

Cigna Foundation Helps Expand Trauma Counseling Services With \$136,000 Grant to Pace Center for Girls

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The Cigna Foundation announced a \$136,000 grant to Pace Center for Girls Broward, a Florida nonprofit organization that provides girls with an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training and advocacy. The purpose of Pace is to intervene and prevent school withdrawal, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and welfare dependence in a safe and nurturing environment.

"We are grateful to the Cigna Foundation for their support in the expansion of the Pace Reach Program. This funding provides us the opportunity to hire an additional therapist to focus on serving girls in northwest Broward County who in most cases would be unable receive Pace therapy services at our center located in southeast Broward County due to a lack of transportation and distance," said Aggie Pappas, Regional Executive Director at Pace Center for Girls.

The Cigna Foundation grant will fund an additional therapist in the Pace Broward County Reach program, which provides counseling for girls who have been through trauma including school violence, sexual violence, loss of a family member and those who lack a structured family unit.

"We recognize the emotional burdens children and families may face after experiencing trauma, and support community organizations that provide the environment, tools and resources to help people get better – physically and emotionally," said Susan Stith, executive director, Cigna Foundation. "Pace is a proven leader in providing personalized, wrap-around care and support, and we are pleased to help them expand their capabilities."

Pace has pioneered a way to impact marginalized girls who need counseling from trained therapists to reach their potential. The organization has a 90 percent success rate in diverting high-risk girls away from the juvenile justice system, while in recent years there has been a 65 percent increase of girls entering the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice system. Pace provides a lower cost and more effective alternative to confinement by addressing risk factors, reducing behavioral and physical chronic health problems, while addressing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

"We go deep into the communities we serve to help people live healthier, more productive lives, and we are proud to support the critical work that Pace is doing to lift up young women and girls in Broward County and throughout Florida," said Scott Evelyn, Cigna president for South Florida.

Since 1985, Pace has grown to include 21 centers across Florida, and has changed the life trajectory for over 37,000 girls through the academic and counseling day program and Pace Reach Counseling Center. Every girl at Pace sets educational and social goals focused on earning a diploma or GED, returning to public school, attending college, getting vocational training, joining the military or entering the workforce. Pace not only saves girls lives, but its return on investment impacts future generations. Among girls receiving Pace services in FY 2017-2018, 82 percent reported improved family relationships, and 74 percent had improved behaviors associated with delinquency. For more info go to www.pacecenter.org.

About the Cigna Foundation

The Cigna Foundation, founded in 1962, is a private foundation funded by contributions from Cigna Corporation (NYSE: CI) and its subsidiaries. The Cigna Foundation supports organizations sharing its commitment to enhancing the health of individuals and families, and the well-being of their communities, with a special focus on those communities where Cigna employees live and work.

About Pace Center for Girls

Founded in 1985 in Jacksonville, Florida, in response to an increasing rate of arrests among middle and high school aged girls whose delinquent behavior was driven by underlying trauma and victimization, Pace uses a unique strength-based, gender-responsive, trauma-informed approach to re-engage girls in learning, to improve academic performance, and to increase pro-social skills while addressing underlying trauma attributed to female delinquency. Pace Broward, the fourth Pace Center introduced in Florida, was

established in 1992 and has served over 7,500 girls in all program components providing gender responsive services to girls.

For more information on Pace Center for Girls Broward, please contact Kim Vassar at 954-561-6939 ext. 3827 or at kim.vassar@pacecenter.org

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