

Play Grants Bring Healing Power to El Paso Children's Hospital

In an exciting continuation of support, 2024 shone brightly for the **El Paso Children's Hospital Foundation (EPCHF)** as it was once again selected to receive a \$25,000 grant from **The Toy Foundation™ (TTF) Children's Hospital Play Grants Program**. For a second year in a row, this generous grant enabled the foundation to support an estimated 2,500 children receiving hospital and outpatient care, underscoring the transformative impact of play in pediatric healthcare.

Play is a potent tool that significantly improves pediatric patients' care, well-being, and health outcomes. Often reliant on external funding or donations to provide this key aspect of the holistic pediatric care model, hospitals benefit immensely from programs like TTF's Children's Hospital Play Grants. Focused on supporting hospitals that serve under-resourced communities, where 50 percent or more of patients rely on Medicaid, the program has delivered the benefits of play to 360,000 children since 2021.

"We deeply appreciate the support provided by The Toy Foundation through this grant," said Abigail Tarango, Executive Director at El Paso Children's Hospital Foundation. "These funds enable us to bring joy to children as they receive care at El Paso Children's Hospital."

EPCHF, in partnership with El Paso Children's Hospital, is one of 20 grantees to receive a Children's Hospital Play Grant. TTF distributed \$380,000 to support 240,000 children, demonstrating the foundation's commitment to pediatric wellbeing.

The grant allowed EPCHF to purchase over 1,600 items, ranging from coloring supplies and fidget toys to complex Lego kits for teens and sensory-friendly items for neurodivergent patients. These items, valued between \$12,000 and \$15,000, impacted over 1,000 patients across inpatient and outpatient service areas.

Play is vital as it helps patients learn about and cope with their medical experiences, offering them a sense of normalcy and joy. The grant has facilitated the acquisition of items that are often overlooked by typical donations. Simple fidget toys can be a source of positive coping during procedures, while teens, neurodivergent children, infants, and toddlers all benefit from specific toys and sensory items tailored to their needs.

For instance, the foundation has been able to give complex Lego kits to many teenage boys, especially those diagnosed with cancer. The transport team received comfort items like small stuffed animals and kid-friendly Bluetooth speakers for soothing sounds. Neurodivergent children have benefitted from special teethers and weighted stuffed animals.

EPCHF's use of the TTF grant highlights the immense value of targeted support in bringing joy and comfort to young patients, proving that play is indeed an essential part of healing.