



For Immediate Release

Circle Health Services (formerly The Free Clinic) and The Centers for Families and Children target increased access to integrated health care for people in poverty

Elizabeth Newman to lead both legacy organizations as President and CEO

CLEVELAND (November 1, 2017) – The Board of Trustees for Circle Health Services and the Board of Directors for The Centers for Families and Children today announced their plan to help more people living in poverty access integrated health care, addiction services, early learning programs and workforce training. The organizations' shared goal is to provide a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing the complex barriers individuals and families often face.

Both boards voted unanimously to enter into a strategic affiliation, and operate as one, cohesive organization under a shared leadership structure. Elizabeth Newman, who has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of The Centers for Families and Children since 2015 will continue in that role and also lead Circle Health Services as President and CEO. Circle Health Services has been under interim leadership since the departure of long-time CEO Danny Williams in November 2016.

“Working together, our organizations will be able to strengthen and enhance existing services while adding new capacity and expanding access to care,” said Newman. “Our focus is the people we serve. Both organizations have a long history of engaging vulnerable populations in a meaningful way. Together we can continue to innovate and develop solutions that change lives rather than just treat symptoms of larger problems.”

Circle Health, which cares for more than 7,000 individuals annually, will maintain operations at its present location at 12201 Euclid Avenue, and The Centers for Families and Children, which cares for more than 23,000 people each year, will continue operations at all of its 17 locations across northeast Ohio. The affiliation will enable the organizations to add additional services, enhancements and capacity to each location in its combined footprint over time. For clients and patients, the affiliation means greater access to a wider range of integrated health and human services delivered in a coordinated and user-friendly manner.

The shared leadership structure will help the organizations integrate operational infrastructure and administrative support. With a combined team of over 650 professionals, the affiliation will also create more opportunities to invest in the development and training of staff and provide more opportunities for career advancement.

Circle Health and The Centers decision to affiliate is part of a national trend to coordinate primary care with behavioral health and addiction services. Research indicates a coordinated, comprehensive approach can be particularly effective for individuals living with a chronic physical condition or severe and persistent mental illness. These populations often struggle to access health care in settings where preventative care and effective intervention is possible. An integrated approach can not only positively impact health outcomes but also help to control health care costs, especially those related to repeat emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

“People come to us for quality health care but over the years we’ve continued to add to our services as the needs of our patients grow and change,” said Seth Wolf, President of the Board of Trustees at Circle Health Services. “We’ve invested in addiction services, HIV/AIDs prevention and support, and most recently, added trauma recovery services. Job training, preschool, wellness – these are services our patients want and need and our affiliation with The Centers will make that possible.”

Circle Health Services, known as The Free Clinic of Greater Cleveland until November 2016, has been in operation since 1970. It grew from a telephone hotline for young drug users seeking help to a comprehensive health care provider offering primary care, dental care, behavioral health care, HIV services, substance abuse treatment and more regardless of an individual’s ability to pay. It received its status as a federally qualified health



center (FQHC) in 2012, enabling it to generate revenue through health insurance payors in addition to funding through charitable donations and competitive grants.

“Many of the people we help on a daily basis are not coming to us with one isolated issue,” said David E. Weiss, Chairman of the Board of Directors for The Centers for Families and Children. “There are no quick fixes here. It takes a holistic approach to address these complex needs, and that’s exactly what this affiliation will help us achieve for the people we serve.”

The Centers for Families and Children, known for behavioral health care integrated with primary care, early learning programs and specialized job training and workplace development programs, began as The Center for Human Services in 1970. The organization was formed as the result of five agencies (Family Service Association, the Day Nursery Association, Traveler’s Aid Society, Cleveland Homemaker Service Association and Youth Service) coming together to integrate their services. In 1993, it changed its name to The Center for Families and Children to better reflect its core work and integrated service model. In 2011, West Side Ecumenical Ministries (WSEM) and El Barrio merged with the organization, now known as The Centers for Families and Children.

Both organizations have a history of evolving to meet the needs of the community as well as deal with the challenges brought about by uncertainty in the health care and human services industries. This uncertainty is particularly problematic in cities, like Cleveland, that struggle with deep, generational poverty. The most recent American Community Survey indicates that 35% of people living in Cleveland are living in poverty.

“Access to quality health care remains a barrier for more than half of the people we serve each year – over 10,000 adults, children and seniors. By joining forces, we will help more people connect with valuable services and ultimately build a stronger community,” said Newman.

The mission of [Circle Health Services](#) (formerly The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland) is to address vital community health needs by providing high quality health care and related services to individuals and families, regardless of their ability to pay, and by advocating for policy changes that promote greater access for the underserved and improved community-wide health and wellness outcomes. Circle Health Services has more than 50 employees and 600 active volunteers. The facility, located in University Circle, is equipped with 18 exam rooms, 5 dental chairs, 3 group therapy rooms, a modern laboratory, and medication services.

[The Centers for Families & Children](#) is one of the oldest and largest nonprofit human service organizations in Northeast Ohio. Through innovation and leadership, we strengthen the community by providing individuals and families with life-changing solutions to lead healthier and more successful lives. We employ an integrated strategy to improve the lives of those we serve through integrated behavioral health, primary care, early learning, and workforce services. Last year, The Centers served more than 23,000 people throughout Cuyahoga County. For more information, visit thecentersohio.org.

###



Understanding the Circle Health Services & Centers for Families and Children Affiliation

How are Circle Health Services, Inc. and The Centers for Families and Children coming together?

Circle Health Services and The Centers for Families and Children are now affiliated organizations and will operate as one united front to help the people we serve live healthier and more successful lives. The complementary missions of our organizations make this a logical evolution of our shared history of serving people in need. We will share services, operational infrastructure, and administrative resources under a shared leadership structure led by Elizabeth Newman, who will serve as President and CEO for both organizations.

Why are you affiliating?

We're better together. We have come together in effort to have a more positive impact on the people we serve and our community. Our focus is the people we serve. Together, the organizations will provide a broad scope of essential services including:

- Primary care
- Dental care
- Behavioral health
- Pharmacy services and medication management
- Addiction and substance abuse treatment
- HIV/AIDS prevention and support services
- Trauma recovery services
- Early Learning including preschool and child care
- Family engagement and supports
- Job readiness, training and placement
- Comprehensive wellness including nutrition education and access to health food

By coordinating these services and expanding capacity to bring these services to scale, we will be able to offer the people we serve comprehensive, life-changing solutions.

Why is the timing right?

Our community continues to face tremendous challenges related to poverty, access to quality health care, mental illness, drug addiction and more. Uncertainty around the future of health care for the most vulnerable is putting more people at risk. Together we are better able to navigate ongoing changes in public policy, funding and the regulatory environment. By leveraging our combined resources and expertise, we will be stronger in managing these risks so that we can be there for those who need us most.

Will both organizations remain autonomous?

While our organizations are maintaining our distinct legal identities, we will operate as one – providing more services to a greater number of underserved and vulnerable people. We will operate under a shared leadership structure, with Elizabeth Newman, who has served as the head of The Centers for Families and Children since 2015, as the President and CEO of both organizations.

How will this affiliation help the people of Northeast Ohio? How will services be enhanced?

Helping people to be healthy and successful is our life's work. Through our combined 18 locations, we will seek to create more opportunities for access to services in neighborhoods where the people we serve live, work and go to school. We will increase capacity to scale effective models of care and coordinate services to ensure people can easily navigate our resources to get what they need through referrals and integrated solutions. We will also continue to innovate to identify new strategies that move the needle on outcomes that matter.



Is there a strong need in our community for the support and services this affiliation will provide?

The need in our community is great. For example, we estimate that over half of the people we currently serve at The Centers lack access to high quality primary care (over 10,000 people). Our affiliation will not only expand capacity for essential services but also increase access through coordination and improved navigation so people can more easily get what they need when they need it.

Will the community support and invest in this affiliation?

Our community knows that we need comprehensive solutions to help people improve their quality of life. Both organizations have a strong reputation for providing high quality services to the most vulnerable residents of Northeast Ohio. Investing in this approach leads to better outcomes for people that in turn strengthens our community. This affiliation enables the organizations to maximize our combined funding and resources to reach more people in need.

###