



Family Enrichment Centers



Circle of Dreams Family Enrichment Center in Highbridge, Bronx

OVERVIEW

In 2017, the New York City Administration for Children's Services developed the Family Enrichment Center (FEC) model. Fully operated by local organizations known for their knowledge of the community, the Centers are places of creativity and hope. Guided by the belief that parents and other community members are the experts in their lives, the Centers foster conditions that help all family members be their best selves. While no two Centers are the same, all are based on the co-design approach that encourages community ownership, respect, and equity. A successful Center helps to lift up the enormous strengths in each child, youth, and adult who walks through its doors and supports healthy family functioning.

BACKGROUND

The FEC model is the result of 18 months of research, development, and input from community providers and other stakeholders. It is shaped by Strengthening Families, a family protective factors approach created by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The early success of the FECs has been mainly due to the dedication and resilience of community members who view the Center staff as their extended family and the FEC as their second home. Initially launched by three local organizations in Hunts Point-Longwood, East New York, and Highbridge, Centers are co-led by an advisory group of committed community members who choose the Center's name, decide on the decor, and help spread the word to others who may need some support or have an interest in giving back to the community. Between 2021 and 2024, ACS will invite local organizations to submit proposals for 27 new Centers citywide, bringing the total number to 30.

APPROACH

The Centers partner with local leaders, businesses, and civic organizations, providing physical and virtual space with offerings that help individuals dream big dreams, make community and personal connections, and get the support most helpful to them. Each Center's parent leaders help design and, at times, co-lead offerings with staff, keeping a focus on three main areas:

Parent Cafés: Parent-led discussions where participants share personal experiences and knowledge to identify ways to support one another. There are also café options for single people who may not play a parenting role. Cafés and printed materials are offered in multiple languages commonly spoken in the community.

Appreciative Inquiry: Together, community members discover the best of their communities, create a dream for the future, and design and walk a path to get there together.

Protective Factors: When protective factors are well established in a family structure, studies have shown that the likelihood of child abuse and neglect diminishes and well-being increases. The five evidence-based protective factors include: parental resilience, knowledge of parenting and child development, social and emotional competence of children, social connections, and concrete support in times of need. The Centers have incorporated economic mobility and communication as two additional protective factors.



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WHAT TO EXPECT

Using a strength-based approach to community planning, Centers use empowering questions to guide a fun and engaging collaborative process. Spaces are bright (in both color and energy), warm, and inviting, where all are welcomed to participate in any of the following:

- Meet neighbors
- Co-facilitate groups
- Pick up or drop off a donation
- Call or text about a family issue or need
- Socialize over a meal
- Build knowledge or a skill
- Join a virtual meeting or discussion
- Help plan, organize, or lead an event
- Sit, reflect, and relax
- Participate in a range of fun, family- and community-centered activities

- Learn or share about community programs and resources
- And more...

The Centers collaborate with community partners and agencies to bring in resources based on the desires of the community. This ensures that resources are within easy reach for all community members. Offerings change as the community's interests change and the advisory group helps the staff make decisions. While feedback is asked for and recommended, there is no requirement that community members of an FEC pay a fee or give any personal or identifying information. Days and hours are based on community preference and confidentiality is respected.

FEC LOCATIONS

1 Highbridge

Circle of Dreams
266 E 165th St.
Bronx, NY 10456
<https://circleofdreams.clubexpress.com>

2 Hunts Point/Longwood

O.U.R. Place (Organizing to be United and Resilient)
940 Garrison Ave.
Bronx, NY 10474
<https://ourplacefec.graham-windham.org>

3 East New York

The C.R.I.B. (Community Resources in Brooklyn)
2588 Atlantic Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11207
<https://thecrib.nyfec.org>

4 Soundview/Parkchester

Provider: Youth Ministries for Justice and Peace, Inc.

5 Mott Haven/Melrose

Provider: The Reggio Emilia Montessori Center, LLC

6 Central Harlem

Provider: Living Redemption Community Development Corp.

7 East Harlem

Provider: Union Settlement Association, Inc.

8 Jamaica/Hollis/Queens Village

Provider: Forestdale, Inc.

9 Far Rockaway/Broad Channel

Provider: Ocean Bay Community Development Corp.

10 Bedford-Stuyvesant

Provider: Little Flower Children's & Family Services of New York

11 Brownsville

Provider: Riseboro Community Partnership, Inc.

12 St. George/Stapleton

Provider: Staten Island Justice Center, Inc.



In alignment with the Mayor's Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity (TRIE) targeting priority communities, 18 additional locations will open in 2024 and 2025.

THE CORE @FEC



Parental Resilience



Social Connections



Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development



Concrete Support in Times of Need



Social & Emotional Competence of Children



Economic Mobility



Community