



CASE
STUDY

Evangelical Community Hospital, Responding to Crisis-Driven Child Care Challenges

When Evangelical Community Hospital mobilized to manage the COVID-19 public health crisis, the needs of its employees – the pandemic’s essential workers – came first. An innovative partnership delivered flexible child care options for parents suddenly confronting the scheduling challenges created by at-home learning for school-age children.

The Need: Like healthcare systems nationwide, the workforce of Evangelical Community Hospital comprises 80 percent women. Of those, 40 percent are in their childbearing and child-rearing years. As hospital officials confronted the COVID health crisis, they surveyed staff about child care supports needed to keep them coming to work. The greatest need became apparent between 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekdays – those virtual school days when children were expected to be at home and learning, while parents were needed at work.

The Business Investment: In 1926, the infirmary of an orphanage/nursing home in Lewisburg, Union County, opened to the public, and the response was overwhelming. That was the origins of Evangelical Community Hospital, still a community health mainstay. As an employer, the hospital’s initiatives to cultivate work-life balance include priority placement with a high-quality child care provider, a dependent-care FSA, and generous parental leave.



The Innovation: The hospital found a solution in an existing joint venture. In 2019, the hospital and Geisinger partnered to own the Miller Center for Recreation and Wellness, while the Greater Susquehanna Valley YMCA took over management. During the pandemic, other fitness centers closed their doors, but in Lewisburg, the partners collaborated to keep the Miller Center open and providing school-age child care.



How It’s Done: Parents could bring their children to the Miller Center, and YMCA staff would augment child care by helping the children log into their devices and follow virtual learning schedules. The varied schedules of students from as many as four school districts per day presented a challenge, which the initiative met by hiring up to one staffer per school district.



How It’s Funded: Evangelical Community Hospital subsidized a portion of costs, and parents paid \$15 a day per child.



The Impact: By responding with agility to the child care and educational crises accompanying a public health crisis, Evangelical Community Hospital balanced its full slate of responsibilities to the workforce and the community. Staff could concentrate on their work, knowing that their children were safe and learning. “When I look at the future,” says Evangelical Community Hospital President & CEO Kendra Aucker, “it’s ‘What can we do as employers to help the region have better child care but also address some of the challenges we have in keeping a workforce and retaining and recruiting a workforce?’ I think some of our success could come in developing a more robust child care program.”

Get Involved: Most Pennsylvania employers want to help working families address child care needs, but few realize that resources are available to help. The Case Studies in Caring series explores award-winning business initiatives created with available resources and are custom-crafted to meet local child care needs for communities and workforces. To learn how your business can join the movement to invest in caring, contact the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission at info@paeearlylearning.com and find an online toolkit for businesses to support working families and child care at Investments in Caring PA, www.investmentsincaringpa.com.