



Illinois Children's  
Healthcare Foundation



# Introducing Illinois' Newest Children's Mental Health Family-Run Organizations

## A First-of-Its-Kind Investment in Family-Led Mental Health Infrastructure

In 2024, Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation (ILCHF) approved a historic \$1.35 million investment to launch and strengthen seven Children's Mental Health Family-Run Organizations (FROs) across Illinois, the first initiative of its kind in the nation. These organizations are led by parents and caregivers who have navigated social, emotional, and behavioral health challenges alongside their own children. Their lived experience transforms barriers into bridges, ensuring families are not just served by systems, but an influential part of shaping them. Each FRO in the cohort received a grant of up to \$150,000, as well as technical assistance in monthly expert-led sessions, governance and sustainability training, and systems leadership development, creating a coordinated vision of better youth mental health outcomes.

## The Value of Family-Run Organizations

Nationally, 1 in 5 children experience a mental health condition each year, yet many families struggle to access timely, coordinated care. In Illinois in particular, families seeking mental and behavioral health services for their children must navigate complex and fragmented systems. Family-Run Organizations, by design, fill a critical gap traditional providers cannot. As over half their staff and board have lived experience, they can effectively combine peer support, system navigation, and focused advocacy. FROs equip families with the knowledge, confidence, and leadership skills to structurally improve outcomes for their children and their wider communities.

An investment in family leadership does more than fund programs; it builds durable, family-led institutions designed to integrate into Illinois' evolving behavioral health system. In fact, the FRO initiative directly aligns with Recommendation 12 in the Illinois' Blueprint for Transformation, which calls for **"Fortifying community networks by investing in local communities and parent leadership."**

Each member of the cohort is working to operationalize a sustainable, community-rooted model that centers lived experience, strengthens cross-sector partnerships, and expands voice for parents and caregivers.



For more information regarding the Family-Run Organizations cohort, contact [ChristineBrambila@ilchf.org](mailto:ChristineBrambila@ilchf.org).



## La Voz de Esperanza (The Voice of Hope): A Family-Run Organization in Kane County, Illinois

**La Voz de Esperanza (The Voice of Hope)** is a bilingual Family-Run Organization serving Latino families across Kane County in the Chicago suburbs. The organization originated in 2021 as the Kane County Health Department Parent Council and later evolved into an independent 501(c)(3) rooted in lived experience, cultural humility, and family leadership. Built by parents who have navigated behavioral health systems for their own children, La Voz works to ensure Latino families have accessible supports and a network of parents with shared experience.

La Voz provides peer support, healing circles, and resource navigation designed to strengthen family mental health and increase access to care. Services are delivered in both Spanish and English through culturally responsive, trauma-informed practices that create safe and welcoming environments for parents, youth, and caregivers. Through workshops, peer gatherings, community conversations and collaborations with organizations such as Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), families build advocacy skills, reduce isolation, and strengthen intergenerational connections. Staff and parent leaders serve as trusted cultural bridges, helping families interpret complex systems while ensuring providers better understand the lived realities of the communities they serve.

Additionally, La Voz works closely with schools, churches, healthcare providers, and community-based organizations throughout Kane County to improve coordination between families and service systems. These partnerships help ensure families receive accurate information, timely referrals, and culturally appropriate support for children's behavioral health.

La Voz grew out of a community leadership movement and continues to operate with family voice at the center of decision-making. Parent leaders help shape programming, share knowledge with other caregivers, and strengthen trust between families and local institutions.

By providing bilingual support, culturally grounded programming, and strong community partnerships, La Voz de Esperanza helps Latino families access services earlier and engage more confidently with the systems designed to support their children.

Learn more about the impact of La Voz by emailing:

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***“We are not a program – we are a community-led movement built by families, for families.”***



Flip to read more about the impact of the ILCHF Children's Mental Health Family-Run Organizations cohort.