

Navigating the Challenges of Today's National Climate

Alison Jacobson



Saving babies. Supporting families.

First Candle's efforts to support families during their most difficult times and provide new answers to help other families avoid the tragedy of the loss of their baby are without parallel.

“On January 27th, we, along with many organizations, were blindsided by the freezing of all Federal grants, both existing and new.”

On January 27th, we, along with many organizations, were blindsided by the freezing of all Federal grants, both existing and new. Despite a Temporary Restraining Order last week to halt the freeze, funds for existing grants are still not being disbursed.

This extends to the state level, as programs run through State Departments of Health receive funding from Federal dollars, and colleges and universities that conduct research may be supported by Federal grants.

Like many non-profits that focus on maternal and infant health, we are deeply troubled that this money was being used to fund our [Let's Talk Community Chats](#) program in Atlanta. (1)

“Like many non-profits that focus on maternal and infant health, we are deeply troubled that this money was being used to fund our Let's Talk Community Chats program in Atlanta. (1)”

This program takes a community-based approach, working in collaboration with families to understand the benefits of infant-safe sleep practices in reducing Sudden Unexplained Infant Deaths and to help them access needed healthcare resources they may not have had.

We train trusted community members, peers, and professionals and meet in local places convenient for the families we work with.

This Georgia program is now in its third year and is funded, at least for now, by a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services through its Office of Minority Health. The current political climate raises challenges for non-profits engaged in social services and equity-focused initiatives, and organizations such as ours will need to address these challenges. They include:

Uncertainty. We've seen how project funding can be suddenly stopped. There is also uncertainty about how programs dealing with health equity and multicultural approaches will be assessed.

The potentially changing landscape. Our goal is to reduce infant and maternal mortality by advancing equitable health outcomes and addressing preventable differences in these outcomes through accessible, evidence-based strategies. A pathway to achieving this is respect for families' lived experiences, which includes understanding their cultures, family practices, and, in short, their diversity.

The availability of alternate funding sources. Because of the uncertainties, appeals to foundations and other non-government granting entities will increase when they evaluate where they fit in the scheme of things and what they can provide.

Regardless of the challenges, we will remain unwavering in our mission to save babies' lives and support families. The Let's Talk program, our Straight Talk for Infant Safe Sleep training program for professionals, and our bereavement support services for those who have lost an infant will continue.

“Regardless of the challenges, we will remain unwavering in our mission to save babies' lives and support families. The Let's Talk program, our Straight Talk for Infant Safe Sleep training program for professionals, and our bereavement support services for those who have lost an infant will continue.”

About First Candle

First Candle, based in New Canaan, CT, is a 501c (3) committed to eliminating Sudden Unexpected Infant Death while providing bereavement support for families who have suffered a loss. Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), which includes SIDS and Accidental Suffocation and Strangulation in Bed (ASSB), remains the leading cause of death for babies one month to one year of age, resulting in 3,700 infant deaths nationwide per year.

We will seek to diversify our funding sources further and broaden our relationships with organizations at all levels that value what we do and are equally committed to saving babies' lives.

Now more than ever, we will rely on donations from individuals who understand the importance of our mission. [You can donate here.](#) (2)

“Now more than ever, we will rely on donations from individuals who understand the importance of our mission. You can donate here. (2)”

References:

1. <https://firstcandle.org/lets-talk-community-chats/>
2. <https://fc.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/fc/donation.jsp>

Disclosure: *The author is the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of First Candle, a Connecticut-based not-for-profit 501(c3) corporation.*

NT



Corresponding Author



*Alison Jacobson
Executive Director
Chief Executive Officer
First Candle
21 Locust Avenue, Suite 2B
New Canaan, CT 06840
Telephone: 1-203-966-1300
For Grief Support: 1-800-221-7437
Email: Alison@firstcandle.org*