

## WEBINAR SERIES ON INNOVATIONS IN ILLINOIS CHARTER SCHOOLS



### ***Christopher House: Families at the Core: How to Go Beyond Partnership and Have a Lasting Impact on Students and their Families***

February 25, 2021

Christopher House, an Illinois charter school, provides education for students from six weeks of age through eighth grade. To support student achievement, the school pairs individualized instruction with a system of “immersive family supports” to build family protective barriers and resilience. The school’s Family Services department is located in a welcoming area placed strategically between the early childhood and elementary education buildings. Together, a care team of administrators, social workers, counselors, Family Advocates, and teachers work to understand the needs of scholars and their families, build strong relationships, and develop coordinated, needs-based, comprehensive, prevention-focused interventions. Family Advocates help families connect with in-school and community-based services, such as parent education workshops; an on-site food pantry; access to social workers, counseling, tutoring, and translating; arranging medical appointments, and other resources and support.

Comprehensive family support, often referred to as “wraparound services” or “comprehensive school model,” has a [long history in American education](#). Research supports the [value of addressing out-of-school factors that impact student learning](#). An [MDRC report summarizes the impact of family involvement on academic skills](#) of young children and offers advice on using research findings to improve practice.

The Christopher House philosophy of parent engagement is rooted in the approach advocated by the US Department of Health and Human Services Head Start program described in the [Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#). This approach emphasizes partnering with families, identifying family strengths and community ties, recognizing language preferences. Christopher House has used the Aspen Institute 2Gen approach, as well, to “[build family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives together](#).” [Download the guide here](#).

#### **Assessment Measures**

- [Massachusetts Family Self-Sufficiency Scales and LADDERS Assessment](#)
- [Devereux Student Strengths Assessment \(DESSA\)](#) - Standardized, strength-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) assessment that measures social and emotional competence of K-8 grade youth. The DESSA-High School Edition (HSE) is available for high school students

#### **Additional Resources for Developing Family Support Services**

- [Coalition for Community Schools](#)
- [NEA Community Schools](#)
- [CASEL](#) - List of Family School Partnership Resources
- [National Wraparound Initiative](#) - Description of the wraparound model, resources, research, news, and events
- [Learning Policy Institute](#) - Community Schools as Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence

#### **Christopher House’s Family Advocate Services**

[By Serving the Whole Family, Christopher House Made Distance Learning Work for All Kids](#)

[How Christopher House Supports Teen Moms Through Childbirth and Helps Them Re-establish Their Lives](#)

[3 Ways to Support the Entire Family During School Closure and COVID-19](#)

[K-12 Dive Brief: Community model’s rise continues as schools embrace wraparound services](#), including a link to a document that discusses community schools as an equity strategy.

