



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CRYSTAL STAIRS CLOSING THE NICKERSON GARDENS SAGE CHILDREN'S CENTER AFTER 20 YEARS OF HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE SERVICES**

**LOS ANGELES, Calif.** (March 26, 2014) – After 20 years of providing high-quality child care services, Crystal Stairs will close the Nickerson Gardens SAGE Children's Center, effective June 6, 2014.

The SAGE Center has been an important flagship project of Crystal Stairs, and has become a trusted community partner as an extension of the Crystal Stairs agency within the Watts community. While Crystal Stairs has delivered high-quality preschool curriculum and school age child care services for children attending local schools in the Watts community, the program has faced significant operating deficits for nearly 15 years.

Although there have been discussions over the years to close the SAGE Center, our board of directors and leadership team have strategized to make sure that Crystal Stairs could continue to provide high-quality child care services for children residing in the Nickerson Gardens public housing development and surrounding neighborhoods. Over the years, Crystal Stairs has invested funds beyond state contract dollars and has focused private fundraising efforts to provide supplementary funding to operate the SAGE Center. However, the current state of the buildings and other infrastructure challenges compromise the future safety of our children and our employees. The anticipated costs in the coming year are unaffordable. Given the tremendous financial investment that would be needed and the fact that our base funding has reduced significantly over the last few years, Crystal Stairs has no other choice than to close the doors of the Nickerson Gardens SAGE Children's Center.

"While this has been a difficult decision, we have great pride in the success of SAGE – our children, families and talented staff," said Jackie B. Majors, CEO. "We appreciate the amazing staff, families and community stakeholders during this 20 year journey who have been our partners in providing high-quality child care services."

With the recent announcements regarding the changes at Head Start sites in the Nickerson Gardens and the Watts community, Crystal Stairs realizes the impact on families and efforts are underway to ensure that families are transitioned to other quality programs in the local community. The coincidental timing of these announcements is unfortunate, but this has no connection with Crystal Stairs operations. The decision to close the Nickerson Gardens SAGE Children's Center has been a very thoughtful and exhaustive process in which the board and management have considered the financial implications, infrastructure challenges and growing safety concerns.

Crystal Stairs has a deep history of service and commitment to Nickerson Gardens and the surrounding communities of Compton and South Los Angeles as evidenced by our operation of eight Head Start sites, and two state preschool programs, serving more

than 800 children annually. Our current Head Start service area is located south of Imperial Highway. Crystal Stairs remains committed and welcomes opportunities to return to Nickerson Gardens in the future as we have been a fixture in the community for years.

#### About Crystal Stairs

Crystal Stairs is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit child care and development organization whose mission is to improve the lives of families through child care services, research and advocacy. Guided by our mission and values, our purpose is to promote empowerment and self-sufficiency, helping families ascend the metaphoric staircase of life. For more information on Crystal Stairs, please visit [www.crystalstairs.org](http://www.crystalstairs.org).

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