



Update for Our Communities

October 21, 2019

We want all of Family Connections' stakeholders to be aware of some important developments in our operations as we look to deepen our impact, grow our programs, expand our geographic reach and ensure financial sustainability. As you learn about what we plan, please know that our commitment to programming in Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights-University Heights remains as strong as ever, but where we offer that programming and our hours of operation will change about a year and a half from now.

How will Family Connections change?

Historically, we have been based in Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights. We have served as building manager for the City-owned Shaker Family Center in Shaker Heights. We have also been a tenant in the Coventry P.E.A.C.E. campus in Cleveland Heights. When our current lease with the City of Shaker Heights at the Shaker Family Center expires at the end of 2020, several things will begin to happen over time. We plan to:

1. Exit from the Shaker Family Center and cease being the building manager for that facility.
2. Exit our rented space in the Coventry P.E.A.C.E. campus
3. Re-locate and centralize our headquarters in the City of Cleveland.
4. Consolidate our four current playrooms in the Heights into two - one in the Shaker Heights Public Library and one in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Library on Lee. This will mean increased hours of operation at both.
5. Add playrooms in Cleveland in neighborhoods where we are already providing our home visiting services through the SPARK program.
6. Develop a new model for the Family School Connection program. We will evaluate new models of service delivery to meet the needs of individual school districts in communities where other Family Connections programming is offered.

All of these changes will allow Family Connections to support more families more consistently without lessening our commitment to Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights-University Heights. The goal is to develop a continuum of services neighborhood-by-neighborhood wherever possible to benefit families. We believe our services will have the most impact when they are delivered over an extended period of time within a neighborhood or community.

Why are we taking these steps?

There are two compelling reasons:

1. In order to maximize our impact, we need to put our full focus on delivering programs, rather than on the time-consuming responsibilities of building management.
2. In order to secure a sustainable financial future for Family Connections and meet the needs of the families who need us most, we will expand our footprint in Cleveland while continuing to serve the Heights.

In the short-term, we know this will result in changes for some of the families we now serve. But, with your support and input, it also represents an opportunity to incorporate key features at new locations.

How did we arrive at these decisions?

These steps are the result of a new Strategic Plan recently completed by Family Connections, which represents our commitment going forward to further expand both our geographic impact and the types of programming we provide for families. We have reached a point where we have to either grow or shrink. Staying the same as we are now is not a viable option. We choose to grow.

Our plan led us to a new mission statement – “Family Connections engages families with young children to nurture social connections, enhance child development and improve school readiness.”

This strategic plan has had input and ideas from our board and staff, funders and professionals in the nonprofit area who deal with issues daily that impact organizations such as ours. The process incorporated both research and analysis and helped us look carefully at alternative approaches as we addressed two key issues:

1. Based on our success to date, how can Family Connections grow to serve more families?
2. How can Family Connections achieve long-term financial sustainability?

The growth path we have chosen with input from our many stakeholders will address these questions.

What do we intend to stay the same?

While we will be relocating our headquarters to the City of Cleveland, our presence in the Heights will remain robust. Playrooms will still be available in the Shaker Heights and Cleveland Heights-University Heights Libraries. We will also continue to deliver our successful SPARK and Family School Connections programs.

Importantly, our hope is to maintain continuity with our current staff. As we resolve details for our expanded direction, some job responsibilities will remain the same and some will change, but we hope to work with the same colleagues as today. We are immensely proud of our staff and the work that they do.

What does the future look like?

For more than 35 years, Family Connections has engaged with young children and their parents. Family Connections does this in a variety of ways including home visits, parenting classes, and providing tools and skills to handle family and child issues. We are not just about children or just about parents. We are about families. Strong families are the foundation of strong communities. Everywhere we have gone we have been welcomed and supported by families that recognize the importance of what we do.

As we increase our engagement with additional communities – especially additional neighborhoods in the City of Cleveland – we will be open to partnerships and alliances with other organizations where we can work together to help families succeed and young children flourish. With our focus on the City of Cleveland and inner ring suburbs, we will actively seek relationships with libraries, community development corporations and others to work collaboratively at offering a continuum of services in different neighborhoods.

This will be an exciting journey, the result of which will be stronger families. From an operational standpoint, we do not expect any major changes until the end of 2020. We are not going to rush into anything. We are going to do this right.

As we implement the direction of our new strategic plan, we anticipate there will be additional announcements from time to time. If it's important, you will hear it directly from us.

Your support has made it possible for us to bring Family Connections into the homes and communities of more families. If you have questions or comments, please know you will have our full attention. We are always happy to hear from you. Thank you for your continued interest and support as we evolve and expand.



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