



FAQs about cessation of Pillars Community Health’s Early Childhood Education services

After much discussion and consideration, Pillars Community Health Board of Directors, with the advice of executive leadership, has made the decision to end Early Childhood Education services when the Head Start grant ends on June 30, 2020. This has been a very difficult decision and has weighed deeply on the hearts and minds of all involved, particularly because of the impact this will have on our dedicated staff. **It is important to note; the current school year will continue and finish with no changes.**

Q. Why is Pillars Community Health going to cease providing Early Childhood Education services?

A. A healthy nonprofit organization regularly evaluates its offerings and acknowledges when it is time to launch or refocus services; this helps ensure that the people who need it the most can access the best possible services from the best possible provider. This decision was made by the Board of Directors with the advice of executive leadership.

Two factors have led to this recent Board decision. First is our need to focus growth on our core mission of integrated health and social services. Now more than ever, the challenges of providing integrated health and social services in Illinois are increasingly more complex, and demanding of time and resources, as the state redesigns service delivery and payment models.

Second, Pillars Community Health received a five-year grant in 2015 to oversee Head Start and Early Head Start programs for 18 area zip codes through June 2020. To continue the grant past June 2020, we would need to re-compete for the grant against other organizations that would like to expand their service area to include all or part of those 18 zip codes. In addition, the Office of Head Start Notice of Funding Opportunity guidance indicated that applicants should include plans to expand Early Head Start slots and services as well as convert half-day Head Start classrooms to full-day. Therefore, the re-competition period offered an opportunity for board and staff leaders to consider whether that needed growth of Early Childhood Education services aligned with our core strategic priorities—or, whether growth of these services in the communities we currently serve, as desired by the Office of Head Start, would be a better fit for another organization that is more centrally focused on provision of early childhood education.

Q. When will these services end?

A. *The current school year will continue (and finish in June 2020) with no changes. We are still enrolling children and families who need services. All bus transportation and scheduled activities will take place as planned for this school year.*

After June 30, 2020, Pillars Community Health will no longer offer Head Start, Early Head Start or Child Care services. While we do not know the future design of the Head Start and Early Head Start services in our communities after June 30, 2020, we share the Office of Head Start’s commitment to minimizing disruption to the students and families we serve . We promise to do what we can to ensure a successful transition when the

Office of Head Start announces the new grantee who will manage the program in our service area.

Q. What are Pillars Community Health's "core strategic priorities"?

A. Pillars Community Health will continue to focus on the growth of integrated physical, behavioral, and oral health care, and social services (including Domestic and Sexual Violence Services) to best meet community needs.

Q. How will this impact the agency financially? Was this a financial decision?

A. The decision was based on Pillars Community Health's long-term agency growth. Pillars Community Health is financially strong and committed to the continued growth and enhancement of integrated physical, behavioral, and oral health care services and related social services. We continuously strive to be strong stewards of both the resources and trust that our communities, partners, funders, and donors invest in us.

Q. Will Pillars Community Health still be serving children and families?

A. Yes, we will continue to serve children, families, in all of our other programs. This includes early childhood mental health, physical health, oral health care, and domestic and sexual violence. We will also continue to do prevention education in all of our other lines of service. We are only closing our childhood education programs (Head Start, Early Head Start, and Child Care).

Q. What will happen to the staff at the Child and Family Development Center?

A. Not only is this a change for the families we serve, but the unknown is also hard on our staff. Approximately 40 Early Childhood education staff positions will end on June 30, 2020. We are grateful for our dedicated staff. It is our plan to offer incentive compensation and outplacement services to those who remain with us through the end of the grant.

Q. What will happen to the families who are either in the program, on the waiting list, or interested in services?

A. Pillars Community Health will continue to offer these services as part of Pillars Community Health until the close of the school year (June 2020). The Office of Head Start and Pillars Community Health are committed to seeing that services are not interrupted.

We do not know the new grant decisions that will be made by the Office of Head Start, nor do we know the future design of the Head Start and Early Head Start program in our service area. We will also continue to provide children and families with our health and social services and continue to offer those services to Children's Center of Berwyn-Cicero, which has been our Head Start delegate agency for the past five years. In addition, we will work with a new grantee to offer leasing of our early childhood facility in Hickory Hills and offer support to their families and children through our health and social services.

Q. Head Start has played a large role in the agency's history and service offerings. Was this taken into consideration?

A. After more than 50 years of providing Head Start and Early Head Start services, Pillars Community Health recognizes this is a strategic focus shift in the organization's service offerings. Throughout our nearly 100-year history, Pillars Community Health and its predecessor organizations have made similar decisions to align services in ways that

would build healthier communities, align with best practices, and make decisions that would sustain and strengthen the organization and its mission into the future. While Pillars Community Health will no longer be a Head Start provider, there will be another Head Start grantee, so these educational services will continue to be part of the safety net of services for the communities we serve.

Q. Whom do I talk to if I have additional questions?

A. Please reach out to Angela Curran, President and CEO, at 708-579-4781 or acurran@pchcares.org with any questions.