



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

A RECOVERY FOR ALL OF US: MAYOR DE BLASIO AND TASKFORCE ON RACIAL INCLUSION AND EQUITY ANNOUNCE CITYWIDE EXPANSION OF ‘FAMILY ENRICHMENT CENTERS’ TO REACH COMMUNITIES HARDEST HIT BY COVID-19

Family Enrichment Centers Are Walk-In Community Hubs Co-Developed With Local Families Based On Their Needs & Interests

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio, and Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity leadership today announced that the City will expand the “Family Enrichment Center” (FEC) system from three sites to 30 over the next four fiscal years. The new centers will be located in the priority neighborhoods identified by the Mayor’s Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity (TRIE), based on equity burdens and the impact of COVID-19.

First launched in 2017, the FECs are walk-in community centers that are co-designed with local families and community members with the goal of reducing child welfare involvement and addressing racial disproportionality in the child welfare system. The FECs work hand-in-hand with community members to provide concrete resources and other offerings responsive to their needs and interests. In particular, the FECs proved crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing critical supports to community members in need, including food, clothing, and technology needs, as well as social supports to parents and caregivers.

“A recovery for all of us means a recovery for the whole family,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Working families were hit hard over the past year and these new Family Enrichment Centers will connect children and parents to resources that are critical to long-term success and stability.”

“Now, more than ever, we must support the mental health and emotional well-being of our children, parents, and families. Family Enrichment Centers will provide critical support in areas that are specific to the needs of the neighborhood and created by the communities of color hit hardest by the pandemic,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “Every Family Enrichment Center will deliver a range of programs and services that may include computer skill development, financial literacy or arts and recreation, that are all designed to bring families together in a safe space. We want the Centers to remind every parent: You are not in this alone.”

The centers work to proactively address families' specific needs (generally related to the consequences of poverty) that may unintentionally lead to child welfare involvement if left unaddressed. The FECs are currently located in East New York, Brooklyn (Good Shepherd Services), Highbridge, Bronx (Bridge Builders & The Children's Village) and Hunts Point/Longwood, Bronx (Graham Windham). Each center was named by community members through a participatory process and are locally known as: The C.R.I.B. (Community Resources in Brooklyn), Circle of Dreams and O.U.R. Place (Organizing to be United and Resilient) respectively.

The FECs partner with families to co-design "offerings" responsive to their needs and interests, providing resources and supports across various domains of child and family well-being. Examples of programs offered at the FECs include: movie nights (for families to meet in a safe space and allow children to make new friends); a therapist-led Healing Through the Arts offering for families recovering from community violence; cultural activities; and Café con Amiga (Coffee with Friends) facilitated by Spanish speaking parent leaders to provide support to parents and caregivers. Additionally, the FECs sought to provide families with what they needed during the pandemic including technology/hotspots to assist children with virtual learning; Lyft car credits so community members could pick up food, medication and commute to doctor visits; and food, laundry cards and detergent were provided to family members.

A [recent evaluation of the FECs](#) showed that the centers are having a positive impact on families, and strengthening the protective factors that are associated with reduced incidence of child welfare system involvement. The report by Youth Studies, Inc. said that FECs were enhancing members' social supports (from family, friends and neighbors), family functioning, emotional connection with their children, and outlook on life. Additionally, those surveyed reported significant increases in their access to advice and resources in addressing several life challenges, including parenting, financial issues, relationships, food and nutrition issues, and stress management. The report also said that FECs were having a positive effect on members' access to concrete supports, which can help families better cope with stress, particularly in times of crisis. For example, while the evaluation was conducted prior to the global pandemic, just recently, the FECs helped City officials to quickly identify some of the hardest hit families in-need of emergency funds due to COVID-related economic challenges.

More than \$10,000 in funds have been distributed to families and young people via the Family Enrichment Centers to help cover the costs of rent, utilities, food and other expenses as a result of the pandemic.

"Families who have struggled most throughout the pandemic need our support more than ever now. Family Enrichment Centers provide a safe and inviting space for families to access vital services and supports, strengthening family emotional connections, social supports and overall well-being," said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Melanie Hartzog**. "Children and families do better when supported by their community, and these centers are an innovative approach to assisting families to help them remain resilient to the stresses of parenting,"

"Now more than ever, families need support and connections to the resources that will help them thrive," said **Sideya Sherman, Executive Director of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and**

Equity. “Family Enrichment Centers are innovative settings that put communities and family first. Whether you need help to manage stress, connections to financial supports, or are looking to strengthen social ties with other families in the community, these centers serve as a “one stop shop” that meet families where they are.”

“Family Enrichment Centers are part of our ambitious vision to support families before life’s challenges become overwhelming, and during what has been a challenging time for everyone, the Family Enrichment Centers have proved to be a vital lifeline for families in need in the pandemic,” said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. “Each Family Enrichment Center is unique because it’s co-created with families in the community and its offerings represent responses to community-identified needs. Citywide expansion of the Family Enrichment Centers underscores Mayor de Blasio’s commitment to addressing racial equity and inclusion in the communities that have suffered disproportionately during the COVID-19 pandemic, and ACS’s commitment to investing in services that strengthen families and reduce the likelihood of child welfare involvement. This plan represents a transformational investment in ACS’s family-supportive, community-centric service system.”

“One aspect of child welfare’s disproportionate impact on poor communities is that help often comes too late and almost always through an outside expert who is viewed with fear by local families,” said **Jeremy Kohomban, President and CEO of Children’s Village**. “Since 2017, the locally operated and locally managed FECs have reversed this historical trend. FECs allow local communities to be the first point of support; giving local communities the opportunity to build trust and care for their own in ways that a large bureaucratic child welfare system never could. Our thanks to Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner David Hansell for their commitment to our communities. This expansion is a game changer!”

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