

The Toy Foundation

# PLAY GRANTS PROGRAM

Twelve-month report



May 2021 – May 2022

# THE HEALING POWER OF PLAY

Through a partnership with Children's Hospital Association, The Toy Foundation created a unique play grant opportunity, The Toy Foundation Play Grants Program. Designed to strengthen the social, emotional, physical, and behavioral development of children, the grants are making play more accessible in children's hospital settings and through community partnerships.

The program launched in March 2020 and 62 hospitals—almost 30% of CHA's membership—submitted grant applications. The Toy Foundation reviewed the submissions and selected 11 applications for funding in May and an additional seven in September for a total of 18 grants valued at \$357,970.

This report highlights project results, outcomes and effects, as well as how play was promoted through the project. It also looks at the populations served and any data provided.



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# MOBILE SENSORY PLAYROOM

Arkansas Children's Hospital; Little Rock, Arkansas

Total grant: \$25,000

## GOAL

Provide access to safe sensory playrooms and decrease patient agitation/harm to self and others; improve access to appropriate play outlets for patients with autism and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities; and identify spaces that can quickly be modified into mobile play spaces.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

Two Vecta mobile multi-sensory carts were purchased for inpatient and outpatient care. These devices helped create a calming, sensory friendly environment. Specialty items for the sensory toolkits were also purchased.

Child Life produced training videos on how to properly use the resources and shared them with other departments. The response to the new equipment has been overwhelmingly positive. The Vecta machines and toolkits are highly requested for autistic and sensory needs patients. About 28,000 patients will be served by this project annually.

## DATA COLLECTED

The tools have been used with countless patients leading to increased cooperation from patients that may not have otherwise been achieved. For example, a light spinner tool was used to calm and lead an autistic 10-year-old patient through an X-ray procedure, and a Vecta machine was used as a diversion tool to place an IV in the arm of a very anxious patient.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"The best part of this project has been educating others on the benefits of the various sensory tools and the Vecta multi-sensory carts. It is exciting when staff of various disciplines see the tools in action and learn strategies to improve the care for patients who may benefit from individualized sensory interactions."





# PLAY RESOURCES FOR PEDIATRIC PATIENTS WITH SENSORY PROCESSING DIFFICULTIES

Baylor Scott & White McLane Children's Medical Center; Temple, Texas

Total grant: \$10,150

## GOAL

To acquire specialized play resources and support materials for pediatric patients who experience sensory processing difficulties during radiology or ultrasound procedures and to decrease procedure times, increase cooperation and distract patients from potentially overwhelming stimuli.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED

Sensory items were purchased and treatment and waiting areas were designated to fit the resources. In addition to child life, staff in radiology, special procedures and other departments were also trained on how to properly use the resources.

Between 300 and 1,000 patients will be served by this program annually. This is a conservative estimate based on approximately 5,260 radiology procedures and 4,400 ultrasound procedures annually.

## DATA COLLECTED

Results from a staff survey showed:

- 100% of patients and families responded positively to the sensory items.
- 99% reported that sensory resources made a difference in the patient experience.
- 97% said the education of the usage of the sensory toys was adequate.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"The bubble wall has been a great addition—even for our non-sensory patients—as it helps patients stand still when we need to take their vitals. Having the sensory cart readily available and stocked with a multitude of tools has helped a variety of children's needs and made completing exams much easier. The new tools have increased staff and patient/parent satisfaction and decreased procedure time and have improved overall patient cooperation."

"Children who are experiencing sensory overload get more input from their five senses than their brain can sort through and process. Situations that trigger this process can include multiple conversations going on in one room, bright or flickering lights, loud noises, certain textures of food, strong scents, and tactile stimulation. The items provided by the grant enabled patients to engage in both novel and familiar toys and promote a safe and fun and calm environment."



# MAKING PLAY ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL PATIENTS

Children's of Alabama; Birmingham, Alabama

Total grant: \$25,000

## GOAL

The hospital used the grant to purchase a camera system, lighting, green screen and Wi-Fi with CCTV capabilities to broadcast a variety of activities, performances and programming throughout the hospital and inpatient rooms.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

The program kicked off during the First Annual Camp Blue River: a week of summer camp themed activities, including sing-a-longs, games, a scavenger hunt, and arts and crafts. The hospital also broadcasts Teddy Bear Clinic, Weather Wednesdays, and a guided painting class geared for the teen population. Other broadcasts include virtual zoo visits and performances by the Alabama Symphony orchestra.

Children's of Alabama sees roughly 12,000 inpatient admissions per year. While this project can serve the needs of the entire patient population, it was designed to specifically reach the inpatient population as well as those receiving treatment in the outpatient oncology and dialysis clinics. The project benefits patients who are in isolation, immobile or are unable to leave their rooms.

## DATA COLLECTED

About 100 patients participate in each activity, with more (approximately 300) participating in larger events such as the Holiday Tree Farm.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"This project is important to us because illness and hospitalization can be particularly stressful for children and their families. High levels of patient anxiety can lead to increased preparation time for procedures, poor patient cooperation—especially for younger children—and increased post-operative recovery time. Many of our patients are confined to their rooms, which can lead to loneliness and boredom. Naturally, this was the case for even more children during COVID-19."

"This project was much needed to bring the therapeutic benefits of laughter play to our patients. It has provided a huge morale boost for our patients and our staff during a very trying time."



# CHILDREN'S MEDICAL PLAY PROJECT

Children's Hospital of San Antonio; San Antonio, Texas

Total grant: \$10,414

## GOAL

This grant helps children familiarize themselves with medical supplies, identify and build positive coping skills, and build confidence as they practice their coping skills.

Child Life specialists worked to identify each child's capacity for using the medical play equipment.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

The Child Life team incorporated play each time the medical play items were used. Having this equipment on hand prior to a procedure or treatment helped the team move from a reactive position to a proactive position to prepare the needed medical play equipment to use prior to the treatment or procedure. The team spends as much time as needed to educate patients and families and create coping plans so they are confident going to a procedure. This practice helps reduce stress when emotions are heightened. The team also created and broadcast one new CCTV program in support of medical play.

## DATA COLLECTED

A total of 12,833 patients/family members were served over the grant period.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"The biggest takeaway from this project has been the ability for the Child Life specialists to order the items that best fit their medical unit population. This allows the Child Life specialists to meet the individual needs of patients they are serving and allow patients to explore a variety of items in a group setting."

"We spend most of our time helping patients through stressful procedures. As a team, we wanted to be more proactive and spend time preparing more patients for procedures. Now when we provide accompaniment during a procedure, we have a plan in place already and patients feel a sense of control over their environment."





# PLAY FOR ALL AND ALL FOR PLAY

Children's Mercy Kansas City; Kansas City, Missouri

Total grant: \$14,366

## GOAL

Use adaptive equipment to make play possible for all infants, regardless of diagnosis or developmental limitation, to engage in play. Staff wanted to create a hospital environment inclusive to all children and reduce the negative developmental effects of hospitalization, while providing safe opportunities for infants to play in the intensive care units. They also wanted to engage caregivers in play, provide developmental education, and unique and engaging sensory opportunities.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

The grant allowed the team to promote play and a healing environment to children with additional sensory or developmental needs. The significant medical needs of the population in intensive care means positioning devices to appropriately engage children in play activities. This grant helped the team make a significant difference by, not only providing play materials and toys, but providing the positioning and adaptive devices to allow the children to engage in the play activities.

One patient who benefitted from this grant has been hospitalized since birth. At 19 months old, all the play experiences he has encountered are hospital provided. This patient has substantial physical limitations and requires life sustaining technology including a tracheostomy, ventilator and feeding

tube. A tumble form seat and adjustable tabletop allowed the team to engage him in play activities in a safe and developmentally appropriate position.

## DATA COLLECTED

Close to 500 patients will benefit from this play project annually. The project enabled the assembly of 646 toy sets and positioning items. Services were provided specifically to children who were admitted to a critical care unit including the pediatric intensive care unit, the cardiac intensive care unit or the intensive care nursery.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"Patients, families and staff have responded positively to this program. We have been able to engage more patients and families in play than ever before. We partnered with our speech, physical, and occupational therapists when submitting this project. There was a clear gap in our ability to support patients with developmental needs. The most exciting items we purchased were the tumble form chairs. They have allowed more patients to be out of bed and upright when previously we were limited on what we could offer patients. Our patients are playing more, and this drastically impacts their coping with extended hospitalizations. We were able to identify toys that were specific to our patient populations and prioritize their needs."





# PLAY AT BEDSIDE AND BEYOND

Children's Health Care Foundation/Children's Minnesota;

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Total grant: \$25,000

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## GOAL

Expand and update bedside, therapeutic and sibling play programs with new toys, games, instruments and supplies. New play materials were purchased for use in inpatient rooms and the emergency department, where the hospital provides small toys or activity packs for children to take home after their time in the hospital. The organization updated the sibling play area, a space where siblings, patients and families can interact, and the child life zone which serves as a therapeutic space for gaining a sense of choice, control, mastery, self-expression and positive interactions.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

This grant allowed the organization to continue to support play areas throughout the hospital for children as well as designated spaces for teens and families. Medical play can enhance a child's understanding of their medical care and encourage expression of thoughts and emotions. Both group and independent play were encouraged and supported. Child life professionals at Children's Minnesota worked closely with children to help understand their medical care and minimize stress through medical play, relaxation and mental imagery.

## DATA COLLECTED

Children's Minnesota serves kids throughout the upper Midwest at two freestanding hospitals, 12 primary care clinics, six rehabilitation clinics and nine specialty care sites. Whether a family needs language assistance, culturally specific health education, help navigating the health care system or financial resources, the hospital is committed to providing support. The patient population is approximately 47% children of color, including Latino, Hmong, African American, American Indian, and Somali patients and families. In 2021, the hospital cared for 166,525 patients.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"Child life services are not reimbursed by insurance and never appear on a family's hospital bill. In addition to organizational support, we depend on the generosity of our community to make sure children have access to these services. Philanthropy helps connect kids to invaluable therapies and programs that have a profound effect on their overall health."



# MYCHART BEDSIDE: VIRTUAL PLAYROOM KID PREP (PATIENTS RECEIVING EDUCATION FOR PROCEDURES)

Children's of Mississippi; Jackson, Mississippi

Total grant: \$25,000

## GOAL

Support the developmental needs of pediatric patients through virtual play-based programming. MyChart Bedside was implemented on all inpatient units. This grant was used to purchase recording equipment, a green screen, microphones, lighting and tripods that serves as a mobile studio to film MyChart Bedside therapeutic content.

Child-friendly, developmentally appropriate videos were created to teach children about their upcoming surgeries and MRI scans. Other content includes activities focusing on compassion and empathy, education and STEM-based activities, medical play activities, virtual animal-assisted therapy sessions and more. There are also movement classes such as stretching, martial arts and dance classes.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

The MyChart bedside equipment is functional in 25 patient rooms on the general medicine unit and is accessible to all children admitted, regardless of their socioeconomic status. The KidPREP programs enhances the psychosocial care of patients and their families, many who are facing complex medical conditions and reside in underserved communities.

Mississippi has the country's highest poverty rate with a large percentage of citizens residing in rural areas, often resulting in limited access to resources and heightened risks of health care disparities.

## DATA COLLECTED

Data collected from the pilot project is limited due to a low return rate of patient experience surveys from a patient/caregiver sample, a higher percentage of quantitative data is expected when the project expands to all medical-surgical and critical care units. A total of 265 patient rooms will have access to the Children's of Mississippi's Virtual Playroom and KidPREP programs when complete.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"With this level of support from The Toy Foundation, our organization can provide effective programming to all inpatient units (medical-surgical and critical care units). Without this support, this would not be a hospital-wide endeavor. This is worth celebrating as every child admitted to our inpatient units will have access to on-demand therapeutic play programming with no exclusions!"

"Our Virtual Playroom mitigates restrictions, supporting children in participating actively in what comes most natural to them: play. Regardless of pandemic status, the hour of the day or night when a child is admitted to our care, or what a child is experiencing medically, each child can play thanks to our Virtual Playroom on MyChart Bedside."



# SENSORY TOY CARTS FOR CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Golisano Children's Hospital at The University of Rochester

Medical Center; Rochester, New York

Total grant: \$10,040

## GOAL

Ten sensory carts were purchased for use across inpatient, procedure and outpatient spaces. While the pilot was originally intended to serve only patients with intellectual or developmental disabilities, there were numerous other patients with mental health needs. The initiative expanded to include those patients in this project. The carts provided patients with items that supported their comfort and feelings of being understood.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

Golisano Children's Hospital made high quality sensory carts available to patients across numerous locations in the children's hospital and provided education to nurses, technicians, providers, and other disciplines about the importance of providing sensory materials. They helped a population that often experiences health inequities and challenges with medical care to feel calmer, access care more easily and achieve meaningful play. The initiative was important in promoting play for children with neurodevelopmental differences and mental health needs.

## DATA COLLECTED

Golisano Children's Hospital collected data for patients who accessed the cart through a

consultation from child life, occupational therapy or the intensive behavioral health care team. This accounted for 30% of patients who encountered the cart. The rest of the materials were given through nursing.

Ten carts were created and disbursed to units.

- 300 patients received items through the cart, and 200 nurses received training on sensory carts.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the carts helped to decrease anxiety, distress, fear, boredom, and challenging behavior during care.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the carts had a positive effect on their child's visit and helped access care.
- 90% of respondents received education around sensory materials for their child while at the hospital.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"There is such a need for individualized resources for patients with neurodevelopmental needs and mental health disorders. The opportunity to provide appropriate toys, and simultaneously educate hospital staff and providers is instrumental to their ability to access care in a safe and supportive manner."





# ESTABLISHING PLAY-BASED AND SENSORY-SENSITIVE PEDIATRIC WAITING AREAS IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Hennepin Health Foundation, DBA Hennepin Healthcare Foundation;  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Total grant: \$25,000

## GOAL

To improve the pediatric experience and lessen the overall traumatic nature of the existing environment through pediatrics-specific play opportunities in three waiting rooms within the emergency department (ED).

Hennepin Health Foundation created an isolated area within the ED for pediatric patients. One of the three existing waiting rooms and five patient exam rooms will be solely dedicated to pediatric patients and family members. Corners were fitted with Kidzspace units, and bubble tubes and wall iPad gaming systems were created for pediatric patients experiencing a wait.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

The team purchased items that range in interest from infants to teenagers. With the increase in ED visits for teens with mental health concerns, sitting in a room with no resources or distraction during periods of long wait times previously caused regular escalation of behaviors, sometimes warranting one-on-one supervision. Now, teens are offered an adult coloring book, stress balls, Lego sets and more so that they can better focus their thoughts and energy.

Hennepin Healthcare serves everyone, regardless of financial ability. Hennepin Healthcare serves a

critical role in the community and improves the physical surroundings for pediatric patients. The patient population is diverse, and many patients are uninsured or underinsured. The need for normalizing play is essential.

Hennepin Healthcare sees 5,000 to 8,000 pediatric patients in the ED each year. The effect of this project on this group of patients does not include the additional children of adult patients or siblings of pediatric patients who also find themselves in our waiting rooms or exam rooms.

## DATA COLLECTED

Surveys via QR code were posted for patients and their families in the ED waiting rooms to seek input into what they would like to see in the space. Since the addition of distraction kits and wall games, families in the ED have indicated the availability of distraction items and toys while they wait for care has been helpful in soothing the fears of the children in need of medical attention.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"The wall games, with distraction games and guided meditation for kids have been an amazing addition to the waiting area. Often, ED and child life staff may walk into the pediatric waiting room to find patients doing yoga, stretching or deep breathing. It can also serve as a tool for providers assessing patients."



# EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT WAITING AREA PLAY ENHANCEMENT

Le Bonheur Children's Hospital; Memphis, Tennessee

Total grant: \$25,000

## GOAL

Transform the pediatric ED waiting room into a welcoming area, complete with kid-friendly murals, updated seating and play areas. The newly decorated atmosphere will help to decrease fears, stress and anxiety as well as promote positive coping skills and playful distraction.

While the project is not finalized, the redesign of the waiting room will support these efforts to provide a child-friendly, engaging space for children and families to wait prior to medical treatment. Le Bonheur anticipates including art panels, an activity corner with busy stations, acrylic bubbles, iSpy and other interactive artwork.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

The ED is the first experience many children and families have with Le Bonheur Children's Hospital.

By redesigning the space, they can consider the needs of children of all ages, as well as their caregivers. Memphis has a high poverty rate with 35% of children living in poverty. From asthma to broken bones to major trauma, more than 90,000 children visit Le Bonheur's ED each year.

## DATA COLLECTED

After the project is completed, they will use the patient satisfaction survey, with both quantitative and qualitative data, to demonstrate the impact of this project.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"The child life specialist team working in the ED noticed difficulty with children coping with long waits in the space. Their passion for play led to requesting the grant to make it a space that promote healing from the moment anyone walked in the door."



# SENSORY-FRIENDLY PLAY FOR KIDS IN MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Mary Bridge Children's Hospital and Health Network; Tacoma, Washington

Total grant: \$15,000

## GOAL

Identify, procure and install sensory-friendly play equipment specifically for kids with mental health concerns in the emergency department and/or inpatient rooms. A wide range of equipment was purchased including fidget toys, modeling clay, exercise mats and balls, gel toys, weighted blankets, jigsaw puzzles, Nerf basketball hoop, notebooks, star and ocean wave projector, musical stepping stones and glitter liquid floor tiles.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

This sensory-friendly play equipment is used throughout the child patient's hospital stay to normalize the hospital environment and to provide patients with a sense of calm when it is needed most. The equipment is also used to promote self-regulation, offer respite and provide opportunities to increase or decrease sensory input according to the individual needs of the child/teen.

The primary population served by this grant is children in mental health distress who also have developmental challenges such as severe autism, intellectual disability or other forms of cognitive impairment.

## DATA COLLECTED

Anticipated outcomes of this project include:

- A sensory-friendly environment that has appropriate play options to meet the needs of this population in a time of mental health crisis.
- Make appropriate play resources available to frontline staff.
- Decrease patient/staff harm.
- Decrease patient distress and agitation.
- Decrease rates of seclusion and restraint.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"Our team took great care in selecting safe toys and equipment that stimulate all the senses while also being versatile, durable and easy to clean. As one of our vendors explains, 'Kids with autism gravitate towards visually interesting toys.' Our selections allow for visual, tactile, aural and oral stimulation, promoting calming and self-regulation while also helping kids practice skills related to mood, attention and motor ability."





# PLAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEDIATRIC BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS IN NON-PSYCHIATRIC SETTINGS: A GROWING NEED

MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital; Charleston, South Carolina

Total grant: \$23,000

## GOAL

To select and purchase toys and activities for mental and behavioral health patients in the pediatric emergency department and acute care units awaiting psychiatric placement.

Due to the risk of self-harm, immense restrictions exist on the types of toys and materials children can use in the hospital during an acute mental health crisis. However, reduced play leads to increased feelings of hopelessness when children and teens are unable to access the coping benefits of play. Minimal materials meeting risk management and psychiatric-safe criteria were available prior to this grant project.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

The population of patients receiving grant items are children ages 5 to 18 admitted to the emergency department or inpatient medical services for suicide

attempts, disruptive behavior, and anxiety or depression.

## DATA COLLECTED

In the first four months of 2022, 706 children have visited MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital with an acute mental health crisis. The materials from this grant are available to help serve all these children and those that continue to visit the hospital for acute mental health crises.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"Our staff are now better able to serve the psychiatric population and their needs and are also able to reduce the stigma associated with mental health admissions and provide greater normative opportunities. Patients have verbalized increased satisfaction with health care encounters since this project has been initiated."



# MEDICAL PLAY THERAPEUTIC KITS

Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children; Wilmington, Delaware

Total grant: \$25,000

## GOALS

Distribute medical play kits to patients and families at the Jessup Street pediatric clinic located in a low-resourced neighborhood in Wilmington, Delaware. Over 80% of patients at the clinic are on Medicaid, and the location has limited access to child life professionals and programs. This grant will be used to support play, increase health literacy and create a positive health care experience for patients and families while building trust.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

With input from providers, the team identified various types of products needed to create appropriate medical play kits to address the needs of this specific population. Medical kits with a teaching focus on eczema, dental hygiene, vaccinations, and general medical play were designed.

The goal was to create 1,550 kits to be given to patients in July. The team has also created therapeutic resources to be included in the kits,

including tip sheets for taking medicine, deep breathing exercises and other coping techniques. There will also be pre-recorded videos to complement the materials. These resources will expand the virtual and live sessions that Nemours Children's is implementing to improve health literacy.

## DATA COLLECTED

Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children was awarded their grant in November 2021, so no annual data is available at this time.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"The most immediate success has been improving our collaborative relationship with providers at the clinic and increasing our understanding of the needs and expectations of their patients. By creating specific care kits based on our conversations, we believe that this project will have a meaningful effect on health literacy and patient comfort with medical professionals."





# INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY BOOK

Nicklaus Children's Hospital; Miami, Florida

Total grant: \$25,000

## GOAL

Create a digital interactive activity book to extend the reach of recreational programming to provide distraction and entertainment during moments of fear and anxiety for a comforting and consistent patient experience. The apps will include a custom, branded virtual playground, Furry Friends modeled on the hospital's beloved therapy dogs and more. Under typical conditions, there are 120 volunteers who visit the children six days a week, but due to the pandemic restrictions, the volunteer corps has only just begun to return. These digital games will help reduce loneliness for patients with extended stays.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

This app will provide distraction, reduce anxiety and fear, and fill a gap of play for patient populations with little access to recreational resources:

- Outpatients, due to short length of stay or distance from the main hospital campus.
- Immunocompromised inpatients at the hospital with limited access to visitors.

## DATA COLLECTED

While the app is in development, the ability to capture meaningful data is being built into it. Data points that will be captured will inform us on better understanding patient interests, most popular games played, total minutes played per game, preferences based on age and more.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"This grant helped the hospital commit the resources necessary to making this app a reality. Because there is a renewed emphasis on experience branding within the health system, this app fits into the organization's goals of improving the patient experience for greater consistency and recognizes the important role of a positive experience for all patients, regardless of their length of stay."

"The most gratifying aspect of this project for the team leading it has been the opportunity to create a consistent health care experience that lessens children's anxiety in the hospital setting, which can feel scary for kids."

Apollo



Pebbles





# **PRESCRIPTION FOR PLAY**

OSF Healthcare Children's Hospital of Illinois; Peoria, Illinois

Total grant: \$25,000

## **GOAL**

With the Prescription for Play project, pediatricians and other health care professionals can write prescriptions to the Peoria PlayHouse Children's Museum so children and their families can engage in unstructured, imaginative play.

The original Prescription for Play program offered play kits only to families who qualified for the subsidized prescription. This grant allowed all families to receive a play kit with their Prescription for Play. Kits feature toys and supplies so children and their families can play at home, outside, in waiting rooms, while traveling and more!

When schools learned about the Prescription for Play program, they were eager to take part. High schools wanted the program prescribed to their teen parents, and early childhood centers welcomed prescriptions for students and their families. The reach of the program extended beyond traditional health care settings and into schools.

## **HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?**

The Prescription for Play program emphasized that play is more than entertainment, it's crucial for health and development. While the program was designed to be for any child in need of more unstructured, imaginative play regardless of socioeconomic status, different versions of the program were available to make it more accessible for families who have more barriers with their social determinants of health.

This grant was instrumental to the program's expansion and allowed the hospital to reach families served in community-based settings.

## **DATA COLLECTED**

The Prescription for Play program was prescribed 210 times. Approximately 90% of the families who received a prescription qualified for the subsidized prescription, which meant the child was enrolled in Medicaid or received a free/reduced school lunch. Over 500 play kits were issued to families. Of those who were issued a Prescription for Play, 20% redeemed the prescriptions at the Peoria PlayHouse Children's Museum for the free toy and free one-time visit. About 10% took advantage of the membership option and all the families who did sign up for the membership were under the subsidized plan.

## **HOSPITAL FEEDBACK**

"Prior to this grant, the program only existed with two OSF Healthcare pediatricians, which resulted in the volume of prescriptions being too low to see meaningful outcomes. This grant allowed the program to expand outside of primary care to specialty care and community-based settings that focused on health promotion and injury prevention."

"The play kits were a big hit. Kids and families enjoyed receiving the play and activity items, but they especially enjoyed the accompanying booklet that outlined over 50 games and activities that could be played with every item. Think of it as a cookbook, but instead of recipes for food, there are recipes for play."



# SAFE TOY KITS: SUPPORTING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PATIENTS IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

St. Louis Children's Hospital; St. Louis, Missouri

Total grant: \$10,350

## GOAL

To enhance the support of patients with behavioral health needs in the emergency department, help patients with behavioral health needs cope with hospitalization, and assist unit staff in identifying and providing appropriate safe activities for patients with behavioral health needs. The Safe Toy Kits help patients cope with their new surroundings and the influx of activity occurring during their stay.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

With the behavioral health crisis at the hospital's doorstep, they needed to be ready to meet patients' needs and help them heal. The Safe Toy Kits de-escalate the patients' emotions, improve focus, establish a positive and warm environment that creates trust between patient and caregiver.

St. Louis Children's Hospital encourages play as a necessary pathway to healing and recognizes that just because kids are in the hospital, doesn't mean they should stop being kids. Child life is embedded in every hospital service line (including the ED) and

works with patients and families to develop ways to cope with fear, anxiety and separation from friends and family by using the tools of play therapy. The Safe Toy Kits within the ED help make that possible.

## DATA COLLECTED

Bags were distributed to 385 patients. If the behavior of a patient needs to deescalate, the ED calls in a Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) team. Anecdotal evidence from the ED clinical staff notes a visible reduction over the past several months of how often the CPI team was contacted.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"Parents are beyond grateful and have been taken aback by the kindness and generosity of the hospital to think of these details and warm gestures, especially in the ED when things can be chaotic. Some have shared that they've never encountered this kind of support before. Sometimes parents aren't used to being treated so well with having kids with behavioral health issues, so this gesture is very much appreciated."



# PEDIATRIC EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DAY ROOM RENOVATION

Children's Hospital at Montefiore; Bronx, New York

Total grant: \$25,000

## GOAL

Renovate a space within the pediatric emergency department to create a day room for behavioral health patients who are on hold awaiting placement in the hospital. The space will include safe and comfortable seating, a dedicated workspace and table that can be used for schoolwork and play, gaming equipment, sensory opportunities and calming decor.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

This space is making a significant impact on the patient and staff experience. Previously, patients were held in small bays with few activities and limited staff interaction, which often led to high levels of agitation and outbursts leading to restraint implementation for safety. With this new day room space, named the Blue Zone, patients come in the morning, attend school with our hospital teachers, have a daily schedule of activities including play (individual and group games), art, music, movement and group activities.

The area is staffed by nursing and a child life specialist with doctors and other ancillary staff coming in and out. This level of engagement has improved the patient experience, and since it opened at the start of 2022 there have been zero restraints needed or used in this space.

The Bronx, the region the Children's Hospital at Montefiore serves, stands as the nation's poorest urban county. Within Bronx County, in South Bronx, almost half of children (49%) live at or below the poverty line. Additionally, nearly 60% (59.2%) of families in Bronx County are single-parent households.

## DATA COLLECTED

The space has served about 400 patients from January 2022 to April 2022.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"The pandemic presented us with additional challenges in providing therapeutic services to our patients who were now facing isolation and separation from normal routine. Additionally, the rise in pediatric mental health issues continues to be a cause for concern. In various areas of the hospital, we wanted to provide sensory opportunities for patients who needed extra support due to heightened anxiety associated with behavioral health issues, autism, and other disabilities. Research has proven that these sensory products in addition to a calming atmosphere, reduces the anxiety levels of these patients and improves compliance. Additionally, traditional play methods do not always engage special needs patients in the way that these sensory experiences do."





# SOUTH LAWN BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT

Valley Children's Healthcare; Madera, California

Total grant: \$25,000

## GOAL

Create a playground that addresses physical accessibility needs of patients and families, as well as incorporate elements that promote social interaction and integrate sensory-rich environments focused on developmental needs. Ensure the playground includes features that exceed ADA minimum standards and that nearly all play features are accessible for ambulatory devices and IV racks at ground level or via ramp. Space also includes custom tandem rockers, water play troughs, dance chimes, percussion instruments and at-grade spinners.

## HOW WAS PLAY PROMOTED?

Previously, this playground space only accommodated small children and visitors. Because the needs of the hospital's patient population have expanded, a new playground was needed—one that focused equally on physical therapies and engaging play for the entire patient population. The new playground was designed by an interdisciplinary team that included hospital staff, landscape architects, occupational therapists and contractors. Each aspect of the design was carefully considered

to address not only physical accessibility needs of patients and their families, but also to promote social interaction, and integrated sensory-rich environments focused on developmental needs for patients of all ages and abilities.

## DATA COLLECTED

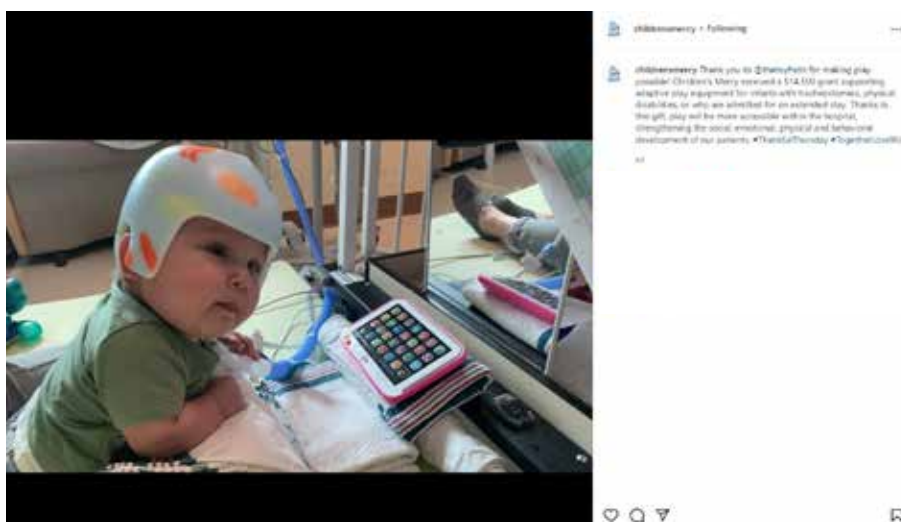
Since the opening of the new playground, Valley Children's patients of all ages now have more opportunities to engage in play and activity specifically suited to their physical needs and appropriate to their level of development.

## HOSPITAL FEEDBACK

"The construction of the new playground was a daily source of excitement for many of our patients. Caroline, an oncology patient, watched the progress daily from her room. Caroline's mom posted about the progress on social media, and the construction contractor saw the post and decided to display inspirational signs that the children could see from their windows. They also delivered gift baskets to all the patients in the unit."



# SAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH



# SAMPLES OF PRESS



June 25



## New Mobile Sensory Playroom Coming to Arkansas Children's Hospital

Arkansas Children's Hospital has been chosen as a recipient of a \$25,000 grant to support a mobile sensory playroom on the Little Rock campus. The mobile sensory playroom will support patients with intellectual or development disabilities, autism and behavioral issues using sensory toys and tools to provide stimulation and calming.

[Read More](#)

## Grant from The Toy Foundation helps comfort kids in HCMC's Emergency Department

Arkansas Children's Hospital • HCMC News • HCMC Press Releases • May 21, 2021 • 2 minutes



Since last year, children being seen at HCMC's Emergency Department in the heart of downtown Minneapolis have been enjoying new toys thanks to a grant from [The Toy Foundation](#), a charitable organization that works with the toy industry to support play programs for children. HCMC was chosen as one of the recipients of a grants totaling more than \$215,000 that were distributed to children's hospitals for innovative play projects designed to help hospitalized children heal.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the health and well-being of millions of children resulting in a rise in emergency room visits and hospitalizations for mental, emotional,

Kansas City, November 09, 2021

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## Grant makes play possible for all critically ill infants at Children's Mercy Kansas City





# FEEDBACK FROM HOSPITALS

“Behavioral Health patients are a misunderstood population and I really enjoy working with them and helping them through their crisis. It’s hard being a kid right now...but these kits help create a warm, authentic, meaningful connection between us so we can provide them the care they need. When these kids have things to keep them busy, they are not trying to hurt themselves or others. They stay safe and we are not calling-in the crisis prevention team as much to intervene.”

*–ED Child Life Specialist, St. Louis Children’s Hospital*

“Our chief nursing officer for Golisano Children’s Hospital and chief medical officer have together praised the rollout of the carts. They have shared ongoing updates and praise in monthly hospital-wide meetings.”

*–Alison Diehl, Research and Grant Administrator, Golisano Children’s Hospital*

“A busy emergency department can be overwhelming for many patients and their families and now, thanks to your generous support, we are able to have a dedicated space where our pediatric behavioral health patients can find solace. This renovated location, where patients can play games or complete schoolwork, has led to a more calming experience for patients that visit the space.”

*–Melissa H. Rooney, M.D., Director, Psychiatric Emergency Services, Children’s Hospital at Montefiore*

“The possibilities with MyChart Bedside are truly endless. While this platform serves as a way for patients and caregivers to engage in their care real-time, it also provides a way for staff to connect with patients through education, play, humor, distraction techniques, and much more. Our teachers within our hospital school program were able to partner with our Mississippi Children’s Museum, creating multiple videos demonstrating science and how the body works”

*–Children’s of Mississippi Director*





Delivering Joy to Children in Need

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