

Centering® Healthcare Institute Request for Applications (RFA)

Name of Grant: Strengthening Child and Family Health through the Expansion of CenteringParenting Group Medical Care in New Jersey

Important Dates:

RFA Release Date	Rolling
Full Application Close Date	September 8, 2023
Award Notification	Within about 4 weeks of submission
CHI Contracting	Before Implementation can begin
Implementation Start Date	Approximately 1-2 weeks after completion of contracting

How to Apply: Details on how to respond to this opportunity can be found on the [CHI Implementation Award](#) webpage and on page 12 of this RFA.

Questions: Please direct questions about the CenteringParenting model or this RFA to Mary Fitzmaurice, MSN CNM, Director of Business Development, Centering Healthcare Institute at mfitzmaurice@centeringhealthcare.org.

Project Goals:

The goals of the “Strengthening Child and Family Health through the Expansion of CenteringParenting Group Medical Care in New Jersey” grant program are to (1) improve maternal and child health outcomes, with a particular focus on reducing health disparities among under-resourced populations, (2) embed the transformative CenteringParenting group care model into the culture and operational systems of the selected practice sites, and (3) build community support, both from local stakeholders (e.g. community-based organizations that could serve as referral sources) and from patient consumers. High-quality implementation along with a commitment to elevate the visibility and value of the intervention will be critical to achieve positive health outcomes, to improve patient satisfaction with the health care received, and to help ensure the program’s ongoing sustainability in selected communities.

Project Description:

Centering Healthcare Institute (CHI), with support from the Burke Foundation, is bringing the evidence-based and relationship-based Centering® group healthcare model to more families and regions in New Jersey. Currently, 270 Centering sites [operate in New Jersey](#), including five sites implemented as part of the state's Department of Health's [Healthy Women, Healthy Families](#) (HWHF) Initiative. CHI provides training, technical assistance, and implementation support to all Centering practice sites in New Jersey.

This RFA seeks to identify practice sites committed to improving health outcomes by transforming care through CenteringParenting groups. Preference will be given to practice sites in geographic areas with poor maternal and pediatric outcomes where positive outcomes would have the greatest impact. This includes sites with sizable Medicaid, charity care, and/or uninsured populations such as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), community health centers, and hospital-based clinics.¹ Funding for this RFA will support a total of 4 (four) CenteringParenting sites for a period of 1 year (12 months), contingent upon successful completion of deliverables and progress achieved in the first year of the grant.

To meet the goals of this initiative and set sites up for success, all applicants should commit to implementation that follows the fundamental tenets of Centering ("model fidelity"): (1) collaborating with and receiving support from CHI staff; (2) engaging with a Centering community of practice; (3) conducting quality improvement activities, and (4) completing data collection, quarterly reporting following group start, and any evaluation-related deliverables. Adherence to these evidence-based elements of the Centering model will be crucial to improving health outcomes, reducing health disparities, improving patient satisfaction with received health care, and ultimately resulting in lower costs to the practice and overall health care and social support systems.

NOTE: This RFA is for applicants interested in offering the [CenteringParenting](#) model. Applicants may apply for funding to support implementation of one or both models. Many practices view CenteringParenting as a natural follow-on to the CenteringPregnancy model, promoting continuity of care for patients.

Anticipated Number and Size of Awards:

In 2023, CHI intends to launch a total of four (4) CenteringParenting sites and four (4) CenteringPregnancy sites, for a total of 8 awards.² CHI will release and review two separate RFAs to identify these sites, an initial RFA for CenteringParenting practice sites and a subsequent RFA for CenteringPregnancy practice sites. Organizations may submit applications to implement both CenteringPregnancy and CenteringParenting group care models.

¹ Please see [New Jersey Maternity and Pediatric Health Trends: A County-level Review](#) conducted by the New Jersey Healthcare Quality Institute as a potential resource.

² Funding to support additional CenteringParenting sites may be available in future years. Promising applicants not funded in the initial round may be considered for future grant cycles.

Selected practice sites will benefit from in-kind support equivalent to approximately \$36,000 over the course of the award period per practice site. This includes in-kind services provided by CHI to implement CenteringParenting (e.g., training, implementation support, notebooks, a leader kit, and a starter set of CHI marketing materials) as well as costs covered through the grant (e.g., workshop fees and accreditation costs). In addition, practice sites will be eligible to receive direct funding as an operational mini-grant of up to \$5,000 from the Burke Foundation that practice sites can use towards operational expenses associated with implementation (e.g., medical equipment, space enhancements).

Context:

Despite being one of the wealthiest states in terms of per capita income, New Jersey continues to grapple with some of the worst child health and wellbeing outcomes in the country, especially among under-resourced communities. According to ZERO TO THREE's [State of Babies Yearbook: 2020](#), only 49.9 percent of parents in New Jersey read to their young children every day; only 36.3 percent of children received a developmental screening in the past year (among children ages 9 to 35 months); and only 21.2 percent of young children received preventive dental care (among children ages 1 to 2 years). New Jersey ranks in the bottom third of states for children being up-to-date on immunizations at age 2 (35th out of 50), with stark disparities across socio-economic and racial lines. Vaccination rates were 56.3 percent among children in poverty (compared with 72.3 percent of children not in poverty) and 48.6 percent among Black children (compared with 77.7 percent of non-Hispanic white children).³

In addition, over 40 percent of children in New Jersey have been exposed to at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), such as physical or emotional neglect or abuse, the death of a parent, or exposure to violence in the home or community. More than 27 percent of Black children and 22 percent of Latinx children in New Jersey are estimated to have experienced multiple ACEs, compared to 16 percent of their non-Hispanic white peers.⁴ These experiences have important implications for long-term wellbeing, as children with ACEs are more likely to have a chronic health condition; have chronic mental, emotional, or behavioral problems; and either bully or be bullied.⁵

Program models that promote nurturing relationships with adults, provide enriching early learning activities, and ensure adequate physical health care and nutrition like CenteringParenting can help New Jersey make great strides in improving these outcomes, especially in under-resourced communities. Targeted interventions during the early years of a child's life are critical, as the brain develops rapidly between ages 0-3. Children's experiences, which are heavily influenced by their environment and relationships with parents and caregivers, shape the brain architecture and have lasting impacts on their physical health, capacity to learn, social-emotional well-being, and building resilience. Given the tremendous influence of parents and caregivers on early childhood development, interventions – such as Centering – that are delivered through the pediatric care setting provide all-important holistic two-generation support for newborns, infants, and toddlers, as well as their parents/caregivers.

³ America's Health Rankings analysis of CDC, National Immunization Survey-Child 2017, United Health Foundation, AmericasHealthRankings.org, Accessed December 11, 2020.

⁴ Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health. Child and Adolescent Health. National Survey of Children's Health Interactive Data Query. 2016–2017. Available at www.childhealthdata.org. Accessed February 15, 2019.

⁵ Bethell CD, Gombojav N, Rush M. "New Jersey Fact Sheet 2019: Strong Roots Grow a Strong Nation." Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, June 2019.

Background on the CenteringParenting Model:

Centering is neither a supplement nor add-on to individual one-on-one well-child appointments – **it is the means of primary health care delivery** that brings patients out of the exam room and into a comfortable group setting where they learn from their providers and each other. The model enables families to have significantly more time with their primary care providers than they would in traditional care settings. During each two-hour facilitated visit, there is ample time for health assessment, interactive learning, community building, and brief one-on-one exam time with the clinical provider. Visits meet nationally recognized standards⁶ and are facilitated by a care team made up of a credentialed health provider (i.e., the individual who can bill for health care visits) and a co-facilitator (e.g., community health worker, lactation consultant, licensed clinical social worker, or medical assistant). As part of an ongoing group, patients form a supportive peer community where they build social capital and develop the skills and confidence to take control of their own health and that of their children.

CenteringParenting brings 6-8 parents, partners, support people, and their same-age infants together with their healthcare providers for family-centered pediatric care from birth through age two. Group sessions begin with well-child health assessments, immunizations, and developmental screenings for each child, with parents directly engaged in their baby's care by tracking their growth, immunizations, and oral health. The sessions continue with group discussion of critical health and safety topics as well as important social-emotional concepts including attachment, [serve and return interactions](#), stress management, relationships and family dynamics, and positive parenting. The format and extended length of the group well-child visit (up to 120 minutes) also allows for screening and monitoring of maternal well-being as well as opportunities to refer to community resources.

In nearly 150 published studies and peer-reviewed articles, Centering demonstrates improved maternal and child outcomes.⁷ Along with such proven strategies as community doulas, maternal and infant home visitation, and community health workers, Centering offers an evidence-based solution to support positive health behaviors, improve patient satisfaction with care, drive better health outcomes, and lower health care costs. Research also suggests that CenteringPregnancy holds promise in reducing health disparities by supporting improved birth outcomes for Black women and their babies, particularly reducing the risk of preterm births.⁸

Launched in 2010, CenteringParenting builds on the evidence-based approach of CenteringPregnancy, extending its proven benefits to pediatric primary care settings. As a newer model of care, CenteringParenting has not yet been evaluated through a randomized controlled trial. However, early studies of CenteringParenting show improvements in visit attendance and immunization rates compared

⁶ CenteringPregnancy follows the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' Guidelines for Prenatal Care, while CenteringParenting follows the American Academy of Pediatrics' Bright Futures Guidelines schedule.

⁷ A bibliography of published studies and peer-reviewed articles can be accessed here:

<https://www.centeringhealthcare.org/uploads/downloads/Documents/Centering-Bib-2019-with-Branding.pdf>.

⁸ Ickovics JR, Kershaw TS, Westdahl C, Magriples U, Massey Z, Reynolds H, and Rising SS. (2007). Group Prenatal Care and Perinatal Outcomes. *Obstet Gynecol*, 110(2): 330-339.

to traditional care and a rigorous evaluation currently being conducted by Boston Medical Center, and is anticipated to provide additional insights into the intervention's impact.⁹

Services and Supports Provided by Centering Healthcare Institute:

CHI is the national standards organization that supports the dissemination, implementation, and continuous quality assurance of Centering group models of care in the United States. Successful applicants will benefit from training, coaching, technical assistance, and tools from CHI's expert consultants – valued at \$37,200 over 12+ months – to support their healthcare delivery system transformation. CHI partners with local practice sites to offer:

- Implementation support for system change, including guidance on developing the **Centering365 Implementation Plan** (CIP) that incorporates processes and tools to help sites identify and address barriers. The CIP aims to position the site to successfully complete the accreditation process. Over the first 12 months, CHI collaborates with each site on the following areas:

⁹ Details on the study can be found at: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT03641092>.

1. Creating your Steering Committee
2. Engaging Leadership
3. Building a Shared Vision
4. Goal Setting and Evaluation
5. Creating your Centering Schedule
6. Creating your Centering Space
7. Patient Enrollment
8. Provider Productivity
9. Financing and Budgeting
10. Billing and Reimbursement

- Comprehensive training and certification in group facilitation and group care. **Centering Facilitation and Advanced Facilitation Workshops** offer providers and staff the opportunity to explore facilitative leadership and practice skill-building. These workshops model the Essential Elements of Centering and are an opportunity for participants to understand the shift from didactic provider-patient conversations to facilitative leadership through a group-based model.
- Access to and guidance on using **CenteringWorks**,™ an interactive and collaborative project management tool for tracking implementation progress against a CIP that provides sites with content and activities to support decision making during implementation.
- Access to a library of ready-to-use resources and tools, including: curricula materials; supplies to support providers and patients; educational media; and a weekly live webinar series to address innovations and common challenges in Centering practice.
- Access to the **CenteringConnects**™ platform, an online peer learning network that links Centering professionals across the U.S. to a national community of practice.
- Site accreditation for model fidelity and quality assurance.

Project Activities and Timeline:

Anticipated Timeline for CenteringParenting Implementation (Years 1-2)		
Phase/Milestone	Timeframe	Description
Start-up	Months 1-3	An assigned CHI team guides a site during the initial Steering Committee meeting, and throughout the start-up process, as the site establishes a shared vision and goals, creates a group space and schedule, enrolls patients, and establishes financial systems.

Centering Launch Event	Month 1-6	Site leadership, Centering staff and other clinical team members, and community partners (Steering Committee and others) meet with the CHI implementation team for an immersive introduction to Centering to strengthen buy-in at every level. CHI provides targeted on-site support to finalize implementation and prepare for the successful launch of groups.
Centering Facilitation Workshop	Month 1-3	In a two-day training, facilitator teams explore Centering principles and build essential facilitation and group management skills.
Groups Start	Month 1-6	Site begins group sessions. Typically, a site introduces one new group per month during this period. CHI consultants provide assistance through check-in calls and support ongoing group management.
Site Accreditation	Months 7-12	With multiple groups running, a site evaluates progress and receives constructive feedback from its CHI team to strengthen implementation and position the site for long-term success.
Advanced Facilitation Workshop	Months 12-18	Group facilitators who have completed CHI's Centering Facilitation Workshop are invited to attend the Advanced Facilitation Workshop to further hone their facilitation skills with peers. Completing the advanced workshop prepares participants for achieving CHI's Certified Centering Facilitator (CCF) credential. ¹⁰

Application Requirements:

Interested organizations must meet the following criteria to be considered a competitive applicant for CenteringParenting grants.

Please note: Existing Centering practices that operate either a Pregnancy or Parenting group care model are welcome to apply to expand their capacity of Centering services.

¹⁰ The CCF credential is a rigorous credentialing process that recognizes the strengths and professional commitment of Centering facilitators. They are recognized for their expertise, experience, and personal investment with an evidence-based model of group care. Moreover, patients, practices, and payers are assured of the quality of care being provided.

Organizational Capacity and Staffing:

- Has adequate patient volume for group care, defined as 200 newborn patients per year per location for CenteringParenting, to support starting one new group each month.
- Has group space appropriate for Centering delivery, providing adequate space and privacy. If this space is not exclusively dedicated to group care, Centering will have priority use of the space at any and all times needed for program implementation.
- Will commit 4 hours to each Centering session and 8 hours per week for the Centering Coordinator.
 - The 4 hours is inclusive of the group time itself. Each Centering session runs 90-120 minutes. Additional time before and after is needed for group preparation, co facilitator process evaluation, charting, data entry into Centering Counts, and any other site-specific tasks or group needs.
 - Based on the implementation pathway and the project management responsibilities in CenteringWorks, the 8 hours weekly allocated for the Centering Coordinator is the recommended amount of time to ensure implementation success and long-term sustainability.

Program Implementation with Fidelity:

- Agrees to implement Centering with fidelity to the model. As an evidence-based model, Centering has developed a list of 9 Essential Elements that are integral to program implementation. Adhering to these 9 Elements will maximize the likelihood that a practice will achieve results comparable to previous randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental studies.
 1. Health assessment happens in the group space.
 2. Patients engage in self-care activities.
 3. Groups are facilitated to be interactive.
 4. Each session has a plan, but emphasis may vary.
 5. There is time for socializing.
 6. Groups are conducted in a circle.
 7. Group members, including facilitators and support people, are consistent.
 8. Group size is optimal for interaction.
 9. There is ongoing evaluation.

Commitment to Quality Improvement and Ongoing Learnings:

- Agrees to participate in a Community of Practice leadership activities to deepen knowledge and expertise with and from other CenteringParenting sites.

- Agrees to communicate at least monthly with the New Jersey Centering Program Manager or other designated CHI team members for regular and as-needed consultation calls to discuss progress toward deliverable completion, site-specific challenges, and potential solutions.
- Agrees to achieve site accreditation within 1 year of signing a site agreement with CHI.

Supporting Data and Evaluation:

- Has experience with data collection and evaluation, including routine continuous quality improvement activities (e.g., Plan-Do-Study-Act), and embraces a culture of learning.
- As outlined in the Master Site Agreement, CHI may request the following types of data from the customer periodically.

Patient Reach Measures	Centering Process Measures
# of patients that were enrolled into Centering groups during a time period	Centering model delivery method (in person, virtual, hybrid)
% of <u>total</u> patients that were enrolled into Centering groups over a time period	# of providers in the practice
# of Centering group sessions conducted over a time period (e.g # of groups x # of sessions per group)	# of providers that facilitated Centering groups over a time period
Average patient attendance count per Centering group session over a time period	
# of patients attending 5 or more Centering sessions over a time period	

Community Engagement and Sustainability:

- Has demonstrated experience successfully collaborating with community partners (external to your practice) to jointly implement programs or initiatives (e.g., direct services, outreach/community engagement activities, training/professional development), and/or conducting cross referrals for resources and services.
- Willing and able to develop and maintain a Centering Steering Committee with active engagement from a diverse group including frontline staff, pediatric staff, practice leadership, and cross-sector participation from areas beyond primary health care.¹¹ Cultivating cross-sector champions for the Centering Steering Committee will help elevate the program in the community and contribute to long-term sustainability. Priority will be given to applicants with greater than 25 percent representation from external community stakeholders.

¹¹ Examples of those external to your practice include representatives from WIC, community-based doula programs, parenting education, home visiting, behavioral health, early childhood education, breastfeeding coalitions, early intervention, health plans, and former Centering participants.

- Leadership within the practice demonstrates commitment to an on-going budget for Centering; scale-up to sustainable patient volume over time; dedicated time for the Centering Coordinator and co-facilitators; and buy-in and support for Centering implementation throughout the organization, from the C-suite to front-line team members. This commitment will be demonstrated by a letter of support from the executive level to be included with the application.

Additional Selection Criteria:

In addition to the application requirements outlined in the previous section, the selection process will take into account practice types and geographies. First, preference will be given to entities that provide clinical care to predominantly Medicaid, charity care, and/or uninsured patients (e.g., FQHCs, community health centers, hospital-based clinics, etc.). In addition, the following counties have been identified as priority communities for CenteringParenting expansion based on analysis of New Jersey pediatric outcome data.¹²

10 Priority NJ Counties for CenteringParenting	
1. Essex	6. Camden
2. Hudson	7. Ocean
3. Passaic	8. Cumberland
4. Atlantic	9. Middlesex
5. Mercer	10. Monmouth

These counties report greater pediatric health disparities and thus are a higher priority for investment. However, we recognize that community-level data may indicate other areas of need, and CHI welcomes applications from providers that serve a high percentage of under-resourced pediatric patients anywhere in the state. Any practices located outside of these 10 counties and interested in applying should contact Mary Fitzmaurice, CNM MSN at CHI to discuss further: mfitzmaurice@centeringhealthcare.org.

What the Grant Funding Supports:

Funding provided by the Burke Foundation will cover the costs of in-kind support provided to practice sites by CHI valued at \$36,000. Grant funding may also include up to \$5,000 provided directly to individual practice sites to defray operational expenses associated with implementation during the grant year. This funding is intended to offset start-up costs associated with the launch of a new Centering program site, which can be an implementation barrier for some practices. The Burke Foundation funding is intended to help cover expenses that are critical for supporting high-quality implementation, ensuring

¹² Data sources include New Jersey State Health Assessment Data (NJSHAD), New Jersey KidsCount, New Jersey Department of Education, Health Resources and Services Administration (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and the Leapfrog Group.

that practices are set up for success as they transform their healthcare delivery system to achieve positive health outcomes, optimal patient and provider satisfaction, as well as robust sustainability.

The program expenses listed below, including items and dollar amounts, should be used in developing a budget (budget worksheet will be sent to qualifying sites along with application questions). **Selected applicants should anticipate and plan to cover costs for the items listed below after the grant period ends.** Please note that any travel would be within New Jersey, and some or all training workshops during the 2023 calendar year may be conducted virtually due to pandemic-related restrictions.

Cost Category/Item(s)	Dollar Value	Notes
Annual site license fee	\$1,000 (FQHCs and multisite projects eligible for 10% discount, accredited sites eligible for 40% discount)	Not covered by this grant. Site is responsible for annual license fees.
Centering365 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-person and remote consultation and implementation support for steering committee, systems change, and quality assurance measurement Launch day site visit by Centering Advisor Site Accreditation process and determination Centering facilitation training for 4 participants 	\$28,995	Covered by grant
Centering Facilitation Workshop Fee <i>Suggested minimum is 5 people; this is a CHI-hosted open workshop, available virtually or in-person, and travel is <u>not</u> included.</i>	\$995 per person (does not include travel)	This amount will be paid directly to CHI by the Burke Foundation for one additional participant <i>Workshop attendance will cover a minimum of two medical providers (MD, DO, NP, CNM, PA, etc.) and two staff (RN, LPN, medical assistant, CNA, social worker, CHW, lactation consultant, etc.) who anticipate co-facilitating Centering groups in the following months. It is also recommended that the Centering Coordinator be trained.</i>

Advanced Facilitation Workshop Fee <i>Suggested minimum is 4 people. This is a CHI-hosted open workshop and travel is <u>not</u> included</i>	\$700 per person (does not include travel)	This dollar amount will be paid directly to CHI by the Burke Foundation. This training will be open to those providers and staff who attended the Centering facilitation training and have been facilitating groups. Four seats are covered by this grant in FY 2024 with continued funding approval.
Leader Kit	\$300 (1 per site)	Covered by grant
CHI marketing materials (e.g., posters, rack cards, pens, etc.)	\$150 value	Covered by grant
Patient notebooks	\$20 per patient	Covered by grant (site is expected to cover these expenses in subsequent years)
Medical equipment and supplies (e.g., blood pressure cuffs)	Need varies by site	***
Group space enhancements (e.g., comfortable chairs, area rugs, pictures)	Need varies by site	***
Healthy snacks	~\$25 per group session ¹³	***

*** An operational mini-grant directly from the Burke Foundation will be available in Year 1 based on an individual site's needs, providing up to \$5,000 of supplemental funding. A very short application form will be required to access these funds.

Application Process

<i>Preliminary Review Period</i>	
Step 1	All interested applicants are invited to complete the CHI Readiness Assessment , which gathers information about the practice site such as patient volume, proposed space to convene groups, and administrative support.

¹³ Each CenteringPregnancy cohort meets for 10 group sessions.

	<p><i>The CHI Readiness Assessment tool assesses a site's preparedness to engage with CHI on Centering implementation. A site that demonstrates readiness is more likely to successfully sustain its CenteringPregnancy program in accordance with the evidence-based model and achieve positive outcomes. Applicants are strongly encouraged to view this short video about the Readiness Assessment process before completing the online form, which takes sites on average 30 minutes to complete.</i></p>
Step 2	<p>Once sites complete the CHI Readiness Assessment they will be contacted by Mary Fitzmaurice, Director of Business Development at CHI, to schedule a phone discussion to assess the site's readiness for CenteringPregnancy.</p>
Application Period	
Step 3	<p>Qualifying candidates whose readiness is verified by the CHI team following the phone discussion will be invited to submit the application materials listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter of intent • Planning Your Centering Budget document • Letter of Support from practice leadership <p>Deadline: All materials must be submitted to CHI no later than September 8, 2023. Submitted applications will be reviewed collaboratively by CHI and The Burke Foundation.</p>
Step 4	<p>Representatives from CHI and the Burke Foundation will meet with members of your team planning to implement Centering and tour your facility. Interview questions will be supplied in advance. Interviews are tentatively planned to occur the week of September 18, 2023.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Site Selection <i>CHI intends to notify successful applicants by approximately October 8, 2023</i></p>	
Post-Award Period	
	<p>Once selected and prior to implementation launch, grantees will need to complete all required CHI documentation associated with acquiring a Centering site license, including the annual site license fee.</p>

About Centering Healthcare Institute:

[Centering Healthcare Institute](#) is a national nonprofit based in Boston, Massachusetts, dedicated to improving health by transforming care through Centering groups. With over two decades of experience as the go-to resource for group health care, CHI is the national standards organization that supports the dissemination, implementation, and continuous quality assurance of Centering group models of care in nearly 600 practice sites – from small community clinics to some of the largest health systems in the world.