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ILLUMINATION FOUNDATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ILLUMINATION FOUNDATION AND CALOPTIMA HEALTH CUT RIBBON ON NATION'S FIRST CHILDREN AND FAMILIES RECUPERATIVE CARE CENTER

CalOptima Health's \$3.5 million grant paves the way for partnership with Illumination Foundation to launch a pioneering model to provide housing to medically vulnerable children and their families

SANTA ANA, Calif. (December 5, 2024) — Illumination Foundation, an Orange County-based nonprofit dedicated to disrupting the cycle of homelessness, has partnered with CalOptima Health to open the nation's first recuperative care center to serve medically vulnerable children and families experiencing homelessness. CalOptima Health, the primary Medi-Cal provider for low-income Orange County residents, provided a \$3.5 million capital grant to establish the Santa Ana, Calif.-based property and collaborated with Illumination Foundation to conceptualize an ongoing payment structure to help sustain the program's services.

By offering medical and social support services on-site, the Children and Families Recuperative Care Center will serve as a safe haven for children and families to heal and stabilize from illness or injury following release or referral from a hospital. The center provides the families with comprehensive case management specific to their circumstances, housing assistance and trauma-informed counseling to address the complex challenges of homelessness. This model will serve as an innovative approach for recuperative care centers nationwide.

Nearly 50 national and local experts, Board members and guests gathered to celebrate the new recuperative care center available to vulnerable children and families. Speakers included:

- Dr. Pooja Bhalla, CEO of Illumination Foundation
- Dr. Jim O'Connell, President of Boston Health Care for the Homeless and Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School
- Michael Hunn, CEO of CalOptima Health

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“We are incredibly grateful for CalOptima Health’s unwavering support. Its funding made the Children and Families Recuperative Care Center possible,” said Dr. Pooja Bhalla, CEO, Illumination Foundation. “We hope that this revolutionary reimbursement model will serve as an example for additional recuperative care sites for children and families across the country. There is an increasing need to support medically vulnerable children who are experiencing homelessness because of family circumstances. This model will serve as a long-term solution for stabilization.”



The Children and Families Recuperative Care Center can house up to six families in two homes surrounded by an expansive backyard that creates a welcoming environment for them to enjoy the outdoors. Each family has its own private room, ensuring comfort and privacy. The families also share common living spaces, which will offer a sense of community.

The CalOptima Health funding that enabled the acquisition, renovation and expansion of the property stems from California’s Housing and Homelessness Incentive Program. HHIP aims to prevent and address housing insecurity for Medi-Cal members by ensuring those experiencing homelessness have a clear path into housing and can access the services needed to achieve stability. CalOptima Health adjusted its reimbursement rate, policies and procedures to ensure sustainability for the center.

“CalOptima Health is honored to have the opportunity to partner with Illumination Foundation to establish a first-of-its-kind Children and Families Recuperative Care Center,” said Michael Hunn, CEO, CalOptima Health. “The model program not only attends to the needs of children who are at greater risk of poor health outcomes because they are experiencing homelessness, but it also allows families to work toward stable housing. This integrated system combines housing and health care and provides the necessary support to guide families along their journey to improved health, well-being and permanent housing.”

About CalOptima Health

A county organized health system, CalOptima Health provides quality health care coverage for low-income children, adults, seniors and people with disabilities in Orange County, California. CalOptima Health’s mission is to serve member health with excellence and dignity, respecting the value and needs of each person. CalOptima Health serves more than 910,000 members with a network of 8,300 primary care doctors and specialists and 40 acute and rehab hospitals. To learn more, visit: www.caloptima.org.

About Illumination Foundation

Illumination Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that provides targeted, interdisciplinary services for the most vulnerable homeless adults and children to disrupt the cycle of homelessness. The organization provides a full continuum of care from street to home, including case management, medical coordination, behavioral health and substance use counseling, and housing navigation to our vulnerable clients in shelters/navigation centers, family emergency homes, recuperative care/medical respite facilities, and permanent supportive housing. To learn more, visit: www.ifhomeless.org.

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Quotes From Leading Industry Experts

Dr. Jim O’Connell, President of Boston Health Care for the Homeless and Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School

- As an expert on the medical needs of those experiencing homelessness, Dr. Jim O’Connell established the country’s first medical respite program in Boston in 1985.
- Dr. O’Connell applauded the Illumination Foundation–CalOptima Health partnership to remedy the lack of recuperative care for medically fragile children experiencing homelessness. He said: “Acute health circumstances requiring hospitalization are frightening for all children. But imagine the fear it must create for an unhoused family whose circumstances are fraught with uncertainty. In so many other recuperative care models, individuals recover on their own. For an adult, that is much less of an issue than it is for a child. With this new model, children stay with their parents for reassurance throughout recovery. The benefit to the parents is equally important as they receive personalized support to address the circumstances surrounding homelessness.”

Julia Dobbins, Director of Medical Respite, National Health Care for the Homeless Council and National Institute for Medical Respite Care

- Dobbins said: “Illumination Foundation’s new program is creating an opportunity to catch families experiencing homelessness during a health care crisis and connect them to supportive resources that have the potential to end their homelessness. This program is also creating the opportunity for children experiencing homelessness to have a positive health care experience. That early experience may have a lasting effect on their long-term connection with primary care and their trust in the health care system.”

Testimonials From Clients Served at the Children and Families Recuperative Care Center

- “We are grateful that Illumination Foundation brought us in; we had nowhere else to go. Laura in Medical has been very helpful with getting us to and from doctors’ appointments. She is very helpful with my son. In the shelter, we would be on our own with no guidance.”
- “Illumination Foundation is great because we came from a house that was foreclosed on and had five days to find a place, and we were referred to the center. Thank you, Illumination Foundation.”
- “I am incredibly grateful for this amazing team. Illumination Foundation looked out for my baby’s health and kept me updated and reminded me about upcoming doctor appointments.”

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