



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**FIRST OF THREE INNOVATIVE FAMILY ENRICHMENT CENTERS LAUNCHES IN NEW YORK CITY TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES**

*Centers are a groundbreaking approach to reducing involvement in child welfare system and increasing family well-being*

(Bronx, NY) - "O.U.R. Place" Family Enrichment Center formally opened today in the Bronx, marking an innovative new approach to providing community-driven, comprehensive services to support families.

O.U.R. Place is the first of three such centers that will open in New York City this year. These centers are led by local communities and nonprofit agencies with support from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). At each of the centers, local parents and community members determine which services will be offered, what the facilities will look like, what hours they'll be open, and what type of staffing they'll have.

ACS ensures that the centers provide offerings within eight key areas that help decrease child maltreatment and improve family well-being:

- Health & Well-Being;
- Economic Stability & Employment;
- Housing;
- Child Development & Education;
- Parenting Skills;
- Positive Relationships;
- Community Engagement; and,
- Supportive Advocacy.

O.U.R. Place and the other Family Enrichment Centers are currently co-designing with parents and community members to determine exactly what programs and services they will offer. Programming may include offerings such as dads' cooking classes, financial literacy workshops, or college prep courses. Activities are expected to start in the next couple of months.

The centers are funded through ACS and managed by non-profit organizations. O.U.R. Place is in Hunts Point, Bronx and is managed by Graham Windham. The other two centers are in East New York, Brooklyn, and the Highbridge section of the Bronx and are run by Good Shepherd

Services and Bridge Builders, respectively. Each center will serve approximately 1,000 families per year. Each site has a director, one to two parent advocates, and a community liaison.

“New York City is a national leader in providing primary prevention services that support families and communities,” **said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio.** “Family Enrichment Centers are a new, innovative way to deliver those services, helping to keep families and communities strong by empowering them with the services they feel they most need. I applaud ACS and the provider agencies that led this initiative that puts families first.”

“Families know what they need in order to thrive,” **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell.** “What makes Family Enrichment Centers special is that community members and parents decide which services they need the most. These centers are part of ACS’ work to support families without any involvement in the child welfare system, and provide them with the services they need in order to thrive. I want to thank our partners, Graham Windham, Good Shepherd Services and Bridgebuilders, for their extraordinary work.”

“Raising children, even under the best of circumstances, is stressful and challenging. No parent can do it alone,” **said Jess Dannhauser, Graham Windham CEO.** “We all need a community to support us in keeping our children safe and well. We at Graham are honored to partner with the residents and organizations of Hunts Point to launch O.U.R. Place to provide this community of support for families to turn to whenever they need it. ACS’s investment in the Family Enrichment Centers is the right thing to do for families. We are confident that it will also prove to be a highly effective way to improve child safety and well-being. We applaud the City’s innovative leadership.”

“With the trainings I’ve attended through our partners at the Family Enrichment Center, it has definitely made a difference in my line of work,” **said Community Member Freddy Lopez.** “After the Appreciative Inquiry training I have been able to take a different approach with the children and parents in my afterschool program. The youth are starting to feel that we understand their concerns and look at the staff as mentors instead of another form of authority. This was made possible by the amazing staff here at O.U.R. Place. I always feel welcomed here.”

“The opening of ‘O.U.R. Place’ Family Enrichment Center in Hunts Point will bring tremendous resources for families in the neighborhood,” **said Council Member Rafael Salamanca, Jr.** “With significant input from local residents, this community-driven initiative will hopefully offer families the exact services, information, and support they need.”

“It is always uplifting to welcome resourceful organizations that work to connect the community to much needed services,” **said Assemblyman Marcos A. Crespo.** “The O.U.R. Place Family Enrichment Center is already proving to be innovative in its execution of programs, and most importantly the program has already demonstrated how committed it is to the people it wishes to assist. I am proud to support O.U.R. Place and I look forward to working with each of the staff and volunteers to ensure that collectively we assist as many families as possible, and also the overall community which in turn will improve everyone’s quality of life.”

In Fall 2017, Commissioner Hansell announced the creation of the Division of Child and Family Well Being (DCFWB), led by Deputy Commissioner Lorelei A. Vargas. This division is a

dedicated ACS office that will complement the agency’s core child welfare and juvenile justice programs, by providing services and educational messages targeted to families that are not child welfare-involved, and with the goal of avoiding such involvement. The Family Enrichment Centers fall under this division and are part of an ongoing effort to disrupt disparity and break down barriers to promote opportunities and establish accessible resources for families— from healthcare, to housing, quality education, and employment.

The key factors that make the Family Enrichment Center model innovative are as follows:

- Centers combine primary preventive services, which are designed to reach families proactively to avoid child welfare involvement, with community organizing;
- Centers apply an equity lens in planning, services, and goals, which allows them to be intentional about services to maximize the likelihood that all children and families thrive and have access to opportunities that support optimal well-being;
- Their primary identity is driven by parents and community members, an-approach that will help children and families thrive;
- Everything about the center—including its name, the physical layout, and the offerings it provides — is co-developed with the community; and,
- Communities were identified as the result of 18 months of research, design, and interactive development. A jurisdictional scan and best practices from across the country helped to shape the model and design (with support from Casey Family Programs and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago).

Each contracted site will receive \$450,000 per year for a total cost of \$1,350,000 over three sites, per year. An additional \$150,000 will be retained by ACS for training, technology, and other costs associated with monitoring, supporting, and evaluation of the implementation of the new initiative across all three sites.

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***About the New York City Administration for Children’s Services:***

The Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) protects and promotes safety and well-being of New York City’s children and families by providing child welfare, juvenile justice, and early care and education services. For more information, please visit: [www.nyc.gov/acs](http://www.nyc.gov/acs)