



IWS FAMILY  
HEALTH

VOICES OF CARE



## DEAR FRIENDS,

As both a pediatrician and a mother, I understand the profound desire to give our children the healthiest start in life. Every parent wants to see their child thrive, yet I witness daily how families are struggling to access the care their children need.

In the first five months of 2025, I have seen a troubling trend—reduced coverage for both private insurance and Medicaid patients. Families who once had reliable access to care are now facing significant barriers. A mother I recently met learned this year that her child's care was no longer covered. Her 10-year-old daughter suffers from one of the most severe cases of eczema I have encountered, with fragile skin prone to infection. The relentless itching disrupts sleep, affecting school performance and emotional well-being. The child has also been bullied because of their condition, compounding the hardship. As a mother, I can't imagine the pain of



**Dr. Portela and her daughter**

watching my child suffer, knowing that essential care is out of reach. No parent should have to make impossible choices when it comes to their child's health.

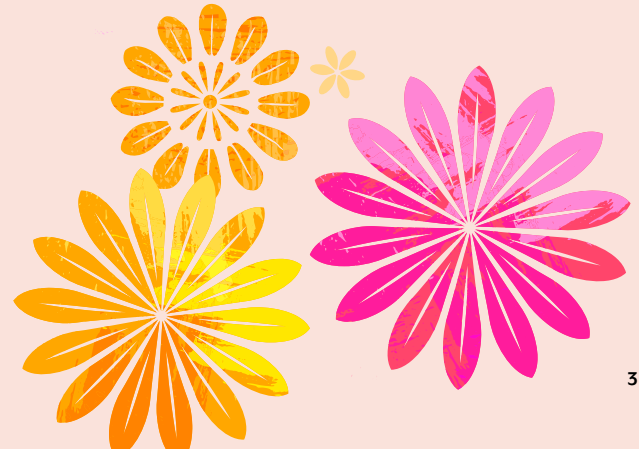
Donations bridge the gap in funding. Thanks to your generosity, IWS Family Health continues to provide high-quality medical, dental, and mental health care to families who need it most. **Your support ensures that every child—regardless of their insurance—receives the care they deserve to grow up healthy, strong, and confident.**

We are stronger together, and we can't do this work without you. Because of you, families don't have to choose between medical care and basic necessities. Because of you, parents struggling with postpartum depression have a support system. Because of you, children with chronic conditions receive life-changing treatment.

If you're able, I hope you'll consider making a gift today. Together, we can make a lasting impact—ensuring every child has access to the care they need to thrive.

**With deepest gratitude for your kindness and generosity,**

**Dr. Paola Portela**  
**Chief Medical Officer & Pediatrician**  
**IWS Family Health**





## Mariel Miagusko, NP

### A MOTHER'S LOVE, A PROVIDER'S CARE: HONORING THE MOTHERS WE SERVE

“

“That’s what makes these early visits so critical,” she explains. “New mothers—no matter where they’re from—don’t always know what’s normal and what’s cause for concern. That’s where we come in.”

For Mariel Miagusko, NP, being a Family Nurse Practitioner isn’t just a job—it’s who she is. At IWS Family Health, she provides care for patients from birth through the end of life, guiding families through every stage of their healthcare journey. Her work is shaped by her core values—family, community, and equality. She believes that healthcare is about connection, trust, and education as much as it is about medicine.



## A Calling Inspired by Compassion

Her journey into healthcare began at 19 years old, when she was treated by a nurse practitioner whose compassion and expertise left a lasting impression. “I will never forget her—her passion for medicine, her empathy, her knowledge,” Mariel recalls. “She didn’t just treat my symptoms; she made sure I understood my health. She made me feel heard. That moment changed everything for me. I knew then that I wanted to do the same for others.”

**As a mother of two young children, she understands firsthand the worries and questions that come with raising a child.** That perspective allows her to connect deeply with the parents she serves. “I know what it feels like to want the best for your children, to make sure they’re safe, growing, and thriving. That’s why these early visits are so important.”

## The Importance of Early Intervention

“Medical protocols have changed over the past 100 years,” she reflects, “but two things haven’t—access to quality care and health literacy.

**Too many families only seek medical help when something is seriously wrong.** Others struggle to balance the cost of healthcare with rent, food, and other basic needs. That’s why IWS Family Health is so important—we provide care that prevents bigger problems down the road.”

Mariel has seen firsthand how early intervention can change lives. She remembers a young mother who brought in her two-week-old baby for a check-up. Typically, newborns have their first visit within one to two days after birth, since it’s normal for babies to lose up to 10 percent of their birth weight. When Mariel placed this little one on the scale, she immediately knew something was wrong. “This baby had lost over 15 percent of its birth weight and hadn’t been seen by a provider since birth,” she recalls. The mother had no idea how serious the situation was.

“That’s what makes these early visits so critical,” she explains. “New mothers—no matter where they’re from—don’t always know what’s normal and what’s cause for concern. That’s where we come in.” She worked with the mother on feeding techniques, scheduled follow-ups, and reassured

her that she wasn't alone. "By the next visit, that baby was gaining weight. That's the power of education and early intervention," she says. That visit only happened because IWS Family Health exists—and because donors make it possible.

## A Small Change, A Life Transformed

**Not every medical issue is obvious. Sometimes the smallest changes make the biggest difference.** Mariel once saw a nine-year-old girl with severe asthma. The child had an inhaler and medication, but her symptoms weren't improving.

Mariel had a hunch and asked the mother to bring the inhaler to their next visit. "I had her show me exactly how she was giving the medication," she explains. "And right away, I saw the issue. No one had ever shown her how to use the inhaler correctly." She sat down with both mom and daughter, walking them through the proper technique. "It seems like such a small thing, but that moment changed everything for them," she says. With the correct technique, the little girl's asthma became manageable. She no longer needed urgent care visits, just routine check-ups. That small change transformed her life.

## A Routine Check-Up That Saved a Child's Life

Mariel has also seen how a simple, routine visit can uncover something life-threatening. She once examined a six-year-old girl during a regular yearly physical. Everything seemed fine—until she listened to the child's heart.

"I heard a murmur," she says. "That's not always a big deal, but something told me to dig deeper." She referred the child for an echocardiogram, which revealed a large atrial septal defect—a hole in the wall between the upper chambers of the heart. "This little girl was scheduled for surgery right away," Mariel says. "If we hadn't caught it, she would have faced serious long-term complications."

**This is why regular check-ups matter. This is why having access to healthcare matters.**

## Donors Make This Possible

For Mariel, the ability to provide this kind of care is a privilege—one that wouldn't be possible without donors who believe in the mission of IWS Family Health. "Donor support is truly the

backbone of what we do,” she says. “It allows us to provide care, to ensure no mother or child is turned away. Whether it’s one dollar or one thousand, donor gifts fund medical supplies, early developmental screenings, and the essential baby supplies that so many families rely on.”

For over 113 years, donors have been filling the “care” in healthcare at IWS Family Health. Their generosity provides diapers, baby bags, and other essential infant supplies. It ensures families in need have access to food and clothing. It funds preventive screenings, developmental assessments, and education for parents so they can confidently care for their children.

“Donors are one of the main reasons I chose to practice at IWS Family Health,” Mariel says. “They provide above-and-beyond care for our patients. They offer that human touch that is often missing in other primary care clinics. Because of them, I know that when a mother walks through our doors, she will receive not just medical care but the dignity and support she deserves.”

## A Career—and a Calling

For Mariel Miagusko, NP, working at IWS Family Health is more than practicing medicine—it’s about providing compassionate care where no one is left behind. “I see myself in the parents I serve. That’s why I take the time to listen, educate, and reassure them that they are not alone.”

Every time she walks into an exam room, she knows she’s exactly where she’s meant to be. And every time a donor supports IWS Family Health, they become part of that mission—ensuring that no child, no mother, and no family ever has to go without the care they need. Your support makes this possible. Make a gift today and help transform a life.



**"Donor support is truly the backbone of what we do."**



## Dr. Raza Hussain, DDS

**BRIGHT FUTURES BEGIN WITH  
HEALTHY SMILES**

“

**“I care about my patients’ happiness,” Dr. Raza shares. “When my kiddos are in pain, they are not happy.” He believes early prevention and good oral hygiene help build strong, healthy teeth and gums.**

**Every child deserves a healthy smile. At IWS Family Health, Dr. Raza Hussain, DDS, provides compassionate, high-quality dental care to children and families, regardless of financial circumstances. A man of deep moral values, strong ethics, and an unwavering sense of responsibility toward his family and community, Dr. Raza believes his work is an extension of his personal values—generosity, kindness, honesty, and courage. He takes great pride in coming to work every day, knowing he is making a difference in the lives of children who might not otherwise have access to dental care.**



For the past three years, Dr. Raza has been a trusted provider at IWS, drawn to its mission of ensuring all patients receive expert dental care, no matter their financial situation. His commitment to ethical living and service guides his approach to dentistry, reinforcing his belief that **every child should have the opportunity for a healthy smile.**

### The Hidden Cost of Dental Care

For Dr. Raza, dentistry is deeply personal. As a first-generation Chicagoan, he witnessed first-hand the long-term effects of limited dental care. His parents, who immigrated from India, were raised in a culture where dental visits were reserved for emergencies. Preventative care was unheard of, and for many, professional dental services were inaccessible. Today, one of his parents struggles to chew due to the loss of molars—an issue that could have been prevented with early intervention. This experience has fueled Dr. Raza's passion for ensuring that the next generation does not face the same preventable challenges.

For many IWS families, basic dental products like toothbrushes, floss, and toothpaste are out of reach. With rising food and rent costs, parents face impossible choices—should they put dinner on the table or buy toothpaste? “I see this every day,” Dr. Raza shares. “Something as simple as a toothbrush can be out of reach for families already struggling to make ends meet.”

Cultural beliefs also impact dental care. In some communities, older generations believe fluoride is harmful. “I spend a lot of time educating parents and grandparents on the benefits of fluoride and reassuring them that, in small doses, it prevents cavities and strengthens teeth,” Dr. Raza explains. Providing families with resources and accurate information is central to his mission at IWS.

### Giving Parents the Tools to Protect Their Child's Smile

“Good oral health isn't just about a nice smile—it's about a child's confidence, their ability to eat without pain, and their overall well-being,” Dr. Raza explains. “A cavity might seem small, but to a child in pain, it's everything.”

“I care about my patients’ happiness,” Dr. Raza shares. “When my kiddos are in pain, they are not happy.” He believes early prevention and good oral hygiene help build strong, healthy teeth and gums.

One of Dr. Raza’s greatest challenges is **giving parents the tools to protect their child’s smile**. He recently treated a three-year-old girl with severe cavities. Her father, unaware of the long-term impact of poor dental hygiene, admitted she consumed candy and sugary products all day. Dr. Raza took the time to educate him on the link between childhood dental habits and lifelong health. Conversations like this highlight why his work is so critical—to provide parents with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their child’s oral health, ensuring they understand its vital role in a child’s long-term well-being.

Dr. Raza also sees firsthand how mental health and dental care are connected. He recalls treating a 16-year-old boy struggling with depression and anxiety who had gone months without brushing

his teeth. Recognizing the signs of emotional distress, Dr. Raza collaborated with the patient’s pediatrician through IWS Family Health’s integrated healthcare model. He also explained how antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications in some cases contribute to dry mouth, making patients more susceptible to cavities. This type of collaboration between medical and dental providers happens daily at IWS, ensuring holistic care for every patient.

To further support young patients, IWS has implemented strategies to ease dental anxiety. Dr. Raza and the dental team provide fidget toys, weighted blankets, soothing music, and televisions playing children’s favorite shows. These small but impactful accommodations create a calming environment, making dental visits a more positive experience.

“I tell parents all the time—prevention is the most powerful tool we have. A little education today can save a child from a lifetime of dental issues,” Dr. Raza emphasizes.

## Every Smile Matters: Transforming Lives Through Compassionate Care

Dr. Raza is deeply grateful for the generosity of donors who make compassionate dental care possible. Thanks to your support, IWS Family Health has state-of-the-art chairs designed for maximum patient comfort. Your generosity also provides nitrous gas, a game-changer for anxious patients who might otherwise avoid treatment.

“Imagine being a child with severe tooth pain, too scared to sit in the dentist’s chair, knowing nothing but fear and discomfort. Now, imagine that same child feeling at ease, cradled by a comfortable chair, distracted by their favorite cartoon, and comforted by a gentle provider who has the tools to ease their fears. This is what our donors’ generosity makes possible.”

One of Dr. Raza’s most heartwarming experiences was witnessing the transformation of a young patient with extreme dental anxiety. Through multiple visits, he used gentle techniques and clear communication to help her feel safe. After her final visit, she gave him a hug—

proof that compassionate, patient-centered care can change a child’s life.

“When you give to IWS Family Health, you’re not just providing a toothbrush or a dental chair—you’re giving a child the chance to eat, speak, and smile without pain,” Dr. Raza shares. “That’s life-changing.”

## Give the Gift of a Healthy Smile

**Your generosity ensures that every child has access to essential dental care.** A toothbrush, a visit to the dentist, and the ability to eat without pain can make a world of difference for a child in need. With your support, we can provide compassionate care, education, and the resources necessary to build healthier futures.

Make a gift today and help bring healthy smiles to children in need. A small act of kindness can transform a child’s life—one smile at a time.





## Speech Therapy

### A MOTHER'S LOVE: GIVING EVERY CHILD A VOICE

**Every mother dreams of hearing her child say “Mama.” But what if those words never come?**

When a parent brings this concern to their IWS pediatrician, it is taken seriously. An early assessment is arranged, ensuring no time is lost in getting a child the help they need. For one mother, that fear became a reality when her daughter, at 18 months, had only two words in her vocabulary and primarily communicated by blowing bubbles. She struggled to focus, becoming frustrated when she couldn't express her

“

**“Speech therapy isn't just about words—it's about ensuring children have the tools to succeed in life.”**

needs. Family and friends reassured her that children develop at their own pace, but she trusted her instincts. She turned to her IWS Family Health pediatrician, where her concerns were heard and addressed immediately.

### The Power of Early Diagnosis

**According to the Early Intervention Program of Illinois, children who receive high-quality early intervention services are 25% more likely to graduate from high school, four times more likely to complete a bachelor's degree or higher, and earn up to 25% more in wages as adults.**

At IWS Family Health, pediatric providers identify developmental delays early and refer children to speech therapy. Early intervention is critical to ensuring children receive support before missing key milestones. With a six-month to one-year wait for bilingual speech therapy in Chicago, many children face critical delays. At IWS, families receive timely care, ensuring children don't fall further behind.

### Speech Therapy Changes Lives

Since 2015, IWS Family Health patients have received speech therapy at our healthcare home at 3600 West Fullerton, thanks to generous donors who believe in early childhood assessment and rapid therapy.

**Speech therapy requires months or years of consistent, family-centered treatment to help children communicate and connect.** Many families struggle to access care. Insurance covers only a fraction of therapy costs, and IWS Family Health bridges this gap, making high-quality speech therapy accessible to all.

“Early Intervention is crucial as the brain develops quickly between birth to three and those early intervention services can change a child's developmental path.”– Jasmine Anguiano, MS, CCC-SLP, Speech Therapist at IWS Family Health.

Jasmine is passionate about family-centered care, recognizing that when parents and caregivers are involved, children thrive.

“At IWS, we believe in involving the entire family in therapy. When parents, siblings, and even grandparents engage, children progress faster. Parents and family are a child’s first teachers. Success happens when a child can communicate, and their family understands and responds.”

Elise O’Brien, MS, CCC-SLP, with over 30 years of experience, highlights accessibility challenges. “In some Chicago ZIP codes, the wait time for early testing and intervention is 12 to 18 months. That delay makes speech and language difficulties much harder to address later.”

### **Moments That Matter**

For one mother, the wait to hear ‘Mama’ has been filled with hope and patience. Her daughter, now four, continues to make strides in speech therapy at IWS Family Health. Though the word she longs for has not yet come, each session moves her daughter closer to finding her voice. With continued therapy and support, that day will arrive—and when it does, it will be nothing short of transformative for their family.

This is why early intervention matters. IWS Family Health exists to ensure children find their voices and parents experience the moments they dream of.

Elise recalls a story that has stayed with her throughout her career. “I had a young patient who used a wheelchair and had been in therapy for a year. His bright mind and curiosity were trapped behind silence, leaving him frustrated and isolated. His mother, who never missed a session, carried the weight of his silence, longing for the day he could express himself.

Through months of therapy, he learned to use an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device, a specialized communication tool that helps individuals who struggle with verbal speech express themselves through symbols, text, or voice output. One afternoon, after weeks of practice, he turned to his mother and, for the first time, said, ‘I love you’ using his AAC device. The room fell silent. Overcome with emotion, she covered her mouth, then burst into tears. ‘I have waited his whole life to hear those words,’

she said, holding him close. Every child deserves a voice, and every parent deserves to hear it. IWS Family Health is here to make that possible.”

### The Cost of Waiting

**Without early intervention, children with speech delays struggle academically and socially, leading to limited career opportunities and economic instability.**

Children who cannot communicate effectively are at greater risk of abuse and exploitation, as they may struggle to express danger or seek help. Children and adults with speech and language delays face heightened risks of being unable to advocate for themselves in unsafe situations, increasing their vulnerability to domestic violence and harm.

“Speech therapy isn’t just about words—it’s about ensuring children have the tools to succeed in life. We’re not just teaching kids how to communicate; we’re helping them build relationships, succeed in school, and gain independence.” – Elise O’Brien

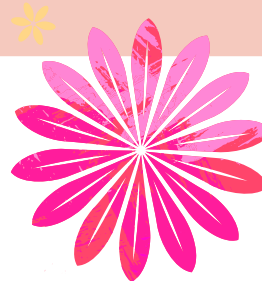
### Give the Gift of Speech This Mother’s Day

This Mother’s Day, you have the power to change a child’s life. Your donation ensures that IWS Family Health can continue providing early assessments, comprehensive speech therapy, and caregiver education.

**Honor a mother’s love by giving the gift of speech.** Your support helps IWS Family Health provide early assessments and rapid response therapy programs, ensuring no child is left without a voice.



**Give today. Because every child deserves to say “Mama.”**



**Thank you for being part of our mission.  
We hope these stories show you the difference  
your generosity makes.**



**IWS FAMILY HEALTH**

3600 West Fullerton Avenue • Chicago, Illinois 60647  
(773) 782-2800 • [IWSFamilyHealth.org](http://IWSFamilyHealth.org)