



Energy Efficiency in Action

El Hogar del Niño, Pilsen, Chicago, IL

In the early 1970's, while households in the predominately Latino neighborhoods of Pilsen and Little Village became more dual-income, local families struggled to find childcare. A devoted group of parents were inspired to establish the first bilingual and affordable childcare center in the area, El Hogar del Niño. More than forty years later, El Hogar is now an accredited childcare provider that serves more than 300 children every year.

Childcare Center Overview

- El Hogar del Niño acquired buildings in 1995 and 2001 that were merged as the center has grown.
- Heating system: combination of forced air furnaces, hot water boilers, roof top units, and individual electric heaters.
- Enrollment: El Hogar del Niño serves more than 300 children annually in a variety of programs including family case management, early childhood education and school age programming, center-based, home-based, and home visiting models, and in-person counseling.



Short-term Energy Efficiency Improvements

- Clean and tune hot water boilers
- Disconnect electric space heaters
- Boiler labeling and improved operations
- Lighting retrofit of exit signs, indoor and outdoor lights
- Pipe insulation
- Install low-flow faucet aerators and pre-sprayers

Long-term improvements:

- Install new high-efficiency furnace and boiler
- Rezone heating systems

Short-term Costs and Resources Leveraged

- Total project cost: \$5,315
- Total out-of-pocket cost: \$1,823
- Total grants and incentives: \$3,492
- Energy Payback Period before incentives: 1 year, 9 months
- Energy Payback Period after incentives: 7 months
- Water Payback Period: immediate

Short-term Projected Savings

- Annual Electricity Savings: 30,372 kWh
- Annual Natural Gas Savings: 130 therms
- Annual Water Savings: 407,796 gallons
- Total Annual Utility Cost Savings: \$6,507

Project timeline





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Partnership Overview

Today, like many longstanding center providers, El Hogar del Niño has added to its building space to accommodate a growing demand for childcare. But, this growth has also contributed to increased energy and water demands and a very complex heating system for the building. So, El Hogar worked with Elevate Energy to identify cost-effective energy and water efficiency improvements that will improve their facility, lower utility costs, and increase the comfort, health, and safety for the families and children they serve.

To achieve this, Elevate Energy first conducted a building assessment, analyzing electricity, natural gas, and water use, including an in-depth furnace test of El Hogar's complex heating system. Elevate Energy identified several improvements that will reduce El Hogar's gas, electricity, and water costs, and is working closely with El Hogar to develop a plan that works within their budget and timeframe. To help offset some of the initial costs of the recommended improvements, Elevate Energy helped El Hogar apply for utility incentives and a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. (An application that was submitted just two hours after the project was first identified!)

In addition, Elevate Energy identified several immediate measures El Hogar can implement now, while continuing to incorporate energy efficiency into their long-term capital plans. For example, during the winter, pipes in El Hogar's back stairwell often froze, and many of the staff used space heaters to stay warm. Elevate Energy identified low-cost operations and maintenance measures for the boiler system that will allow El Hogar to operate more effectively and address these issues. These included adding insulation to the pipes and a clean-and-tune for the boiler and radiators. These immediate improvements not only save on natural gas, but also drastically cut electricity use by disconnecting the now-obsolete space heaters, and preventing the pipes from freezing.

These initial and future building improvements will cut El Hogar del Niño's operating costs and make the childcare center more comfortable, safer, and easier to manage. Minimizing utility costs through efficiency improvements allows El Hogar to focus more resources on their mission of preparing children and their families for a more successful future in a nurturing, culturally sensitive learning environment.



From the Organization

“This fits right in with our mission – to operate as efficiently as possible in order to direct more resources toward the kids. Elevate Energy's expertise and commitment has helped us pinpoint inefficiencies and take advantage of opportunities to cut costs.

—**Mario Perez, Executive Director**

Eligibility

Nonprofit childcare centers in Northern Illinois (ComEd territory) that own the building or pay their own utility bills.

Apply today

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