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UChicago Economics Center Partners with Casa Central to Support Chicago Families

CHICAGO — The University of Chicago’s [Center for the Economics of Human Development](#) (CEHD) has selected [Casa Central](#) as its community partner in an ambitious home visiting program that will support Chicago families. The program aims to strengthen parents’ capacity to support their child’s early learning and skill development—the foundation for success in life.

Together, CEHD and Casa Central are partnering with Irish program [Preparing for Life](#) (PFL) to adapt and implement its proven Dublin-based home visiting program in Chicago. The new [Chicago Home Visiting Partnership Project](#) will provide comprehensive support—including prenatal education, evidence-based parenting programs and case management—from pregnancy until age five.

Casa Central will take the lead in serving families with home visitors trained in the PFL model. PFL will provide ongoing consultation, while CEHD researchers will evaluate outcomes to gain a better understanding of which supports and services most effectively promote healthy child development. CEHD is directed by James J. Heckman, a Nobel prize-winning economist who has studied the impact of early childhood interventions for decades.

Casa Central’s commitment to serving Chicago communities and transforming lives dates back to 1954. The organization provides comprehensive, well-regarded community services, including early education and support for families. After a multi-step selection process, Casa Central was selected from a pool of 18 potential partners.

“We are delighted to be working with Casa Central. Their mission, vision, and community- and family-centric approach aligns so well with our aims. This new initiative will make a difference in the lives of Chicago children and families now, and the knowledge gained will help guide efforts to better support them for generations,” said CEHD Executive Director Alison Baulos.

“This collaboration not only strengthens all our organizations but, more importantly, what we learn from each other will have a profound and lasting impact on children and families on both sides of the ocean,” said Marty Castro, President & CEO of Casa Central.

“The home visiting approach we developed a decade ago has changed the lives of children in Dublin. We are excited to be bringing our program to Chicago’s families and, by tracking outcomes, expanding our knowledge of how early learning fuels success throughout life,” said PFL Program Manager Niall Sexton.

CEHD, PFL and Casa are already working to develop the program, which will focus on serving families in the Back of the Yards and surrounding Chicago neighborhoods. The team is hiring staff, adapting the curriculum to suit Chicago families, and engaging a community advisory committee to oversee adaptation of the program. The partners expect to recruit families for the pilot program early in 2023. Full implementation of the program will begin in 2024.

About the partners: The University of Chicago [Center for the Economics of Human Development](#) works to understand the circumstances under which people thrive and reach their fullest potential. [Preparing for Life](#) is a program of [Northside Partnership](#), a community-based nonprofit established to support social and economic regeneration in Dublin. [Casa Central](#) is one of the largest Latino social service agencies in the Midwest, providing comprehensive, family-centered support in Chicago neighborhoods.