act in Massachusetts passed.

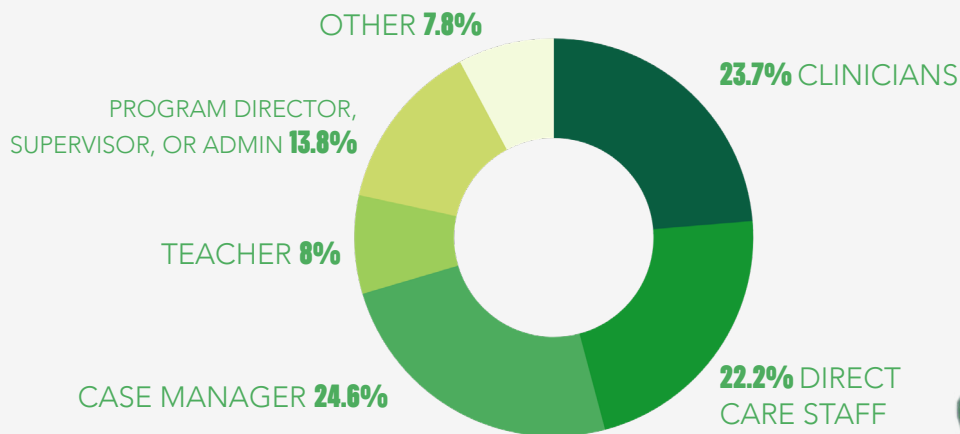
17 Survivors from across the Commonwealth testified for its passage during a hearing. In the past year, we received endorsements from 95 agencies, partners, and stakeholders and organized 35 survivors and allies to provide verbal and written testimony to the Judiciary Committee.

TRAININGS

We offer both introductory and advanced courses locally and across the country. This past year we trained:

- **1,792 people** in understanding and responding to victims of CSEC
- **190 people** on skills and strategies for providing effective, trauma-informed services to survivors
- **142 people** in becoming a My Life My Choice Prevention Curriculum Certified Facilitator
- **74 providers** in congregate care on better serving trafficking and high-risk adolescent girls

Of those who attended a My Life My Choice training for the first time:



PREVENTION GROUPS

Our Prevention Groups reach youth at disproportionate risk of exploitation. The average age of prevention group participants last year was 13.5 years old. 65% of participants were BIPOC and 50% of participants were LGBTQIA2S+.

Upon completing the group, participants reported:

182% increase in sharing myths and facts about commercial sex industry with a friend

48% reduction in youth staying out without permission

45% reduction in youth being asked to exchange sex for money, drugs, shelter, or something of value

INFLUENCE THE SYSTEMS MOST IMPACTING MARGINALIZED YOUTH

13

New Prevention
Solution
Fellowship
partners established

43

Coalitions and task forces
with My Life My Choice
staff representation

35

Survivors and allies
submitted testimony to
support our legislative agenda

43

Legislators signed on to
support the Sex Trade
Survivors Act

16

Mentees involved with our
advocacy work

THIS YEAR WE:

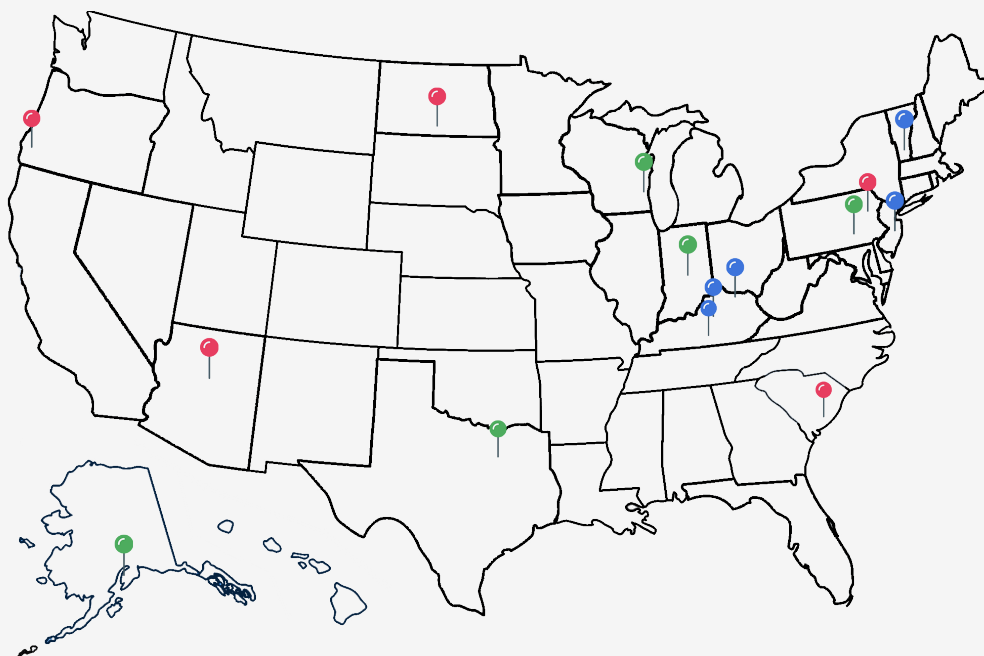
1. **Deepened our partnerships** within the Child Welfare, Criminal Justice, Education, and Health Care systems.
2. **Improved and increased CSEC trainings** offered within these systems.
3. **Increased understanding around the importance of, and created more opportunities for, survivor voices in policy** reform and development within these systems.
4. **Worked to expand, deepen and embed CSEC prevention** in these systems through innovative delivery models and collaborations.
5. Built support and momentum towards a **statewide plan to address CSEC**.
6. **Advocated for policy reform and legislation** that directly addresses barriers and challenges for youth at greatest risk of CSEC, including LGBTQIA2S+ and BIPOC youth.

PREVENTION SOLUTION FELLOWSHIP

During this past year, we worked with our third **National Prevention Solution Fellowship** (PSF) cohort of 5 residential programs to continue our efforts to shift how young people are served in congregate care. Our partnership with Covenant House in Alaska is particularly exciting because prior to this collaboration we had not trained anyone from this state.

We expanded our **Massachusetts PSF** to include two cohorts that both began this past winter, one with 5 young parent living programs and one with 5 congregate care facilities for adolescent females.

In total, between both Fellowship Programs, they are serving over **5,750 youth** and employ more than **2,900 staff**.



■ Cohort 1

■ Cohort 2

■ Cohort 3

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

We continued to train staff within key systems impacting the lives of the young people we serve:

- Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Department of Youth Services (DYS)
- Department of Mental Health (DMH)

This past year:

88% of our youth were **involved with DCF**

14% of our youth were **involved with DYS**

11% of our youth were **involved with DMH**

NATIONAL LEADERS

13 of our staff represent My Life My Choice on a total of 43 steering committees, boards, and coalitions across Massachusetts and nationally.

As thought leaders in the anti-trafficking field, our staff are active members of:

- WorldWe Advisory Board
- Governor's Working Group on Child Trafficking (Co-Chair)
- Governor's Commission on Unaccompanied and Homeless Youth
- Governor's Commission to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Human Trafficking
- National Center on Child Trafficking Advisory Board
- Shared Hope's National JuST Council

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We continued to build relationships within systems across our direct service area of Massachusetts. Some notable new relationships were:

- Municipal Police Training Committee to deliver trainings aimed at enhancing officers ability to recognize CSEC, deliver survivor-centered and trauma-informed responses, and encourage interagency collaboration.
- Bristol County to train judges, probation staff, and court staff.
- The Suffolk County Probation Task Force.

TEXAS ALLIANCE

The state of Texas passed legislation in 2020 that will soon require all youth in congregate care to receive prevention education; thanks to our partnership, **Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services** is helping get our prevention curriculum to even more providers throughout the state. All providers in Texas who apply to our Prevention Curriculum Training and are accepted can attend and receive training at no cost to their organization as a result of this funding.

“THANKS TO MY LIFE MY CHOICE’S EXPERTISE IN LEADING THE FIGHT AGAINST COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, MANY PROVIDERS IN OUR STATE ARE NOW BETTER POSITIONED TO EFFECTIVELY WORK WITH YOUTH WHO HAVE BEEN EXPLOITED.”

- SARAH HALL, CSEY PROJECT MANAGER, TEXAS ALLIANCE OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

“BILLS THAT MY LIFE MY CHOICE ARE SUPPORTING AND WORKING ON WILL BE LIFE-CHANGING FOR EXPLOITED YOUTH INVOLVED IN FOSTER CARE, IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, OR [WHO] ARE IMPOVERISHED. ALTHOUGH WORKING WITH POWERFUL LEGISLATORS IS INTIMIDATING, THE DEDICATION OF ADVOCATES IS TRANSFORMING OUR COMMUNITIES.”

- S., AGE 17, YOUTH LEADER & MENTEE

POLICY & ADVOCACY

We took significant strides towards strengthening our policy efforts by bringing on our first-ever Policy and Advocacy Manager and promoting a Senior Survivor Mentor to the role of Policy Specialist. Accomplishments include:

- Creating our first legislative agenda that centers safety, rights, and resources for survivors;
- Training all My Life My Choice staff on the advocacy and the legislative process;
- Working tirelessly with the EMMA Coalition with the goal of passing the Equality Model in Massachusetts; and
- Engaging mentees in taking on leadership roles and making meaningful contributions to our policy efforts.



ENSURE CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR CURRENT AND EMERGING NEEDS

44%

of My Life
My Choice
staff identify as
survivors

37%

of **revenue** from philanthropy

35

full time positions

1

Year of being
in our **new home**

9

Core values guiding us

THIS YEAR WE:

1. **Furthered our commitment to our core values** and staff development.
2. **Continued to invest in racial equity work** internally and externally.
3. **Continue to work towards equity and inclusion for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals** internally and externally.
4. **Continued to strengthen our financial position** through diverse funding streams and new partnerships.
5. **Expanded capacity to meet growing needs** through a new space, efficiencies, and technology.
6. **Utilized strategic communications** to further programmatic goals and build engagement.
7. **Maintained the quality and efficacy of our models** through comprehensive evaluation.

NEW SPACE, NEW CONNECTIONS

We made great use of our new space during our first full year in person. We hosted several events and programs for our mentees and community partners including an Open House for partners, funders, neighbors, and volunteers, 3 Prevention Groups, a Pride Celebration for mentees, a Mother's Day event for parenting mentees, EMMA Coalition meetings, mentee internships, and task force meetings.

Our staff **hosted 12 guests from 6 countries** for a meet and greet with the U.S. Department of State's 2023 Trafficking In Persons Report Heroes.

HIGHLIGHTS

We increased our capacity by employing 5 college interns, 4 per diem trainers, and 1 per diem mental health clinician.

We also finalized implementation of the **Survivor Empowerment Matrix** which helps our team assess progress in key areas identified as critical to sustainable recovery.

With the help of our amazing friends at Driver8, we changed our logo and updated our color palette as part of our branding efforts. The new logo and colors represent our bold, clear, and inclusive approach to social justice.

Our diverse revenue streams included: **\$1,339,878 in philanthropy, \$1,041,737 in government grants, and \$1,249,996 in earned income.**

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

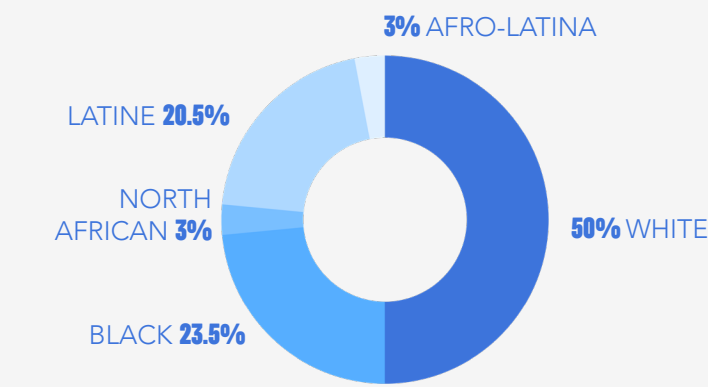
We formed a **Culture Committee** responsible for helping foster an internal culture that reflects and embodies our core values, promotes transparency, and ensures everyone feels that they belong and are respected.

Staff engaged in one of **2 racial equity-focused affinity groups**, depending on how they identified. The BIPOC Affinity Group and White Accountability Group each regularly meet have their own purpose, but they share the goal of fostering an inclusive and equitable organization for staff and mentees.

Several staff chose to participate in our **LGBTQIA2S+ Affinity Group** that was created as a confidential space for LGBTQIA2S+ staff to share, connect, and use the space and time for what is needed.

STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

RACE & ETHNICITY

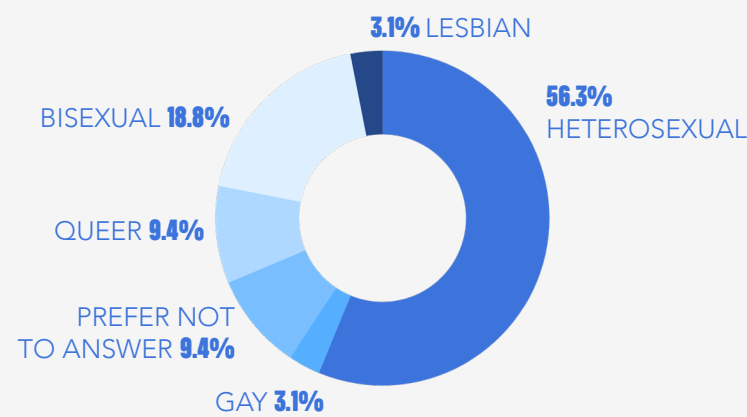


50% of staff identify as **BIPOC**

40% of senior staff identify as **BIPOC**

73% of survivors on staff identify as **BIPOC**

SEXUALITY

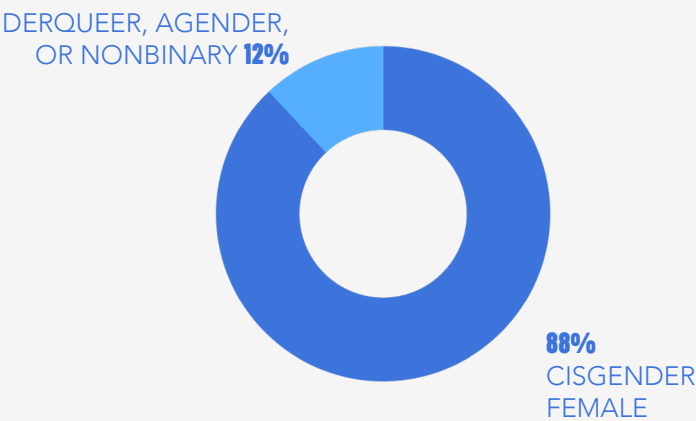


35% of staff identify as **LGBTQIA2S+**

30% of senior staff identify as **LGBTQIA2S+**

20% of survivors on staff identify as **LGBTQIA2S+**

GENDER



SURVIVORSHIP

44% of staff identify as **survivors**

33% of senior staff identify as **survivors**

**THANK YOU FOR
BEING A
PART OF OUR
COMMUNITY.**

**MY LIFE
MY CHOICE**
ENDING EXPLOITATION

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