

A New National Model: Putting Children First

At Lotus House, we recognize that every aspect of a child's experience in our shelter, from therapeutic care and education to the physical space and its contents, is integral to their wellbeing, offering opportunities for healing, growth, exploration, discovery and learning. We know that homelessness is traumatic for everyone, especially children. In safe, supportive shelter with protective factors that put children first, we have the opportunity to mend broken bonds, heal bodies and minds, and uplift spirits so that children and families thrive.

Childhood is a time of intense growth and development in all areas, including a child's intellectual, social and emotional development, laying the foundation for their success in school and later life. When their needs are met by positive and consistent early experiences with loving caregivers and nurturing environments, babies and young children thrive. In Lotus Village this begins with a model therapeutic early childcare and education center, with six classrooms offering a full range of therapeutic and community support for our littlest ones, newborns to age 3, and their mothers, in collaboration with the United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education.

Thanks to The Children's Trust and our research partners at Florida International University, our counselors offer an expanded array of assessments for every child to better understand their needs, and are implementing new, evidence-based, child and family therapies for all children and families.

Best practices are evaluated and outcomes advanced by service driven research, to provide greater insight into and solutions for children and families who are victims of violence and other serious traumas.

Our objectives of creating and fostering a nurturing educational and social environment that truly places children first are carried throughout Lotus House and our new home in Lotus Village, with critical child and family therapies, resource coordination and linkages to community services, enriched after school programming for all ages, and welcoming, child-friendly spaces from our new intake sanctuary and family rooms to the special children's playroom, art and activities lab, and children's garden.

Special Thanks to our Children's First Program Funders: The Children's Trust of Miami Dade County, Miami Dade County Homeless Trust, Miami Dade County

Lotus House is committed to utilizing evidence-based, early assessments of our sheltered children and families to deepen our understanding of the breadth and depth of their needs, as well as evidence-based therapeutic interventions with measurable outcomes to support, heal and strengthen. By combining our clinical services with the

rigors of research we are able to continuously improve our standards of care and coordination, measure the impact of different therapeutic models, offering not only life changing therapeutic support to our children but the potential to advance the status of sheltered children everywhere. They are so deserving of our work together in a shared mission and service. Learn more about the interventions, methodology and outcomes of our service driven research benefiting children and families.

Early Childhood Assessment And Interventions

Our research findings thus far have been documented in the published research articles included below. The literature reviews *Mental Health Prevention and Treatment Programs for Infants Experiencing Homelessness: A Systematic Review* and *A Systematic Review of Infant Mental Health Prevention and Treatment Programs* helped us to identify effective interventions for our families with children 0-2 years of age for our second service driven research project. Also, summarizing three years of service driven research at Lotus House, *Early Intervention for Families Experiencing Homelessness: A pilot randomized trial comparing two parenting programs* describes the high level of documented special needs and trauma histories of sheltered children from birth to age 3 at Lotus House and the efficacy of two evidence-based parenting programs, Parent Child Interaction Therapy and Child Parent Psychotherapy, as interventions that reduce trauma symptoms. Offering a more specific focus, *Addressing Mental Health and Trauma Related Needs of Sheltered Children and Families with Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)* outlines the importance of addressing the traumatic experiences that are commonly experienced by sheltered children. Our deepest gratitude to Dr. Paulo Graziano of Florida International University and Dr. Emily Arcia for helping Lotus House successfully carry out this community-based research in a way that is respectful and empowering for those we serve.