



Executive Director of Early Learning
Elwyn
Elwyn, PA

THE SEARCH

Elwyn, a leading non-profit organization supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs, seeks a dynamic, strategic, and experienced leader to serve as its next Executive Director of Early Learning (ED or executive director), one of the children's services provided by the organization. Supported by a dedicated and experienced leadership team, the executive director will oversee all business operations of the Preschool Early Intervention (EI) program in the cities of Philadelphia and Chester. The ED will work alongside children and families, staff, city leadership, and external partners to sustain and build upon Elwyn's distinguished role in early intervention and leadership in the field.

Since its founding in 1852, Elwyn has built upon its legacy as one of the country's oldest organizations serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by focusing on three major service areas: Adult Behavioral Health, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Services, and Children's Services. The organization's many layers of care are unified by a common commitment to serving the community with support that transforms lives.

The Early Learning Services (ELS) program at Elwyn supports eligible young children with developmental delays and disabilities by providing quality preschool early intervention services that promote long-term positive outcomes. The executive director will implement a strategic vision, structure, and organization to ensure eligible children in the cities of Philadelphia and Chester receive early intervention services in a timely manner. Building on years of experience or understanding of city systems, they will ensure program compliance, efficient and strategic data management, and continuous improvement in accordance with Elwyn's vision, mission, and values.

Elwyn has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

HISTORY

For over 170 years, Elwyn has provided opportunities and services for children with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Founded by Dr. Alfred Elwyn, the “Pennsylvania Training School” was one of the first institutions of its kind. Originally founded with private funding, the organization later received an allocation of funds from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, starting in 1854. Established during a time of social progress for understanding and educating individuals with intellectual disabilities, Elwyn created opportunities where there once were none. In 1857, the Pennsylvania legislature approved a grant for the construction of a new, larger school, which was built on a 300-acre farm near Media, PA. That site remains the home of Elwyn’s main campus.

Over the course of its growth, Elwyn has continued to be a national leader and founded what is known today as the [American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#) (AAIDD). In the 1960s, Elwyn shifted toward a more community-oriented focus, leading the movement to integrate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities into more meaningful roles in society. The 1970s represented a period of growth, with Elwyn opening chapters in Delaware and California. In 1998, the organization began contracting with the Philadelphia Public Schools to provide early intervention services and expanded programs in Pennsylvania. Today, Elwyn employs nearly 6,000 people and serves almost 20,000 individuals across the country.

ELWYN TODAY

Elwyn is a leader in education, treatment, and support services for children and adults with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and behavioral health challenges. Elwyn honors its history as the country’s oldest human services non-profit of its kind by moving forward with a shared vision for the future. The [2021-2024 strategic plan](#) identifies four key priorities: Grow and Develop Core Services, Engage Members of Elwyn’s Service Triangle, Invest in Technology and Innovation, and Modernize Real Estate.

Elwyn defines its Service Triangle as the individuals served, their families, and the staff of the organization. Prioritizing employee engagement and professional development, Elwyn invests in its employees and aspires to be an organization with quality leadership. To provide the highest quality services, Elwyn is committed to investing in modern technology and using innovative approaches to solving complex problems.

Elwyn is organized with three major service areas: Adult Behavioral Health, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Services, and Children’s Services. Under each of these service areas, Elwyn provides programs at multiple locations that address the diverse needs of clientele and their families at all stages of life.

- [Adult Behavioral Health](#) provides residential services, crisis support services, outpatient mental health and recovery, and family support programs.
- [Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Services](#) is a comprehensive suite of residential, work and day programs that support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities with opportunities for meaningful participation in daily life.
- Children's Services encompasses [Children's Behavioral Health](#), [Early Learning Services](#), and [Education Services](#). The education division includes the Davidson School, Opportunities School, and the Extended Child Care Program (Before and After School).

ABOUT EARLY LEARNING AT ELWYN

Elwyn Early Learning Services provides Preschool Early Intervention (EI) and Preschool Special Education services for approximately 10,000 children annually. To increase access, Pennsylvania offers early intervention support and services at no cost if a child is found eligible. As the main provider in Philadelphia and Chester, Elwyn's ELS program offers developmental evaluations to determine eligibility, educational planning, and services to support eligible children to participate in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible. This is accomplished through facilitating referrals to service personnel and providers and individualized planning that considers the values, culture, and priorities of the child and family.

Quality intervention services can minimize the delays and challenges some young learners experience while building family and immediate community capacity to support the child long-term. Elwyn intentionally structures Early Intervention services to emphasize collaboration among families, EI service providers, and early learning professionals involved with the child.

FINANCES

Elwyn is a financially healthy organization that brings approximately \$400 million in annual revenue. The Early Learning vertical is an \$80 million operation, but the increased demand for EI services, and the rising costs of doing business in the cities of Philadelphia and Chester, are likely to elevate it to over \$100 million annually.

LEADERSHIP

Charles S. McLister, MA, MBA

In April 2017, Charles "Chuck" S. McLister, was appointed as the ninth leader of Elwyn. As the president, CEO, and ex-officio board member, Chuck is responsible for establishing the organization's strategic direction, working with the firm's trustees to provide resources, clarity of purpose, and responsive oversight of the organization's overall performance. Within his first year of service, Chuck established Elwyn's permanent Core Values, created a new strategic vision statement, recruited and installed a high-performing executive team, and collaboratively developed a five-year strategic plan. As part of this

process, Chuck introduced a philosophy that prioritizes the most important members of the organization, and which underpins all of the agency's strategic activities. He holds an MA degree in Applied Psychological Research from Penn State University and an MBA, with honors, from Villanova University.

THE ROLE

The executive director of early learning will be a vital systems leader who will strengthen and shape early learning services at Elwyn. Reporting directly to the vice president of children's services, the ED will listen intently to the needs of children and families and act to catalyze the organizational change necessary to better serve the Philadelphia and Chester communities. The ED will be an action-oriented, empathetic, and savvy business leader who is confident communicating with other prominent figures in the field and understands the importance of seeking opportunities for growth. By strategically cultivating stakeholder relationships and bolstering strategic partnerships, the ED will maximize and leverage key relationships with the intent to serve more children and meet the needs of families. Elwyn's relationship with both the cities of Philadelphia and Chester is critically important, and the ED will strive to be present and visible externally while remaining invested in the support and development of their staff.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Building upon the strong foundation that already exists, the executive director of early learning will address the following challenges and use them as opportunities to advance early learning services at Elwyn:

Strategically cultivate relationships with external constituencies

As the face of Elwyn Early Intervention, the executive director is responsible for interfacing and partnering with local and state stakeholders. The executive director will develop strong relationships and increase Elwyn's visibility within the city system. As the leading provider of early intervention services in Philadelphia and Chester, it is critical for Elwyn to forge and maintain relationships across the city and to advocate on behalf of children, families, and service professionals. The executive director will be a bold leader with knowledge of special education regulatory requirements and experience in early intervention services. To succeed in this role, the new ED will be determined to develop key partnerships with Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRC), Educational Law Center (ELC), Parent Education Advocacy and Leadership (PEAL) Center, Community Behavioral Health (CBH), and school districts. As an engaged member of the community, the new leader will build a reputation as a change agent who can deliver on promises and remain decisive in the face of challenges.

Innovate on internal systems to maximize efficiency

The executive director will contribute their expertise and experience in continuous improvement, strategy optimization, and analysis to support this fundamentally important work. In collaboration with colleagues

and the technology team, the executive director will develop and execute a strategic plan for updating internal systems, such as identifying the most valuable key performance indicators, determining the layout for service delivery dashboards, and defining best practices to report on progress. As an expert in data analysis and to lead by example, the executive director will utilize important metrics to drive improvement, track future projections, and keep the early learning team informed on outcome delivery.

Stabilization of the provider network will be an area of particular importance for the executive director. By methodically and intentionally expanding the range of providers who deliver services to Elwyn's early learners, the program will increase the capacity of service delivery and better meet a diverse range of needs. To promote efficiency and sustainable growth, the executive director will possess a tireless motivation to innovate and improve the systems and structures in place at Elwyn.

Understand and advance the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion

The next executive director will build upon Elwyn's history of addressing systemic issues of inequity that affect the disability community and fostering an inclusive space for students whose intersectional identities are at the center of their daily interactions in the world. In partnership with the leadership team, the executive director will prioritize recruiting and retaining professionals at all levels of the organization who are representative of the racial, socio-economic, and ability diversity of those it serves.

Philadelphia is one of the most diverse cities in the United States and is currently facing a large equity gap, which was heightened by the challenges of the pandemic. As a champion of increasing access to quality, community-based intervention, the next executive director will follow Elwyn's model of radical acceptance and compassion for the children and families they serve while acknowledging the complexities of an urban environment.

Lead, develop, and support a team

The executive director is a compelling leader with an enduring drive for community impact. As the decision maker and thought leader for Elwyn's Early Learning Services division, they will implement structural changes in a large organization that serves over 10,000 children annually. To be successful, the executive director will promote and maintain the organization's commitment to accountability with a steadfast dedication to closing the loop on new implementations. Under their leadership, Elwyn will hire two senior directors to assist in managing internal systems. The executive director and their direct reports will be part of a dynamic team that strategically applies information from the Quality Improvement team and intentionally embeds it within the new systems they've established. By creating a culture of accountability and embodying a growth mindset, the next executive director will encourage their team to constantly seek improvement and progress.

Bring a strong business acumen to drive community impact

Drawing upon a keen business sense and experience with budget management, the executive director will bring confidence and composure to difficult conversations both internally and externally. In managing the operational priorities of early learning, the executive director will evaluate data to understand the level of funding required for program success and strategically present the status of funding to key stakeholders and the Elwyn executive team. The next leader's emphasis on transparency and willingness to address problems head-on will be critical in community conversations. Despite being new to the role, the executive director must take ownership of past challenges, identify the problem at hand, build a calculated solution, and deliver quality results.

QUALIFICATIONS

The search committee seeks candidates with the following experiences, characteristics, and abilities, understanding that no single candidate will have all of the ideal qualifications:

- Ten (10) years of demonstrated experience managing programs and systems, leading change, and effectively leading, coaching, and mentoring directors, professionals, and direct-line staff to deliver targeted goals and initiatives and deliver on expected outcomes;
- Demonstrated experience with increasing authority and accountability in developing, managing, evaluating, and implementing change and leading early intervention programs;
- Working knowledge of special education funding 611, 619, 612, special education law (IDEA) for early learning services, School Based ACCESS Program, and other related funding sources;
- Deep knowledge of preschool early intervention or preschool special education, and state and federal regulations as they relate to preschool early intervention or preschool special education;
- Ability to generate, interpret, and analyze complex reports and apply discoveries to inform and improve program operations;
- Applied knowledge of evidence-based practices and trends within preschool early intervention and early childhood education;
- Ability to build strong, productive, and collaborative relationships and coalitions with all levels inside and outside the organization from entry-level through senior leadership with external partners, including parents and other key external stakeholders;
- Experience managing a team of direct reports and recruiting, growing, and retaining talented professionals with a range of experience and tenure;
- Strong attention to detail, time management, and organization skills to manage multi-level service delivery systems;
- Proven track record of effective program management with the delivery of targeted goals;
- Excellent judgement with the ability to independently solve problems and make decisions with little or no need for direct supervision;
- Experience working in a fast-paced environment with an ability to anticipate future needed changes or identify problem areas and take effective actions;
- Unimpeachable integrity, ethics, high standards of excellence, and collaborative orientation;

- Attention to and care for issues of diversity, community, and access;
- A combination of business savvy and empathetic leadership, a strong commitment to the importance of this work and the impact it has on families and children;
- A sense of humor;
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent in Education, Child Development, Social Work, or similar field; Master's degree in Early Childhood and/or Special education preferred;
- PDE Teaching Certification in Early Childhood or in Special Education preferred.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/elwyn/executive-director-early-learning>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Phillip Petree, Partner
Emily Willis, Associate

Elwyn is an Equal Opportunity Employer. *Elwyn does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, ancestry, pregnancy status, medical condition, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, sexual orientation or identity, age, national origin, citizenship, handicap status, marital or family status, mental or physical disability, perceived disability, military or veteran status, political activities or affiliations, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law, ordinance, or regulation.*