



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.