



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Department of Human Services

March 25, 2018

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Family Empowerment Centers Press Release

Philadelphia, PA - March 25, 2019 – The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) announces the funding of two Family Empowerment Centers, a new child abuse prevention service for at-risk families. The Centers are a key component of DHS's goal to reduce the number of children placed with the department by safely diverting families to prevention services instead of becoming involved with DHS.

The Family Empowerment Centers will focus on providing intensive support to families who are at high risk for future involvement with DHS. Families who are eligible for the program will be identified by DHS through the following criteria: a report of suspected child abuse or neglect has been made but the information or investigation shows there are no unmitigated safety threats or present danger for the child(ren).

DHS Commissioner Cynthia Figueroa says, "The Family Empowerment Centers is a community-based approach to reducing the number of children who enter DHS care. We're excited to launch this new initiative that will provide greater support to families."

DHS will contract with two private providers to operate the Family Empowerment Centers. They are: theVillage in the southwest section of Philadelphia and Congreso de Latinos Unidos in North Philadelphia. The providers engaged in a competitive RFP process and were recently awarded contracts. The Centers will be fully operational by May 2019.

The Family Empowerment Centers are designed to complement the department's existing Family Empowerment Services. Although both services are voluntary, the Family Empowerment Centers' key priority is family engagement, recognizing that many families may have had previous negative experiences with social services, child welfare, or government offices in the past and this can be a barrier to accessing services that help them better care for their children and prevent future involvement with child welfare.

DHS Deputy Commissioner for Community Based Prevention Services, Waleska Maldonado says,

“We’re excited that the Family Empowerment Centers will tailor services to meet the specific needs of each family. This is a great step forward in creating better support systems for families.”

In the Family Empowerment Center model, families will be connected to community-based supports designed to meet their ongoing needs—such as parenting groups, housing supports, access to funding for concrete goods such as food, cribs, clothing, and education/employment support.

Other services may include specialized intensive case management, including weekly home visits, referrals to mental health or substance abuse services, proactive health care connections, and social development support, among others.

More about the Family Empowerment Centers:

Target population. The Family Empowerment Centers must target their services to the following: families who are at-risk of child abuse, neglect, or delinquency; families referred to DHS, who are at-risk for child abuse, neglect, or delinquency but have not been accepted for formal services and may still be involved in a DHS investigation; families with children ages 0-17 who are alleged to be maltreated and there are no unmitigated safety threats, but are assessed to be at-risk for future maltreatment; families transition from the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

Key Facts:

- The Family Empowerment Centers will be fully operational by May 2019.
- Both Family Centers will have a contract for \$1.5million for fiscal year 2020.
- Congreso de Latinos Unidos is at 216. West Somerset Street.
- The Village is at 6517 Chester Avenue.

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About DHS

The Philadelphia Department of Human Services is the county child welfare agency. We lead, support, coordinate and implement services to prevent and address child abuse and neglect; and operate juvenile justice programs for Philadelphia.

www.phila.gov/dhs

If you have a question, complaint, concern, or suggestion about DHS and its operations call the Commissioner's Action Response Office (CARO) at 215-683-6000

or or dhscaro@phila.gov.

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