

**Children's Healing Center Partners with Priority Health to Expand
Play Therapy, Social and Emotional Support Programs for Kids
*Partners Receive \$900,000 from State for Pilot Focused on Immunocompromised***

Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 9, 2022 – Thanks to a \$900,000 grant from the state of Michigan, the [Children's Healing Center](#) is partnering with [Priority Health](#) to expand play and recreation therapy, parent support, social and emotional support programs, and other services to children with complex medical conditions.

In its 2021-22 budget, Michigan allocated funds to create a pilot study that will allow the nation's first year-round recreation center for kids with weakened immune systems to test a reimbursement model for an expanded suite of its services with Priority Health, Michigan's fastest-growing health plan. The funding comes from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Children's Special Health Care Division.

While services like care management and group therapy are already reimbursable under Medicaid, the Children's Healing Center also provides social and educational support services, play therapy and caregiver-focused services that have not been eligible for reimbursement.

The pilot program, which started in October of last year and runs for 12 months, will allow the Center to provide these expanded services for 100 children and families. Priority Health has assisted in identifying and enrolling the 100 qualifying children and will be responsible for data collection and metric identification throughout the study.

The Children's Healing Center, which opened its doors in 2015, works to break down the barriers of isolation to provide opportunities for play, programming, education and socialization to hundreds of kids and their siblings, parents and caregivers. Studies have shown members feel less stress and less perceived pain, with 85% of parents saying the Center has improved their family's overall quality of life.

"This new pilot will make a huge difference to families in our community who have kids with complex medical conditions," said Children's Healing Center CEO Amanda Barbour. "Clinical studies consistently reinforce the healing power of play, yet access to play is not always easy for our families. By providing hospital-grade facilities that focus on cleanliness, we make play safe and fun – and that translates into fewer inpatient hospital stays and other improved outcomes.

"We thank the state of Michigan for underscoring the value we bring to the community through this grant. We look forward to partnering with Priority Health to demonstrate what we have known since day one: play and connections are critical components of the health care puzzle – and essential for true healing."

The Center's 7,200 square-foot facility is designed to provide as close to a germ-free environment as possible. Through four zones – active fitness, art and learning, exploratory play and technology – the Center encourages exploration and activity, enabling kids to connect with their peers and families to connect with others on similar medical journeys. The Center provides extensive programming in these areas for children from birth through 26, along with their caregivers.

In 2017, the Center partnered with Calvin University Center for Social Research to begin quantifying the positive effects of play and connection. Participants and families reported they make new friends and experience strong feelings of connection, with little to no feelings of isolation, while at the Center. This research caught the eye of Priority Health's leadership in 2018 and a partnership between the two organizations was formed.

"We are thrilled to work alongside the team at the Children's Healing Center to help provide critical and transformative emotional and social care to our most vulnerable populations here in West Michigan," said Priority Health President Praveen Thadani. "Our goal is to help individuals live healthier lives, and that is why we work closely with our provider partners to implement value-based arrangements that result in better patient outcomes and lower overall cost of care. This pilot program is a launch pad for future innovations that rethink the way in which care is delivered.

"Priority Health is pleased to see the state of Michigan acknowledging the importance of this type of value-based care through its generous grant. We understand data is a key component for developing future successful programs, and we look forward to carefully tracking and analyzing the cost savings families experience throughout the duration of this pilot."

In September 2022, the Children's Healing Center and Priority Health will submit a full report detailing the effectiveness of the program in fulfilling the social, emotional and physical needs of the patients served during the pilot program. The report will focus on utilization trends and health outcomes associated with isolation and loneliness, mental health concerns, emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

Pending the results of the pilot study, the state of Michigan will consider authorizing future funds that would be allocated towards providing Medicaid recipients with similar services that were offered under this program.

About Children's Healing Center

Opening its doors in September 2015, the Children's Healing Center is the first year-round recreation center in the nation for children with weak immune systems. The Center offers a safe, clean and interactive place for children ages 0 to 26 to come play and socialize. For more information, visit www.childrenshealingcenter.org. Like us on Facebook /ChildrensHealingCenter or follow us on Twitter @healingkidsplay.

About Priority Health

With over 30 years in business, Priority Health is the second largest health plan in Michigan, offering an extensive portfolio of health benefits options for employer groups and individuals, including Medicare and Medicaid plans. Serving more than one million members each year and offering a broad network of primary care physicians in Michigan, Priority Health continues to be recognized as a leader for quality, customer service, transparency and product innovation. To learn more about affordable, quality health coverage options from Priority Health visit www.priorityhealth.com.

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