



Supporting Parents
Connecting Families
Building Community

2023 Annual Report



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A PEPS Group gathering in 1984.

OUR MISSION

PEPS connects parents to strengthen families and build community.

OUR VISION

- Resilient Families
- Connected Communities
- Equitable Outcomes

OUR VALUES

- Equity
- Innovation
- Inclusion
- Community
- Authenticity

OUR EQUITY STATEMENT

As long as race and ethnicity predict the future life chances of children in our state, racial equity and social justice will guide how we do our work at PEPS. We believe that all families should have access to a healthy, supported life.

Equity work at PEPS is:

- Thoughtful
- Embedded
- Ongoing

Learn more about [equity at PEPS](#).

Dear PEPS Community,

2023 was a milestone year at PEPS – we celebrated our 40th Birthday! What started in 1983 with seven moms and their newborns in a living room has grown into an organization that served more than 3,500 parents in the Puget Sound region and nearly a thousand more through partnerships in 2023. We've evolved to meet parents' needs by offering parent peer-support programs at multiple pivotal phases of development and transition, including groups for expectant parents and parents of adolescents and teens.

My family experienced a different birthday milestone this year – my firstborn, the one who brought me to PEPS, officially became a teenager. As I navigate the joys and frustrations of parenting an adolescent, I see just how critical social connection is for parents. Science backs it up, and I know how comforting it is to talk to another parent who is going through similar highs and lows.

In 2023, just as PEPS was working through how to bring more parents together in person again, the Surgeon General issued a public health advisory on the Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation. The report confirmed what we've always known at PEPS: humans are wired for social connection, but we've become more isolated over time. Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling; it harms both individual and societal health.

The solution? Relationships. Social connection! And that is what PEPS does – with intention and attention to access, equity, and the unique needs of each family. 2023 was a year of learning, partnering, responding to the needs of parents and charting a path forward.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for being part of the PEPS community and supporting our work – from our founding to our 40th year and beyond. Your support fuels our ability to build community, grow, evolve and thrive.

With deep gratitude,

Dana Guy, she/her
Executive Director, PEPS



PEPS Executive Director Dana Guy celebrating with PEPS friends at our 40th Birthday Bash.



[PEPS] helped us feel way more normal and less alone. Lots of great resources, but more than that, just hearing others' experiences was super reassuring.

— 2023 Connecting the Expecting participant

2023 PEPS PROGRAMS

Connecting the Expecting
For expectant parents

Newborn
For parents with babies 2-20 weeks old

Second Time Around
For parents with a newborn and one or more older children

Baby Peppers
For parents with babies 5-12 months old

Parents of Adolescents & Teens (PAT)
For parents with adolescents 10-19 years old

Affinity Programs
For parents with a shared identity who have children 0-3 years old:

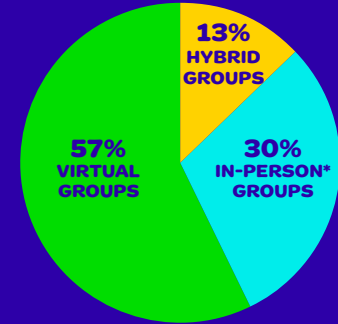
- LGBTQIA+ parents
- Single parents
- Working moms

2023 PEPS Impact – At a Glance

3,589 PARENTS PARTICIPATED IN PEPS GROUPS



320 GROUPS MET



**29% of in-person groups met in homes, 71% met at community sites.*

983 PARENTS PARTICIPATED IN PEPS GROUPS THROUGH COMMUNITY AND NETWORK PARTNERS



149 PARENTS PARTICIPATED IN PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS AND TEENS (PAT) GROUPS

115 PARENTS PARTICIPATED IN AFFINITY PROGRAMS



207 GROUP LEADERS SUPPORTED PARENTS



9,493 VOLUNTEER HOURS DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING PARENTS





In this space that the PEPS program provided for me, I could be really raw, and I could really ask for the help that I needed without having to pretend that everything is fine. And it was a relief.

— Lucrecia, PAT participant

Read more about [Lucrecia's experience](#) in a PAT Group and how the PAT curriculum was developed.

WAYS PEPS COLLECTS FEEDBACK:

- Participant feedback from pre-group, midpoint, and post-group surveys
- Group Leader surveys during training and after each PEPS Group meeting
- Registration data
- Meetings with schools, community partners and social workers
- Interviews with pilot group participants
- Surveys from partner organizations

In 2023, our Impact and Evaluation Specialist began work on an evaluation tool to measure how PEPS impacts families across the five protective factors of the [Strengthening Families™ framework](#). We will continue this work in 2024 as we lay the groundwork for future research opportunities to support the PEPS model.

Adapting to Meet Families' Needs: How Community Feedback Informs Our Work

PEPS has shifted away from a one-size-fits-all approach and expanded our programming to support families through multiple transitional phases. Our work is informed by listening, learning, and collecting input from participants, subject matter experts, and the greater community.

OFFERING ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS OF ADOLESCENTS AND TEENS

When we launched our [Program for Parents of Adolescents and Teens \(PAT\)](#) in 2022, it was designed as a 9-week program. We received feedback that adding shorter program options would make PAT accessible to more families. In response, we developed a collection of 4-week PAT series focused on themes such as *parenting a middle schooler* and *communicating with your adolescent*.

Parents can now learn and grow with their peers through:

- 9-week PAT Groups
- 4-week PAT Groups
- Workshops and community events

REFINING AFFINITY GROUPS

PEPS Affinity Groups bring together people who share a common identity. These groups can be a place of respite where participants do not have to explain their identity and can show up more fully. We've piloted groups for LGBTQIA+ families, single parents, and working moms. New Affinity Groups are introduced with care and intentionality, taking into consideration the need, the local landscape of organizations already supporting specific communities, and staff capacity.



PEPS staff at the LGBTQIA+ family picnic in September.

In 2023, LGBTQIA+ Affinity Groups became a permanent program offering after two years in the pilot phase. Based on feedback from pilot group participants, we increased the length of the program from 9 to 12 weeks and changed it from a supplemental program to one that covers standard topics in addition to affinity-specific topics.

Read this [ParentMap article](#) highlighting PEPS Affinity Groups.

CURRICULUM REVIEWS

PEPS is dedicated to developing and refining our program curricula to reduce bias and ensure our materials are accessible and culturally relevant. The PEPS curriculum has been professionally reviewed for anti-bias, trauma-informed language. In 2023, we hired a consultant to complete an anti-ableism curriculum review.



Partnerships acknowledge that we are one star in a constellation of incredible organizations working with parents. This equity-centered model increases access to parent peer support. Our partners have their own community, along with expertise and lived experience to deliver the curriculum in culturally relevant ways.

— Dana Guy, PEPS Executive Director

2023 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Bainbridge Youth Services
Childstrive
Denise Louie Education Center
Hearing, Speech & Deaf Center Launch
Mercy Housing Northwest
NISO Programs
Open Arms Perinatal Services
Sistema Escolar USA
Southwest Youth and Family Services

2023 NETWORK PARTNERS

Early Parent Support Anchorage
Anchorage, AK
Greater Maple Valley
Community Center
Maple Valley, WA
Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies
Coalition of Hawai'i
Honolulu, HI
Martha's Table
Washington, D.C.
Mercer Island Healthy Youth
Initiative
Mercer Island, WA
Methow Valley Midwifery
Methow Valley, WA
Partners in Parenting
Austin, TX
Seattle Families of Multiples
Seattle, WA
Triangle Area Parenting Support
Triangle Area, NC

Interested in becoming a PEPS Partner? Fill out our [Community Partners interest form](#) or [Network Partners interest form](#).

Expanding Our Reach: Partnerships at PEPS

Through [partnerships](#), we are able to share the PEPS peer support model with communities in the Puget Sound region and across the country. **Community Partners** are local organizations that PEPS collaborates with to offer culturally relevant parent support. **Network Partners** pay a licensing fee to access PEPS curriculum and facilitation training to offer peer support groups in their communities.

COMMUNITY PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: SISTEMA ESCOLAR USA

Sistema Escolar USA is a community organization committed to bridging the gap between Latino families and the US education system. PEPS and Sistema Escolar USA have partnered since 2022 to offer Parents of Adolescents and Teens (PAT) Groups for Spanish-speaking families.

Sistema Escolar USA founder Liliana Medina worked with PEPS to adapt our PAT curriculum. Going beyond a simple translation, Liliana transcreated the program materials to make them culturally relevant for Spanish-speaking families. Sistema Escolar USA ran four PAT Groups in 2023.



Sistema Escolar USA PAT Group participants gathered at a park.

[Watch this video](#) featuring Sistema Escolar USA PAT Group facilitators.



I wanted to bring this to the Spanish community because I needed it when I was raising my child. I didn't have access to any program like this and all the resources were in English.

— Liliana Medina, founder of Sistema Escolar USA

NETWORK PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: EARLY PARENT SUPPORT – ANCHORAGE

Early Parent Support – Anchorage (EPSA) is a PEPS Network Partner that ran their first parent peer-support group in Wasilla, Alaska in 2023. When EPSA co-founder Shaina Seidner was a new mom in Anchorage in 2019, she heard about PEPS through a friend in Seattle. Wishing Anchorage had more options for parents to find support and build community, Shaina approached another new mom, Amanda Dale, about bringing the PEPS model to Alaska.



Moms and babies gathered for an EPSA parent peer-support group meeting.

While juggling day jobs and young children, Amanda and Shaina spent three years during the pandemic fundraising, facilitating community conversations, and preparing to launch their new organization. Throughout this process, Shaina and Amanda tapped into the knowledge and experience of the PEPS Partnership Manager for guidance.

Since a successful launch over the summer, EPSA has run more groups throughout the fall and winter. [Read more of EPSA's story](#) on our blog.



PEPS Advisor Dima Kfour and her family.

GROUP LEADER & ADVISOR HIGHLIGHT

Dima Kfour and her family moved from Ireland to the Seattle area in 2021. After participating in a PEPS Newborn Group and Working Moms Affinity Group, Dima was inspired to help other families find support systems by volunteering as a Group Leader and contributing her unique skills as an Advisor.

Dima applied her background in strategic marketing to help PEPS tackle a major challenge of 2023 – Group Leader recruitment. With Dima's guidance, we reviewed our Group Leader recruitment systems and identified areas for process improvement, such as increasing personalization of recruitment emails, maximizing CRM tools, and leveraging social media and community partnerships for targeted marketing.

Building Capacity: How Volunteers Propel Our Work

GROUP LEADERS

Our dedicated team of PEPS **Group Leaders** are essential to our work, helping parents feel seen and supported through challenging transitional periods. Due to their critical role in our program delivery, we continuously invest in Group Leader recruitment and training. We support leaders through weekly check-ins, coffee chats, social media groups, and advanced facilitation training opportunities.

2023 brought challenges with securing enough Group Leaders as more families were ready to meet in person. We're grateful to our Group Leaders who stepped up to lead more groups and our staff who shifted gears to lead groups and prioritize leader recruitment and training.

Group Leaders come from a diverse range of backgrounds, from past PEPS parents to mental health counseling students to grandparents and more. PEPS Group Leaders give their time and gain community, connection, and skills along the way. Many Group Leaders have used PEPS as an opportunity to add experience to their resume or explore a career change.



Being a PEPS Leader has made me a better facilitator, a more empathetic listener and a more inclusive leader.

— Jason M, PEPS Group Leader

ADVISORS & AMBASSADORS

As part of our ongoing commitment to equity, we shifted away from a traditional board model in 2022. Our smaller, more nimble governance board is complemented by our **Advisors & Ambassadors Network**. This broad, diverse, and fluid group of community members advises staff on specific strategic areas related to fulfilling our mission and strategic direction.

After establishing the Advisors & Ambassadors Network in 2022, we activated this group of community members in 2023 in new and meaningful ways. Advisors bring their professional skills, fresh perspectives, and experience to support projects including curriculum review, organizational structure, and IT. Ambassadors bring their networking and community-building skills to further the reach of PEPS programs.

There are many ways to support PEPS as a volunteer. Interested in contributing your skills and perspective to support our mission? Learn more about [volunteering at PEPS](#).



There are so few places in society that people can fully be themselves and share hard truths, and PEPS provides that. It's an honor to be in that space and be a witness to that moment.

— Anna Van Pelt, PEPS Group Leader

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FINDINGS*



In a national study conducted by Zero to Three, **half of parents reported lacking adequate support.**



A recent large sample size survey completed in California concluded that **mothers who reported having consistent social support were half as likely to suffer from a Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder than those who did not have such support.**



Studies indicate that **adults who are resilient were likely to have well-supported parents.**

*For sources and more information about these findings, see [our annotated bibliography](#).



Operating with Intentionality: The Research Behind PEPS

The PEPS model is based on the **Strengthening Families™** framework. This framework recognizes that support for parents strengthens resilience for the next milestone, challenge or change, helps build a strong bond between parents and their children, and shapes a child's healthy development.

We've seen the transformative power our peer support groups have on parents, from the newborn haze to the challenging adolescent years. As we expand our partnerships and reach out to new communities, we want to be able to share research and data that communicate the value of peer support programming for parents.

In 2023, we worked with consultants who evaluated existing research to create an annotated bibliography outlining the data we have about the importance of peer support for parent and child well-being.



Today's American family is impacted by cultural social isolation, a recent pandemic, racism, capitalism, a lack of pro-family public policy, (and more), undermining health and well-being across the socioeconomic spectrum. A growing body of research suggests that meaningful connections between parents and their peers correlates to child, parent, and family resilience and overall well-being.

— Pia Johnson Barreto and Annie Garrett, annotated bibliography researchers and authors



PEPS is collaboratively amplifying the work of groups who have subject matter expertise and have developed community-informed policy proposals that will lead to racial equity. PEPS offers a large community of parents who can quickly take action in support of these efforts.

— Molly Firth, PEPS Advocacy Consultant

HOW DOES PEPS CHOOSE OUR ADVOCACY PRIORITIES?

We're embracing our responsibility to engage the large community of parents in our network to take action on issues and policies that impact parents and families.

Our advocacy priorities are informed by:

- An organizational assessment gathering input from parents and organizations in the community to understand key issues impacting parents and how we can better show up for families in our region
- 15 interviews with stakeholders and coalition leaders involved in advocacy to identify areas where PEPS could have the most impact
- Advocacy survey feedback from over 400 community members
- Participation in three statewide advocacy coalitions: the Early Learning Action Alliance, Prenatal-5 Relational Subgroup, and the Work and Families Coalition

Learn more about our [journey to advocacy at PEPS](#).

Building a More Supportive Community: Beyond PEPS Groups

We know that PEPS Groups are an effective, hyper-local way to connect parents, build community, and reduce isolation during challenging transitional periods. We also know that after 40 years of connecting parents, we've established trust with community members and built an incredible network of families who have seen the power of community care and parent support firsthand.

ADVOCATING FOR EQUITABLE POLICIES

What could we accomplish together if we activated the PEPS community – tens of thousands of parents strong – to support equitable outcomes for all families?

In addition to offering PEPS Groups, another way we're showing up for families is by [advocating for more equitable policies](#). In 2023, we engaged our community around three key advocacy priorities that families told us would make the biggest difference in their lives: **protecting Paid Family and Medical Leave, securing affordable housing investments, and making childcare more affordable.**

The large community of parents in the PEPS network is a powerful force for change, and we're so grateful to all our community members who helped advocate for equitable policies for Washington families by emailing legislators, signing in pro to support bills, and spreading the word about our advocacy work.

CONNECTING FAMILIES WITH IMPORTANT RESOURCES

PEPS supports families beyond their group through:



Blog articles featuring experts such as child psychologists, early childhood educators, pelvic health physical therapists, and more.



Resource lists compiled by experts for parents of adolescents, LGBTQIA+ parenting, anti-racist parenting, and more.



E-newsletters connecting families with parenting resources, local community events, and stories from PEPS families.



Community events featuring professionals in adolescent mental health, will and estate planning, education savings, and more. In 2023, we saw record numbers of attendees at our community events, indicating that these topics are important to parents in our community.



500+ PEPS supporters celebrated 40 years of PEPS at our Birthday Bash.

THE IMPACT OF YOUR SUPPORT

Watch how PEPS changed two moms' lives and helped them gain confidence as new parents.



Thank you for being a consistent presence in my parenting journey. PEPS was there for me as I became a parent, and again as I became a parent of a teen for the first time. Both feel equally important and vulnerable, and I cannot thank you enough for the support during these times of transition.

— 2023 PAT participant

Collective Giving: Sustaining PEPS With Your Support

At the end of each year, when reflecting on our work and what we've accomplished together, it becomes very clear that we need community to build community.

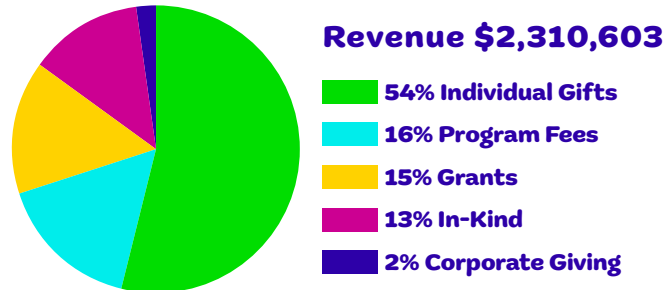
Thanks to the collective efforts of our giving community, together we can serve more parents, adapt to a changing landscape, and generate new ways to connect parents in extremely isolating times.

As a nonprofit organization, securing the resources to sustain our work is no small task in an ever-changing world with many needs and causes to invest in.

We are incredibly grateful to those who believe in our mission and work, who continued and even increased their support of our work, joined our giving community for the first time, committed to donating for multiple years or indefinitely with their monthly gift, provided seed funding for new programs or ongoing operations, and sponsored, hosted a table or joined us at our Birthday Bash Benefit Luncheon.

Thank you to our [2023 volunteers](#) and [2023 donors, funders, and sponsors](#). We truly appreciate each and every one of you.

Our work to support parents, connect families, and build community would not be possible without you.



*Program expenses include: new program development, curriculum development and support, Group Leader recruitment, training and support, program evaluations, partnership development and support, community engagement, group registrations and systems, customer service, and parenting resources.

Net assets as of December 31, 2023: \$1,606,833

Note: Pre-audited 2023 financials. Numbers subject to change.

Get Involved!

We strive to offer multiple ways for community members to engage with PEPS. Interested in helping families find support and build community? Get involved today – it takes the whole community to build community!

- **Join** a PEPS Group
- **Lead** a PEPS Group
- **Share your expertise** as a Guest Speaker
- **Join** our Board or Advisors and Ambassadors Network
- **Invest** in PEPS
- **Tell** a neighbor, colleague, or friend about PEPS
- **Sign up** for our newsletter or advocacy updates



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