UChicago Center Launches Home Visiting Program to Support Chicago Children, Parents

CHICAGO — The University of Chicago’s Center for the Economics of Human Development is partnering with Ireland-based Preparing for Life to launch an innovative home visiting program to support families in helping their children flourish and thrive.

The program will provide comprehensive support for parents—with home visits, prenatal education, evidence-based parenting programs and case management—for up to five years. The goal is to bolster children’s early development and school readiness.

The program will help parents give their children a strong start in life, while yielding data to help better understand how caregivers can best support and enhance their child’s development.

The partnership between the Center for the Economics of Human Development (CEHD) and Preparing for Life (PFL) means that families served in this home visiting program will benefit from extensive expertise in multiple areas. PFL has run one of the most successful evidenced-based home visiting programs in Ireland for over 12 years. CEHD, a pioneer in the use of innovative economic analysis of early interventions, has studied the impact and benefits of the PFL program. Now they will merge their expertise with a local group to serve and support Chicago children and families.

Babies learn from birth, and the social, emotional and cognitive skills they build in the earliest years are the foundation for success in school and life. “Skills beget skills. Abundant research shows that early interventions to help support this development pay off with long-lasting benefits in education, employment, earnings and health,” said James J. Heckman, the Nobel Prize–winning economist who directs CEHD. “Early intervention is the most efficient way to promote better outcomes as adults.”

Home visiting is a well-established approach to support families and help them provide an optimal environment for child development. Partnering with a local early childhood organization to provide this support, CEHD will use
advanced economic analysis to assess the impact of this support and learn more about which approaches work best and why.

Niall Sexton, Program Manager with Preparing for Life in Dublin welcomed the announcement: “PFL has had a long-lasting relationship with CEHD for many years and we are very excited to be part of this international collaborative project. We are really looking forward to working in partnership with families, community services and CEHD to help build long-lasting outcomes for children and parents in Chicago”

For more information, visit the project page: cehd.uchicago.edu/homevisiting

About the Partners
The Center for the Economics of Human Development was founded in 2014 by Nobel Laureate James J. Heckman at the University of Chicago to identify and explore the circumstances under which people develop the skills necessary to thrive and achieve their fullest potential. The center’s comprehensive research program seeks a thorough empirical understanding of human flourishing. Unifying this research is the idea that capacities and skills gained in early childhood set the foundation for positive outcomes throughout life, ranging from employment and earning prospects to overall health. The Center equips policymakers and practitioners with information necessary to promote equality of opportunity for even the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Preparing for Life is a program of Northside Partnership, a community based non-profit established to support social and economic regeneration Dublin City, Ireland. PFL is an evidenced-based, home visiting program designed to improve school readiness. Trained home visitors meet with the family regularly beginning in pregnancy and provide structured information and support across the primary areas of child development. Throughout the process, home visitors seek to identify and build on the parent’s inherent strengths and resources. Over 12 years of operation, PFL has demonstrated significant, lasting outcomes for children in formal evaluations.