

PRESS RELEASE

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Early Childhood Initiatives Center and Northwest Health Partner to Provide First Aid/CPR Certification to Early Childhood Programs

Partnership Provides Trainings at No Cost to Protect the Health and Safety of Children Under the Age of Five

The Early Childhood Initiatives Center and Northwest Health have formed a partnership to protect the health of children under the age of 5 by providing First Aid/CPR training and certification to the 5,000 early childhood professionals that provide care and education to the 32,000 children under the age of 5 in Northwest Arkansas. The partnership will serve as a pilot project in creating community solutions that rally around our youngest learners to ensure they are in the healthiest, safest environment possible.

"It is an honor to partner with the Early Childhood Initiatives Center to help our communities childcare providers be better prepared to care for our most vulnerable populations" shared Sharif Omar, CEO Northwest Health

Children under five are more susceptible to injury as they become mobile and curious. Infants and toddlers are at risk for choking, suffocation, and poisoning because they frequently explore their environments by sucking on small objects that can easily be swallowed. In fact, choking is the fourth leading cause of accidental death for children under five years of age. Childcare providers often witness common events that result in injury such as falling from playground equipment, tripping and hitting a hard surface, or getting hit in the mouth with a ball or other play object. Across the United States, nearly 25% of children will experience choking in a child care setting; 40% of children will experience a fall resulting in injury; almost 70% of children will experience a bite, abrasion, or cut requiring First Aid assistance. Given the very real possibility of an early childhood professional having to respond to serious injury in a child care setting, it is critical that they have the necessary skill set to act quickly and effectively.



On average, First Aid/CPR classes cost \$85 per person and financial constraints have forced many child care centers to operate in Northwest Arkansas with limited certified staff members. The trained staff members may not be present on the day of the emergency, or they may be at the other end of the building and cannot reach the injured child quickly. In short, young children may not receive the

emergency assistance needed because of *financial limitations*, resulting in fewer early childhood education professionals prepared in risk management.

Child care programs operate in such tightly controlled markets they are often unable to invest in basic health and safety requirements mandated by child care licensing, including *certifying staff in CPR*. In 2015, Arkansas DHS began requiring **50% of all staff** to be certified in Infant, Child, Adult First Aid/CPR, through hands on skill based instruction with practical testing by a certified trainer. As the demand for affordable and accessible classes are at an all-time high, it is a critical time to offer services to meet new requirements.

“This partnership really spotlights the region’s demand for high quality early childhood services, needs within the early childhood community, and highlights Northwest Health diligence as a community partner,” said Michelle Barnes, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Initiatives Center. “Partnering with Northwest Health brings the ECIC to the next level in capacity building, and we hope is the first of many partnerships in the health field to support the health and safety of young children in our region.”

For more information, contact Sunny Lane or Kristen Herbert at (479) 273-3552 or visit ecicnwa.org.

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About the Early Childhood Initiatives Center

The ECIC collaborates with the nearly 500 early childhood programs in Northwest Arkansas, to ensure that every child, infant through pre-k, has access to the highest quality of early childhood education and care. High-quality early childhood education benefits the child, workforce and society through increased graduation rates, parental earnings and employee retention, and ensures a talent rich pipeline, leading to a \$9.21 return on investment for every dollar spent in early education. We rely on the generosity of volunteers, advocates and donors in our community. Visit ecicnwa.org to learn more.

About Northwest Health

Northwest Health is one of the largest health networks in Northwest Arkansas with five hospitals: Medical Center – Bentonville, Northwest Medical Center – Springdale, Northwest Medical Center – Willow Creek Women’s Hospital, Siloam Springs Regional Hospital and Northwest Health Physicians’ Specialty Hospital. The system has 487 beds, a combined active medical staff of more than 540 physicians and 2,200 employees working together to provide quality healthcare for the region. Collectively, Northwest Health hospitals had more than 18,000 inpatient admissions, 90,000 emergency room visits and 4,200 deliveries in 2015. Physicians Specialty Hospital is owned in part by physicians.