



**Contacts:**

Sharon Sobol Jordan, 216/432-7200  
Center for Families and Children

Judith Z. Peters, 216/651-2037  
West Side Ecumenical Ministry

**Center for Families and Children, West Side Ecumenical Ministry enter into affiliation agreement to increase impact on community**

CLEVELAND – April 7, 2011 – Two highly regarded social service agencies – the Center for Families and Children and West Side Ecumenical Ministry – are coming together in order to increase their impact on the community by building on their strengths and becoming more efficient. There will be no interruption of programs or services for clients.

The agencies have entered into an affiliation agreement and will integrate their organizations over time. CFC will be the parent corporation and WSEM will be a subsidiary corporation. The combined organization will have core strengths in early learning, food centers, behavioral health, youth development and workforce development. El Barrio, which merged with WSEM in 2004, will remain focused on serving the needs of Hispanic and other minority populations.

“The combination of CFC and WSEM – two great organizations with great services – will allow us to achieve our shared vision of providing opportunities and hope for children, adults and families living in poverty in Greater Cleveland,” said Erskine E. Cade, chair of the CFC board of directors. “Together, we will have a strong presence on both the east and west sides of Greater Cleveland, and the scale, depth and reach we need for sustained efficiency, impact and growth in this highly competitive funding environment – a better position than either of us would be in alone. In fact, CFC’s commitment to the Hispanic community on the West Side is made even stronger with the addition of WSEM and El Barrio.”

Cade added, “The population in need of our services continues to grow at a time when the funds available to provide them are rapidly diminishing. Over time, we will look for ways to make our programs even stronger, expand our ability to serve those in need and increase our community impact.”

David A. Doll, chairman of the WSEM board of directors, said, “We have many strengths in common, as well as unique strengths that we each value and respect about the other. Joining together will strengthen the sustainability of our core missions and preserve client services, as well

as enable us to become strong and determined advocates for the people we serve, and give us the needed scale to accomplish our advocacy goals.”

The combined organization will honor WSEM’s faith-based roots as a key part of its heritage. Food centers will remain the primary manifestation of that ministry and be operated in close partnership with churches and volunteers under the name West Side Ecumenical Ministry – a part of the Center for Families and Children.

“The joining of CFC and WSEM is a very positive outcome of a very thorough process and thoughtful consideration and discussion,” said CFC President and Chief Executive Officer Sharon Sobol Jordan, who noted that informal discussions about pursuing some form of collaboration began in late 2008. “As these discussions became more formal by early 2010, both agencies were fortunate to be selected to participate in the Human Services Restructuring Pilot Project.”

That project was established by a group of foundations and other local funders to encourage, foster and support significant strategic restructuring efforts such as sharing of administrative functions, integrated programming, joint ventures or even mergers.

“Although our discussions began independently, they were facilitated by the pilot project,” Jordan said. “We looked at a full range of options and concluded that a combination will best enable us to serve our collective mission and increase our impact on the community.”

The board of the parent organization will include broad representation from the boards of both agencies, and leadership will be drawn from both agencies. Jordan will serve as president and chief executive officer of the parent organization. Judith Z. Peters, WSEM chief executive officer, will be executive vice president and lead government relations efforts and several other major strategic initiatives for the combined organization.

The primary headquarters of the combined organization will be at CFC’s Nancy Lyon Porter Building, 4500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland. All CFC and WSEM administrative and program staff will remain in their current locations unless notified otherwise, and there will be no immediate impact on staffing.

“Both organizations have dedicated and valued employees who will benefit from being part of a stronger, more sustainable organization,” said Peters. “It is our hope that with a new, larger organization there will be more opportunities for staff rather than fewer.”

**About the Center for Families and Children**

In 1968, inspirational community leaders Leona Bevis, Louise Humphrey and Nancy Lyon Porter shared the belief that a more cohesive approach to the problems facing families could be achieved by bringing several agencies together to form a more integrated service delivery system. This initial vision became the central tenet that guides CFC: an enduring commitment to serving families and children and fiscal responsibility through cooperation.

Due to their insight, five historic agencies joined forces in 1970 to form the Center for Human Services. This unique merger included agencies whose roots could be traced back to the 19th century: Family Service Association, the Day Nursery Association, Traveler's Aid Society, Cleveland Homemaker Service Association and Youth Service.

In 1993, the agency's name was changed to the Center for Families and Children (CFC) to more accurately reflect its dedicated focus. Today, CFC's commitment endures, with our critical mission of changing lives and communities through client service, advocacy, and collective action. For more information, visit [www.c4fc.org](http://www.c4fc.org).

**About West Side Ecumenical Ministry**

WSEM was founded in 1966 by members and clergy of five West Side churches who realized that by pooling their human and financial resources, they could do a better job of meeting the needs of the community than they could as individual congregations. Over the years, the neighborhood and faith-based organizations and others supporting WSEM have changed, but what has remained constant is an understanding that more can be accomplished by working together than by working alone.

In partnership with dozens of community-based organizations, over the years WSEM added food distribution, crisis support and vital community outreach services and resource referrals. In 2000, WSEM expanded behavioral health care and counseling services. Later, in 2004, WSEM merged with El Barrio, which expanded the workforce development program with the addition of Hispanic populations. For more information, visit [www.wsem.org](http://www.wsem.org).

###