



Restorative Justice Project Maine
ANNUAL REPORT 2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Cover Art: *Project Connect* mural by
Reentry residents and community
volunteers, October 2019

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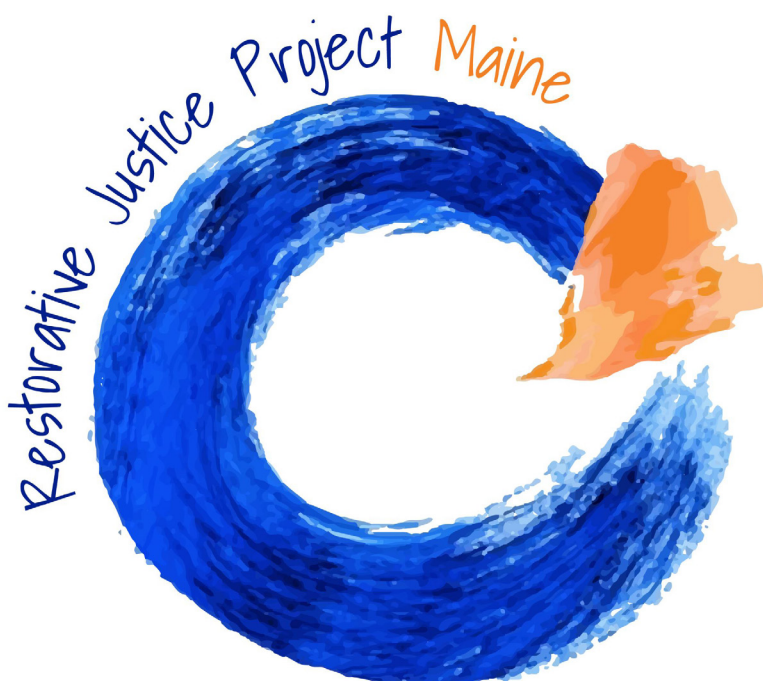
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OUR MISSION

The Restorative Justice Project Maine promotes justice that is community-based, repairs harm, and creates safety and well-being for all.



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



December 2023

GREETINGS,

If you're like me, you've been spending time lately reflecting on what we can do to make this world a saner and safer place. When I ask myself that question, I take comfort in being part of the Restorative Justice Project Maine — an organization that brings people together to create repair harm and restore relationships. RJP Maine gives me hope for a world where we can help young people have a chance for a brighter future.

2023 was the final year of our four-year grant from the Federal Bureau of Justice. That grant funding allowed us to do much to strengthen our presence in all four counties that we serve: Waldo, Knox, Lincoln and Sagadahoc. With the ending of the grant, we were saddened to have to reduce our workforce.

In 2024, we continue to focus on our top priority, as we have for the last 20 years — working with youth who have crossed paths with the criminal justice system. We continue to receive referrals and support young people from all four counties. We are fortunate to rely on a group of dedicated staff and to draw upon from an expanded pool of skilled and highly engaged volunteers.

Mary Finn, a Wiscasset area volunteer, eloquently describes the power of our court diversion program for youth:

I have had the pleasure of being an adult support to several high school students who made an impulsive and wrong decision and hurt others in the process. Restorative Justice Project Maine and their harm repair program provided these young people insight into the impact of their actions and the opportunities to make things right. Our program provides a high amount of support for these young people and for the victims so that they can carry out this difficult work with respect, hearing each other, and healing, and moving forward without causing shame and social isolation that can lead to more harm. This process also results in improving public safety in our communities.

Thank you for joining me in taking steps to create safer, saner communities by supporting the work of the RJP Maine. For me, it is a privilege to be part of a movement that is changing the way justice is carried out in our country. I hope that you will be inspired by our 2023 Annual Report, and will contact me or our Director, Kathy Durgin-Leighton, if you have any questions that we might answer.

Sincerely,
Christine LeGore BOARD CHAIR

OUR ORGANIZATION

We are an agile, responsive organization that continues to grow and learn. In fiscal year 2023, we made significant strides in the following areas.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACISM WORK

We are in our fourth year of working toward a more diverse and equitable organization. Our goal is to have a shared understanding among all staff and volunteers of how to ensure that our work is delivered from an anti-racism base. To this end, we added a two-hour “RJ with a Race Equity Lens” module to our *Foundations in Restorative Practices* training. Thanks to a grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation we worked with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) consultants of the Global Equity Collective (GEC) and local Maine educators, students, and families to produce a 2-video series, entitled *Responding to Racial Harm using Restorative Practices: It Starts with Counteracting Microaggressions*. People from 20 different organizations have signed up to access the videos. In 2024 we’ll be exploring how the videos are being used and how we might further develop the curriculum, lesson plans, and materials with local educators.

PUBLIC POLICY

Our RJP Maine Legislative Committee is advocating for fundamental change toward more restorative options in the criminal legal system. A team of 5 volunteers review and prioritize restorative-minded bills proposed to the Maine Legislature, working to get those we care most about passed. Five “action alerts” were sent out to subscribers alerting them for a need to call their legislators to support priority bills.

INNOVATIONS IN COMMUNITY-BASED CRIME REDUCTION GRANT

We were thrilled when, in 2019, the U.S. Department of Justice awarded RJP Maine a competitive grant as part of its “Innovations in Community-based Crime Reduction Program” to create community justice hubs in the midcoast Maine counties. And in the four years since, we’ve thrown ourselves into grassroots community engagement. Community residents, educators, social service providers, law enforcement officers and others have generously given countless hours of their time and expertise, implementing restorative practices “upstream” to prevent crime and make our communities safer and more welcoming. Sadly, the grant is coming to an end.

Hundreds of community members have participated in our listening circles about safety, belonging and conflict. Dozens have joined our county-based steering teams to develop and implement preventive strategies. And our midcoast sheriffs, district attorney, police chiefs, victim witness advocates, probation officers and community members have come together every quarter as an advisory team to participate in a dialogue about restorative justice and make commitments to implementing restorative practices within their own realms.

OUR ORGANIZATION

Early on in this project, our advisory team identified reducing crimes related to substance use disorder as a major priority for midcoast communities. To that end, the [Waldo County Steering Team](#) identified three strategies to focus on, and as the work transitions outside the purview of RJP Maine, the steering team is divided into three volunteer-based working groups to implement these strategies. One group will support Volunteers of America in opening a recovery center, another will work with the Belfast Police Department to create an ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) response team, modeled off of a New Hampshire Program, and the third plans to partner with the Treatment and Recovery Court to offer restorative processes to those charged with OUIs.

In [Lincoln County](#), our community engagement strategy paid off in stronger relationships with our local schools and school resource officers, which we now anticipate will lead to more case referrals. The steering team focused its attention on finding ways to provide youth with more access to activities as a way to prevent substance abuse. As part of this transition, steering team members have been invited to join a coalition convened by Healthy Lincoln County, an important participant in the community justice hub from the start, that is focused on preventing youth substance abuse and engaging kids and teens in positive, preventative activities.

In [Knox County](#), steering team members gravitated toward finding ways to provide at-risk youth with mentorship and peer support, and they sought to provide a forum for youth to speak for themselves and share their own needs. In partnership with the Landing Place, a drop-in center for teens in Rockland that is part of the Knox County Homeless Coalition, the steering team hosted a listening circle for at-risk teen boys in May; the boys shared their experiences and the adults listened.

RJP Maine is committed to supporting the ongoing work that comes out of the community justice hubs project in alignment with our current program offerings. We will be providing restorative justice training to people working on the projects initiated by the steering teams, and we will invite law enforcement officials, attorneys and others in the Maine legal system to continue to participate in dialogues about restorative justice. As knowledge of restorative justice deepens and spreads, we see the benefits of restorative practices that are based in community relationships.



BY THE NUMBERS

HARM REPAIR

We provide an alternative path for community members who have been charged with crimes, caused harm, or are entangled in conflict. Throughout our four service counties (Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo), we divert youth and adults who have caused harm from the criminal justice system while holding them accountable for harms caused. This is accomplished through a comprehensive, community based approach that involves facilitated conversations (conferences, circles, or dialogues) between the harmed and harming parties, a concrete list of reparative tasks for the offender to complete (these often include community service, financial restitution, and apologies), and often the support of a trained volunteer mentor.

2023

RJP Maine responded to **80 cases**

50 involved youth

30 involved adults

Volunteer Facilitators **25**

Volunteer Mentors **22**

Cases by County

Knox 25

24 youth, 1 adult

Lincoln 23

11 youth, 12 adult

Sagadahoc 11

10 youth, 1 adult

Waldo 21

5 youth, 16 adult

HARM REPAIR PROCESS OVERVIEW

Promoting justice that is community-based, repairs harm, and creates safety & well-being for all

STEP 1. REFERRAL TO COUNTY COORDINATOR

For intake & scheduling & assignment to a facilitator team



STEP 2. FACILITATOR TEAM CONDUCTS RESTORATIVE REFLECTION

With centrally affected parties separately



STEP 3. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROCESS

Repair Agreement created



STEP 4. RESPONSIBLE PARTIES WORK ON REPAIR AGREEMENT

With optional support of community volunteer (sometimes called 'the mentor')



STEP 5. CLOSING & WRAP UP

- Parties reconvene to determine whether they're satisfied that agreement is completed
- Facilitators send letter of completion to referring party



As a volunteer in harm repair processes, I have witnessed the restorative power of harm repair for both harmers and victims. As a resident of Waldo County, I want to see more restorative options available to my community.

— Janine Gates, RJP Maine Volunteer, Belfast

JUVENILE CASE MANAGEMENT DOC REFERRALS CLOSED

% of referrals petitioned to court benefiting from dismissed or reduced charges

92%

Top 5 referral types

Criminal trespassing, criminal mischief, assault, vandalism, terrorizing



I recently helped facilitate a “circle” with a Rockland policeman (who had been harmed) and a high school student who had attacked him. The young man’s mother also joined the circle along with a social worker and two of us from RJP. After several sessions, we reached a harm repair agreement that the policeman (the victim) was very happy with: The young man wrote the policeman a moving letter of apology, agreed to wash the policeman’s car, agreed to continue receiving drug and alcohol counseling. And importantly, he understood, really understood that what he did was terribly wrong. The policeman told me afterwards that the RJP Harm Repair Agreement with this juvenile made it much less likely that the boy would be a repeat offender.

— Josh Goldstein, RJP Maine Volunteer, Belfast

TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

SCHOOL/INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

4 Trainings held

75 People served

HIGHLIGHTS

- Many of our 3-year working plans with local schools came to a closing in May 2023
- Efforts to continue restorative practices remain active in **RSU71**, **RSU40**, and **Thomas and Colby Colleges**.
- New partnership agreements
 - **Sweetser**: providing continuing education to Certified Intentional Peer Support Specialists (CIPSS)
 - **Maine Immigrant and Refugee Services (MEIRS)** to provide restorative practices workshops and support circles with young people and their parents experiencing the challenges of immigrant, refugee and asylum seeking in Lewiston.
- Within the **Reentry Center** we helped plan and host three half-day events for residents and their families to enjoy time in connection in an outdoor space known as "The Garden" or in local community centers.

UMaine FOUNDATIONS COURSES

HIGHLIGHTS

- Our 42-hour UMaine Foundations of Restorative Practices course is now completely online via the UMaine Cooperative Extension. Through this transition, we continued to host our in-person series with folks coming from as far away as Tiffin, Ohio, to as close as RSU14 and Bates College.

2 Trainings held

45 People served

Participant Testimonial

The facilitators were fabulous, the content was fabulous. The amount of real practice time included in the training was SO helpful. I'm glad that we reflected and practiced throughout, not just at the end. All of the resources we were given to work through during the workshop AND keep after has been very clear and useful. I attended this alone and will absolutely be recommending others from my organization to join a future cohort.

SCHOOL STAFF HARM REPAIR

4 Trainings held

HIGHLIGHTS

- In our second year offering Harm Repair Training to school staff members, with our 42 hour Foundations course being a pre-requisite for this deeper dive into conflict and healing work, participants joined their previously-trained colleagues to continue to grow their capacity for engaging harm repair efforts in their schools.

VOLUNTEER FOUNDATIONS SERIES

HIGHLIGHTS

- As we continued into our second year of offering a more comprehensive training for volunteers of RJP Maine, with intentional discussion of and practice with community building and restorative mindset, we offered three training series options to meet volunteer schedules.

3 Trainings held

34 People served

Participant Testimonials

The more people who can receive these tools the better our community will be.

I would recommend because it thoroughly covers the basics of restorative justice, and I would love to see more people volunteering with RJP.

The accessibility and true acceptance/kindness that is the restorative culture speaks volumes to why these practices are for Everyone. Always felt grateful and honored to enter and be present within the sub community of each module, regardless of where or how I was in each day before attending. This allows for all to find an access point.

Extraordinary and helpful focus on circles as a useful form of structured conversation.

VOLUNTEER HARM REPAIR SERIES

5 Trainings held

20 People served

HIGHLIGHTS

- This was our second year offering a deeper dive into harm repair facilitation. We introduced five different ways of responding to harm restoratively to help RJP Maine keep up with trauma-informed practices. We are looking to the future and not applying a one-size-fits-all approach to conflict as a way of more gently inviting community members into restorative processes and better meeting their needs.

Participant Testimonial

I would recommend this training (and already have) to practitioners in the community who can and hope to adopt a more community-centered approach to harm reduction and long-term healing. This space is one of curiosity and collaboration and opens a space for asking questions. The facilitators are engaging and I truly love hearing leaders' experiences with these applied models. Trainers are clearly invested and passionate, which is a grounding energy for the entire class.

AMPERSANDS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ADDRESSING SEXUAL HARMS

HIGHLIGHTS

- This was our first opportunity to engage with the Ampersands Restorative Justice Applied to Sexual Harm training. We opened the doors to our partners and fellow sibling RJ organizations. We learned about how the trainers and facilitators at Ampersands host their processes over 3 full days.

1 Training held

9 People served

COUNTERACTING MICROAGGRESSIONS VIDEOS

2 videos produced

20+ People served

HIGHLIGHTS

- We worked with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) consultants of the Global Equity Collective (GEC) and local Maine educators, students, and families to produce a 2-video series, *Responding to Racial Harm using Restorative Practices: It Starts with Counteracting Microaggressions*.
- People from 20 different organizations have signed up to access the videos.
- In 2024 we'll be exploring how the videos are being used and how we might further develop the curriculum, lesson plans, and materials with local educators.

RECORDED TRAINING CONTENT

HIGHLIGHTS

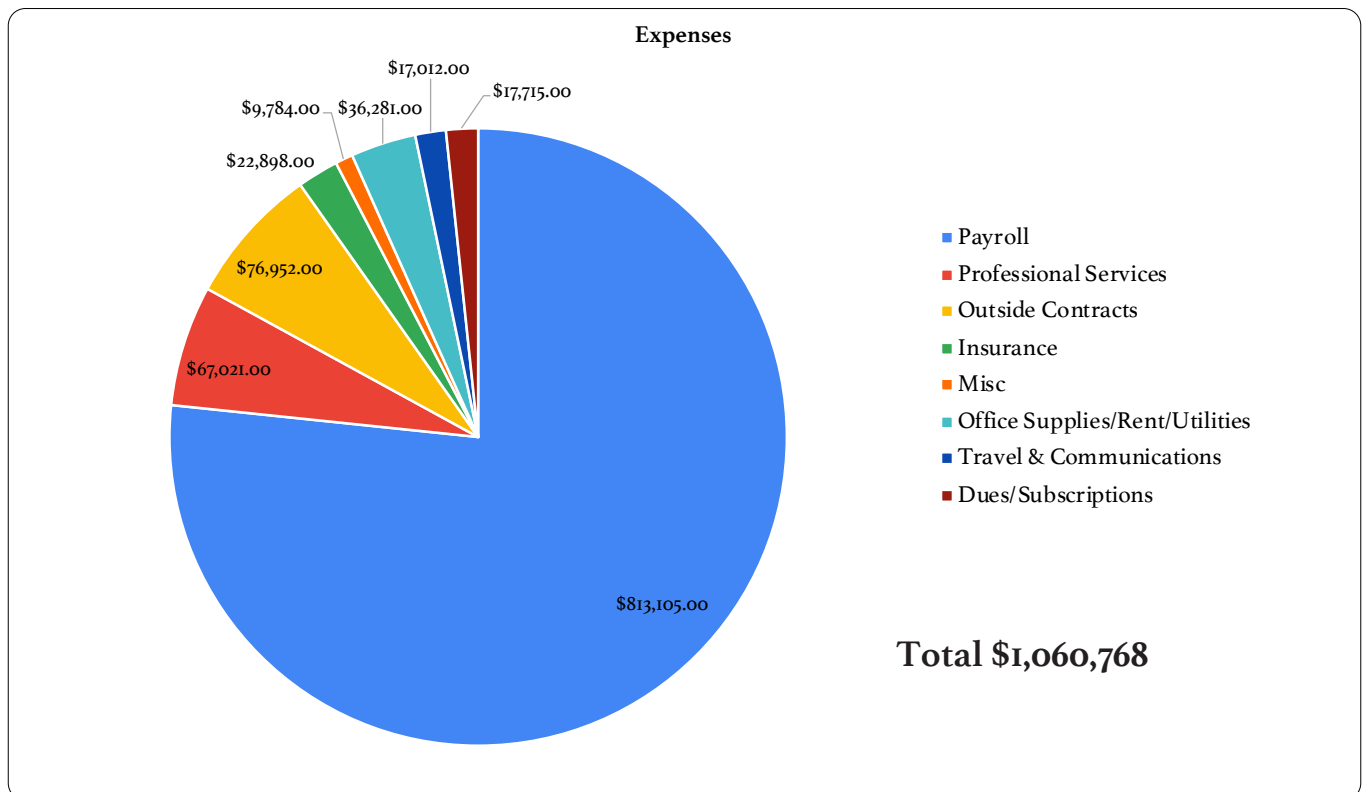
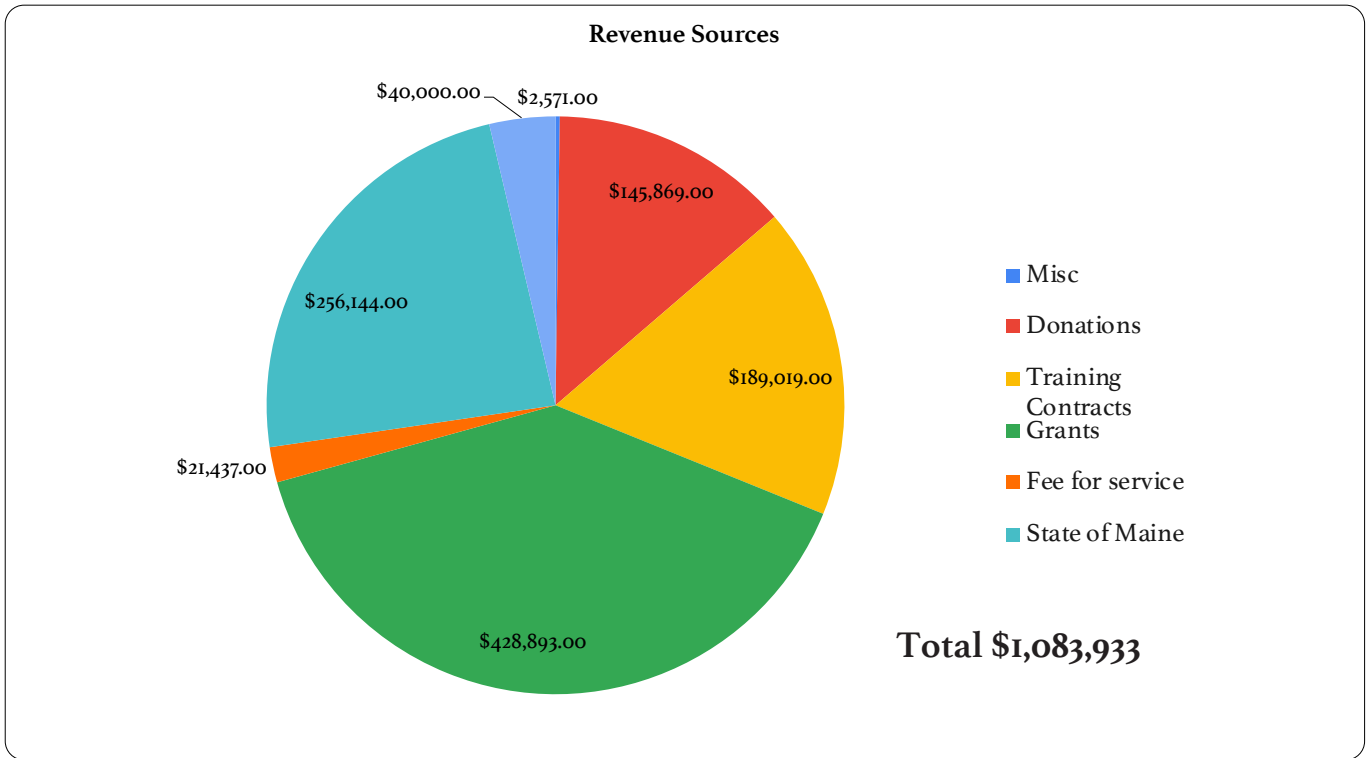
- In 2023, our team recorded up to one hour of content that aligns with each of our 5 learning modules in our Foundations of Community Based Restorative Practice Series. We are excited to see in 2024 how our video content supports and supplements our training and capacity-building efforts with all of our partners and volunteers.

5 Recordings produced

Coming in 2024

FINANCIALS

EXPENSES & REVENUE, 2023



OUR DONORS

Changing the current legal system is no easy task, but our donors help to make it possible. In 2023, 214 individuals, 6 faith-based organizations, and 9 businesses gave to RJP Maine. Each and every donation, no matter how small, is important to us.



FISCAL PARTNERS

Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance
City of Belfast
City of Rockland
Colby College
Knox County
Maine Community Foundation
Maine State Department of Corrections
Penobscot County Health Center
RSU 13
RSU 40
RSU 71
Sweetser
United Midcoast Charities
University of Maine Hutchinson Center
Volunteers of America Northern New England/
Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center
Waldo County Sheriff's Department

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

City of Belfast Public Library
Coastal Recovery Community Center
Damariscotta Baptist Church
District Attorney's Office — Prosecutorial District 6
Lincoln County Sheriff's Office
Midcoast Community Collaborative
Midcoast Youth Center
Knox County Sheriff's Office
Maine Humanities Council
Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial,
Indigenous, and Maine Tribal Populations
Sagadahoc County Sheriff's Office
St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Rockland
The Landing Place Youth Center —
Knox County Homeless Coalition
UU Church Belfast
University of Southern Maine Cutler Center
Waldo County Sheriff's Office

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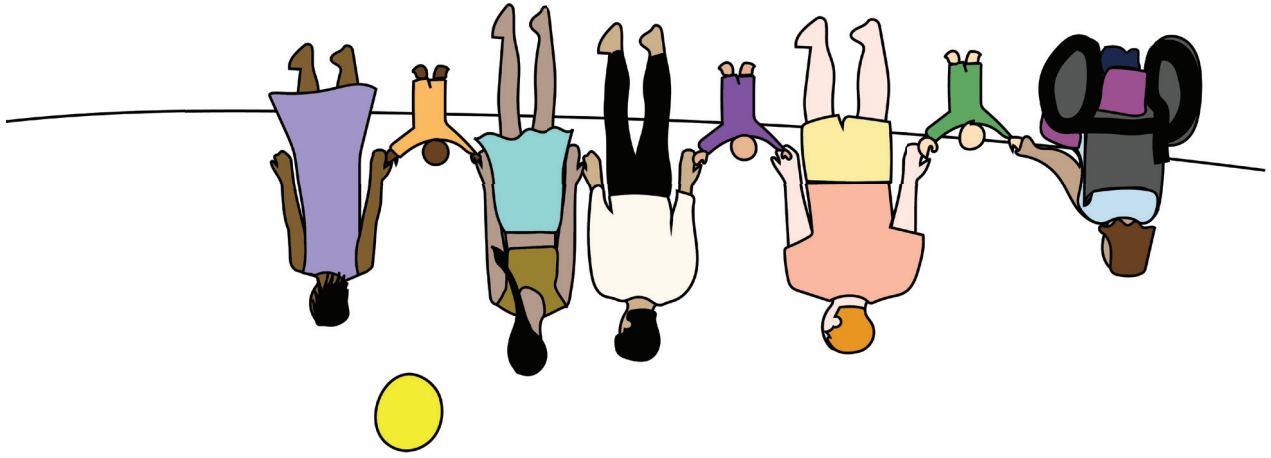
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