

Reach Out and Read and Amerigroup Iowa Expand Child Literacy Program in West Burlington to Increase Well-Child Visits

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to serve children and their families at an estimated 3,000 well-child visits which will include the distribution of 3,000 high-quality, age and primary-language appropriate books

- Organizations are coming together to promote healthy brain development, language acquisition and family bonds



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*Dr. Patrick Williams,
Community Health Centers of
Southeastern Iowa*

Boston, MA (August 15, 2022) – [Amerigroup](#) Iowa, a leading managed care provider, and [Reach Out and Read](#) (ROR), an early health literacy intervention program that takes place in primary care clinics that serve diverse children across the country, are coming together to support Des Moines County children and families with resources for building healthy relationships and social-emotional development.

The \$35,000 grant from Amerigroup Iowa will support children and their families as well as medical providers and clinic staff at Community Health Centers of Southeastern

Iowa, Inc. (CHC/SEIA) in West Burlington, one of the largest pediatric providers in Des Moines County. The program expansion will serve children and their families at an estimated 3,000 well-child visits annually which will include the distribution of 3,000 high-quality, age and primary-language appropriate books.

"Increased well-child visit attendance and increased developmental assessment improves the early detection, referral, and treatment of developmental delay in young children," said Jeffrey Jones, Amerigroup Iowa President. "Enhanced compliance with well-child visit attendance is vital for the health of the child, ensuring appropriate access to immunizations, and developmental screenings. Our local provider community will find Reach Out and Read to be a useful, efficient intervention that streamlines their clinical practices and Amerigroup is proud to expand this program in West Burlington."

The grant will support both CHC/SEIA West Burlington Pediatrics (1223 South Gear Ave.) and

CHC/SEIA West Burlington Medical Clinic (1706 West Agency Rd.) where 70% of visiting families are on Medicaid.

"I am excited about the partnerships and integrating the ROR program as part of our pediatric annual wellness visits," said Antonio Flores, CHC/SEIA CEO. This is an invigorating program that will make a long-lasting impact on the lives of our patients and communities."

Dedicated medical providers are at the heart of ROR because of the effects on patients and families. The simple act of a trusted pediatric clinician providing a child with a new book at their well-child visit and encouraging their parents to read aloud and have fun conversations about the pictures in that book with their child is a proven way to optimize early brain development, protect against the effects of toxic stress and other negative social drivers of health.

"Consistently reinforcing the importance of reading and positive bonding between caregiver and child will result in long-standing positive benefits throughout our community," said Dr. Patrick Williams, pediatrics specialist in West Burlington who currently practices at CHC/SEIA. "Our providers and I are grateful to be able to participate with the Reach Out and Read Program."

In Iowa, ROR's first program launched in 1998 at Blank's Children's Hospital, distributing 3,551 books within the first year. Since then, ROR Iowa has grown to 100 active programs serving 80,912 children, distributed 57,201 books, and worked with 548 providers across the state.

"We are excited to serve children and families with the Reach Out and Read early literacy program through the Community Health Centers of SE Iowa," said Molly Topf, ROR Iowa Executive Director. "We appreciate the dedication of the medical providers and staff in working to make a healthy and life-long impact with their guidance on the importance of reading to support a love of reading and readiness for school with the children and families in their community."

Through ROR, families and their young children are supported through a public health framework that offers universal and individualized promotion of safe, stable, nurturing relationships as a standard of care in and out of the well-visit. ROR creates bridges between



CEO of CHS/SEIA Antonio Flores, Pediatrician Dr. Williams, Executive Director Iowa Molly Topf, Amerigroup Iowa President Jeffrey Jones, and Clinic Manager Jenny Wood

sectors and reinforces support for foundational relationships within the pediatric healthcare system and, more broadly, across a spectrum of early childhood interventions. The organization seeks to give all children an opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to their community and society, particularly those facing systemic barriers to their ability to thrive.

Jennifer Tegan

Reach Out and Read

+1 617-415-5039

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