

## **New grants expand Head Start/Early Head Starts seats**

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**We've received additional grants for Head Start/Early Head Start, expanding total seats in the Chicago and Suburban Cook County to 1,900**

As more parents return to work after a difficult 18 months, Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford is thrilled to offer more high-quality early learning and childcare seats to families.

We've been awarded grant funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to serve an additional 316 children and families in Chicago and an additional 73 children and families in

Suburban Cook County. As a result of these new awards, Easterseals will serve a total of approximately 1,900 children and families in suburban Cook County and Chicago, an increase of 27 percent.

Easterseals will continue to directly operate the Gilchrist Marchman Child Development Center in the Near West Side of Chicago. The inclusive center has seven classrooms for children ages 6 weeks to 3 years old and two classrooms for preschool-aged children. Easterseals will also partner with over 17 private early learning centers located in the Armour Square, Ashburn, Auburn Gresham, Austin, Belmont Cragin, Chatham, Chicago Lawn, East Garfield Park, Kenwood, South Deering, South Chicago, and West Englewood community areas in Chicago. In Suburban Cook County, Easterseals will directly operate the Easterseals Hickory Hills Early Learning Center, which will open in July 2021 for children of all abilities ages 6 weeks to 5 years old. Easterseals also partners with over 21 private early learning centers in Suburban Cook County. In addition to Head Start and Early Head Start services in centers, Easterseals offers home visiting services for families that prefer a home environment.

“Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford has a long history of providing the highest quality of care and education for our earliest learners. We’re excited to expand our services to serve additional communities, families and children of Chicago and Suburban Cook County,” says Sara Ray Hallman, President & CEO of Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford. “Research shows that high-quality early childhood education has deep and lasting benefits and is an essential pillar of our work at Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford.”

Tracey Mikasa, Director of Early Learning Services notes, “Families that enroll with Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford can expect a positive and inclusive early learning environment that prioritizes health and safety and fosters school readiness in children of all abilities. Through relationships, play, and implementation of a research-based curriculum, children progress in social skills and emotional well-being, fine and large motor skills, language and literacy, cognitive development, and how they persist and engage in learning. All children receive health and developmental screenings, nutritious meals, oral health guidance, and social-emotional support. Parents and families are supported in achieving their goals through family engagement, leadership opportunities and access to community resources.”

For information about enrollment, families are invited to call 708-330-4490 or to apply online at [www.easterseals.com/chicago](http://www.easterseals.com/chicago).