CHAT

Communication Health,
Advocacy & Therapy

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

POSITION GUIDE • NOVEMBER 2026
SEARCH FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



310-D S. Main Street | Lombard, IL 60148 | P 630.652.0200 | F 630.652.0300 | **www.chatwithus.org**

CHAT | Communication Health, Advocacy & Therapy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. OVERVIEW
2. ABOUT CHAT
3. THE OPPORTUNITY
4. POSITION SUMMARY
5. CANDIDATE PROFILE
6. COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS / HOW TO APPLY

310-D S. Main Street | Lombard, IL 60148 | P 630.652.0200 | F 630.652.0300 | **www.chatwithus.org**



OVERVIEW

POSITION:
Executive Director

REPORTS TO:
Board of Directors

LOCATION:
Lombard, Illinois / Chicagoland
flexible hybrid

MISSION

For 47 years, CHAT (formerly known as Center for Speech & Language Disorders, or CSLD) has given children in need the gift of communication. Focused on inclusion and centered in social justice, CHAT provides life-changing speech therapy to individuals with few—if any—other options. Through our clinic, in schools, Early Intervention, and in partnership with community nonprofits, we tailor services specifically to a person's needs and build on their strengths.

We approach our work with deep cultural humility and understand the need for systemic change in healthcare and education so that the people we serve can be more sustainably supported. We strive for more communication justice by serving under-resourced and neurodivergent individuals whose communication disorders and differences contribute to their inequitable treatment, and by working to remove structural barriers to access. We accept Medicaid while many others don't and bring therapeutic services and programming into communities where they are needed.

CHAT exists to include and empower children whose voices have not been heard, helping them access a better future.

VALUES



PASSIONATE ADVOCACY

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." - Desmond Tutu

United by our passion for inclusion, CHAT advocates for systemic change in healthcare and education so that our communities can be more sustainably supported. We create communication justice by serving underresourced children whose disorders and differences contribute to their inequitable treatment, and by working to remove structural barriers to access support. We exist to support children with few—if any—other options.

COLLABORATIVE

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." - Helen Keller

Collaboration fuels our impact. We partner with families, caregivers, community partner nonprofits, agencies, lawyers, teachers, school administrators, and other related service providers to maximize supports for the children we serve. We listen actively and embrace diversity of thought and experience, because by working together we make more of a difference.

COMPASSIONATE

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." – Maya Angelou

We lead with compassion, leaning into difficult conversations, suspending preconceived perceptions, and extending grace. When serving others, we acknowledge our own privilege and continuously work to improve our cultural humility. We embrace opportunities for unlearning to better support the diverse communities we serve. We uplift and amplify underrepresented voices, listening, and learning with empathy.

VALUES



ADAPTIVE

"Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again." - Nelson Mandela

We recognize situations beyond our control, redirecting our attention and efforts towards things we can change. When faced with systemic and internal challenges, we face them head on with a growth mindset. Setbacks do not shake our resolve but help us to teach resilience and self-advocacy. We are solution-oriented and flexible, committed to overcoming challenges, not dwelling on problems. We are intentional about the impact we have on the children we serve and strive to create an inspiring place of belonging.

EMPOWERING

"Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself." – Harvey Fierstein

We empower children by helping them to harness their strengths and interests to achieve their goals. We view challenges as opportunities, affirm and embrace differences, and create connections that facilitate results. We seek opportunities to support as many underserved youth as possible, encouraging and teaching self-advocacy as essential to every therapy and service. We work to empower families, caregivers, and communities with advocacy tools to holistically support the children we serve.

ABOUT CHAT



For nearly five decades, CHAT has worked to ensure that children with speech and language needs have access to the services and support they deserve, regardless of financial circumstances or ability to navigate complex systems.

Founded in 1979 as the Center for Speech & Language Disorders by speech-language pathologist Phyllis Kupperman, the organization began with a commitment to provide services to children who otherwise might go without them. That commitment remains at the center of CHAT's mission today.

Rebranded as CHAT in 2019, the organization has evolved from a clinic-based service provider into a multifaceted nonprofit serving children and families throughout Chicagoland. CHAT combines direct clinical services, educational partnerships, community-based programming, and advocacy to address both individual communication needs and systemic barriers to equitable access.

CHAT's work is rooted in communication justice: the belief that communication is a human right and that everyone deserves meaningful opportunities to express themselves, connect with others, and participate fully in their communities.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

CLINIC-BASED SERVICES:
Individualized speech-language therapy, evaluations, and specialized programming offered at CHAT's Lombard clinic and through teletherapy. Services address language, speech sound production, literacy, social communication, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), hyperlexia, executive functioning, and more.

EARLY INTERVENTION:
Family-centered speech-language services for children under age three through Illinois' state-run Early Intervention program. Services are provided in natural

environments, including homes and daycare settings, throughout the Chicagoland area.



SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS:
Speech-language services provided through partnerships with charter schools and special education cooperatives. CHAT contracts with schools to deliver services primarily on-site, with one teletherapy partnership. School-based services represent one of CHAT's largest service areas.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:
CHAT is committed to bringing speech-language services to the families and communities who need them most. Through collaborations with nonprofits, childcare centers, universities, and other community organizations, CHAT expands access to services and helps reach families who may otherwise face barriers to care.

SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS:
A variety of targeted group classes and educational offerings designed to address specific communication and learning needs, including literacy, executive functioning, early language development, and caregiver education.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND ADVOCACY:
CHAT is committed to expanding access to care by accepting Medicaid and all regional Medicaid managed care plans, providing financial assistance to uninsured and underinsured families, and advocating to reduce barriers to services within healthcare, education, and public funding systems.

TRAININGS:
CHAT is expanding its professional development offerings as a newly approved ASHA Continuing Education Provider, offering speech-language pathologists opportunities to earn continuing education credits. CHAT also provides trainings for educators, legal professionals, corporate organizations, and other community partners to promote communication justice, increase awareness of communication-related barriers, and highlight the broader impact of communication access and inclusion.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

More than 1,000 children served annually

More than $600K in scholarships provided since 2000

Over 2,000 scholarship sessions offered over the past year

More than 76% of children served through our clinic and community partners on Medicaid or underinsured

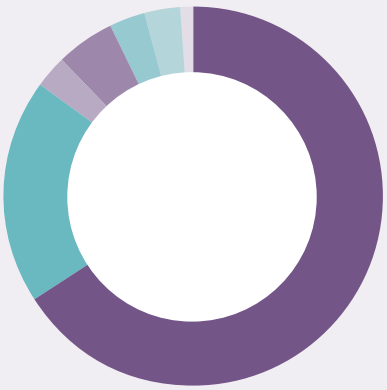
30 schools and eight preschools served in 2025

Over $250K in 2025 fundraising with 10% growth anticipated in 2026

CHAT currently operates with an approximately $2.2 million annual budget, a team of approximately 28 professionals, and a ten-member Board of Directors. Its experienced clinical and operational leadership supports a diverse portfolio of programs and partnerships.

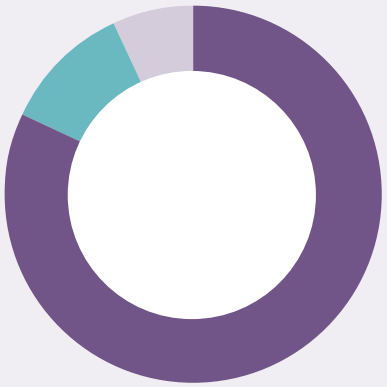
CHAT's financial model is supported primarily by revenue from school partnerships and clinical services, complemented by fundraising, grants, and community support. The 2025 financial overview below illustrates the organization's revenue sources and its commitment to directing resources toward programs and services.

CHAT BY THE NUMBERS



REVENUE

- Educational Programs: 66%
- Clinical Patient Revenue: 19%
- Community Partnerships: 3%
- Special Events: 5%
- Grants: 3%
- Individual & Corporate: 3%
- Other: 1%



EXPENSES

- Programs: 83%
- Administrative: 10%
- Fundraising: 7%

A COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE

CHAT is committed to strengthening existing services while identifying new ways to reach underserved populations, expand community partnerships, and build the financial and organizational capacity needed to sustain its mission.

THE OPPORTUNITY



CHAT enters its next chapter with a strong organizational foundation, experienced clinical and operational leadership, and meaningful opportunities to expand its impact, visibility, and long-term sustainability.

Over the past decade, CHAT has strengthened operations, expanded partnerships, diversified programs, and built infrastructure to serve more children and families. With an established team overseeing clinical services, people leadership, and daily operations, the next Executive Director will be well-positioned to focus primarily on external relationships and communication, philanthropic development, and strategic planning.

A central opportunity is building a more comprehensive and sustainable fundraising program. CHAT has relationships with foundations, individual donors, corporate supporters, and community partners, along with a successful signature annual fundraising event. The next Executive Director will cultivate major donors, expand corporate partnerships, strengthen individual giving, lead CHAT's annual appeal, and serve as an enthusiastic leader of the annual Speak Easy Gala. Working with the Board and staff, this leader will advance donor engagement, stewardship, and long-term philanthropic growth.

CHAT also has an opportunity to increase its visibility throughout Chicagoland. While longstanding and respected among families, schools, and professional partners, the organization's work could be more widely known. The Executive Director will strengthen its public profile, cultivate civic and business relationships, and position CHAT as a recognized voice for communication justice. This will include external communication growth through multiple channels, including social media strategies.

Strategic partnerships will remain a growth avenue. CHAT brings specialized services into schools, early childhood programs, and community nonprofit

settings. Its expanding continuing education platform offers opportunities to share expertise, deepen partnerships, and explore new revenue streams.
At the same time, CHAT operates in a challenging healthcare and workforce environment. Competition for qualified speech-language pathologists is significant, while reimbursement rates and changing insurance requirements create financial pressures. CHAT must balance accessible care with competitive compensation, investment in staff, and financial stability. The next Executive Director will approach these realities pragmatically and creatively, recognizing that philanthropy and strategic revenue development are essential to protecting the mission.

CHAT's clinicians and staff are the foundation of its impact. The incoming leader will work with an established senior team to maintain a cohesive, supportive culture, strengthen retention, invest in professional development, and ensure that staff continue to feel valued and connected to the mission.

The Executive Director will also partner with the ten-member Board to strengthen governance, engagement, and philanthropic leadership, while supporting recruitment of new Board members who bring diverse perspectives, relationships, and expertise.

As CHAT transitions from its longtime leader, the organization seeks an Executive Director who respects its history, builds trust, and brings fresh energy and perspective to its future. The outgoing leader has spent more than nine years at CHAT and is deeply committed to supporting a thoughtful transition.

THE ROLE

The next Executive Director will be a mission-driven, relationship-oriented leader combining strategic vision with practical nonprofit management and enthusiasm for connecting people to a meaningful cause.

This is a compelling opportunity for a strong senior leader with experience in nonprofit management, philanthropy, community engagement, and/or related mission-driven work who is ready for broader executive responsibility. A clinical background is not required; CHAT seeks a leader whose strengths complement existing clinical and operational expertise.



POSITION SUMMARY

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director provides overall strategic and organizational leadership for CHAT, with responsibility for advancing its mission, ensuring financial sustainability, cultivating community relationships, leading fundraising efforts, and guiding long-term growth. The Executive Director works collaboratively with an experienced senior leadership team that oversees clinical service delivery, supports human resources, manages day-to-day operations and financial management, and leads grant writing efforts. This established leadership structure allows the Executive Director to focus on organizational strategy, relationship building, fundraising, and expanding CHAT's impact while ensuring strong oversight and coordination across all areas of the organization.

AMBASSADORSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Serve as a passionate, visible ambassador for CHAT's mission and communication justice.
- Build relationships with philanthropic, corporate, educational, civic, and community partners throughout Chicagoland.
- Increase visibility, expand professional networks, and attract supporters.
- Represent CHAT at events, meetings, and fundraising activities; serve as the primary external spokesperson.

MISSION AND STRATEGY

- Partner with the Board and senior leaders to establish and advance strategic vision.
- Identify responsible growth, revenue diversification, and community-impact opportunities.
- Support and grow partnerships and initiatives aligned with mission and organizational capacity.
- Advance communication justice through engagement and advocacy.
- Translate priorities into actionable goals and measurable outcomes.

LEADERSHIP

- Foster an empathetic, transparent, accountable, and collaborative culture rooted in CHAT's DNA Code: Collaborate with Grace, Always Compassionate, Powered by Passion, and Ever Adaptive.
- Lead, support, and develop an experienced senior leadership team, respecting individual expertise, encouraging shared decision-making, and empowering leaders to succeed and to continue to grow in their development.
- Support staff retention, professional development, employee engagement, and organizational continuity, creating an environment where team members feel valued and supported.
- Model compassionate, authentic leadership through open communication, active listening, cultural humility, and a willingness to engage in difficult conversations with grace.
- Promote a growth mindset and solution-oriented approach, embracing innovation, adaptability, and continuous improvement while keeping CHAT's mission and impact at the center of decisions.

BOARD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

- Work closely with the Board Chair and Board of Directors to advance CHAT's mission, strategic priorities, and long-term sustainability.
- Provide timely, accurate information to support effective governance and informed decision-making.
- Actively participate in Board meetings and key committees, including Finance, Marketing/Fundraising, and other committees as needed to support planning, oversight, and organizational accountability.
- Strengthen Board member engagement, accountability, and active participation.
- Support recruitment of new Board members who bring diverse expertise, perspectives, and professional networks.
- Engage Board members as ambassadors, advocates, and philanthropic partners in advancing CHAT's mission and expanding its community impact.

FUNDRAISING AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serve as CHAT's primary fundraiser and relationship builder.
- Develop strategies for individual giving, major gifts, corporate support, sponsorships, and philanthropic revenue.
- Cultivate major donors and steward existing supporters.
- Lead the annual Speak Easy Gala and other events with staff, Board members, sponsors, and volunteers.
- Lead CHAT's Annual Appeal and other donor engagement campaigns, including active writing and storytelling.

- Strengthen Board participation in cultivation and fundraising.
- Collaborate with senior leaders on grant development.

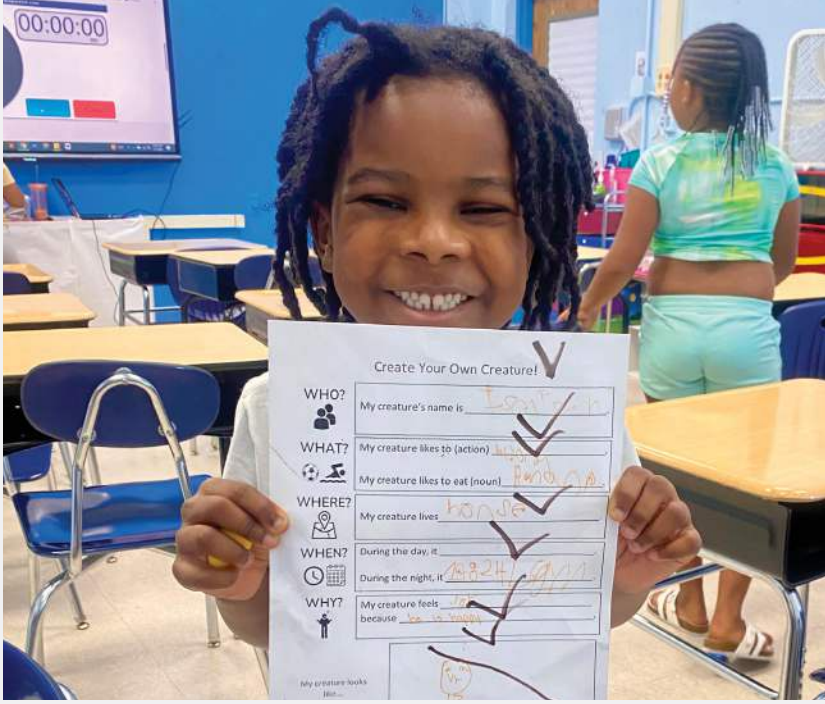
FISCAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Maintain overall accountability for financial health in partnership with senior leadership and Board.
- Oversee annual budgets, financial plans, and long-term sustainability strategy.
- Monitor performance, risks, and resource alignment.
- Diversify revenue in response to reimbursement, staffing, and funding pressures.
- Ensure responsible stewardship, financial controls, reporting, and compliance.

OPERATIONS AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Provide strategic oversight of clinical, educational, Early Intervention, and community programs through established leaders.
- Support high-quality, equitable, and culturally responsive services.
- Ensure systems, policies, and infrastructure support operations and growth.
- Evaluate new partnerships, programs, and revenue-generating initiatives.
- Maintain oversight of compliance, risk, and executive-level contractual responsibilities.

CANDIDATE PROFILE



CHAT seeks a mission-driven Executive Director to lead its next chapter of organizational development, strategic growth, and community impact.

The ideal candidate will bring a commitment to equitable access, along with leadership experience, relationship-building skills, and strategic judgment. An exceptional communicator and strong writer and storyteller, they will be both visionary and pragmatic, with the ability to see big picture and details. The next Executive Director joins an approximately $2.2 million organization with roughly 28 professionals, a ten-member Board, established clinical and operational leadership, and nearly five decades of service.

Working with the Board, senior leaders, staff, donors, and community partners, this person will strengthen philanthropic support, sustainability, and community relationships. This is an opportunity for an experienced senior leader to build upon an established foundation while bringing fresh energy, relationships, and ideas to a cohesive, mission-aligned nonprofit.

KEY PRIORITIES

- Strengthen fundraising and philanthropic development through major donors, individual giving, corporate relationships, events, and campaigns.
- Increase CHAT's visibility and network of civic, business, community, and philanthropic relationships.
- Advance strategic vision and thoughtful growth with the Board and staff.
- Support people with transparency, care, and respect for professional expertise.
- Strengthen Board engagement, development, and fundraising participation.
- Ensure financial and operational strength amid reimbursement and workforce pressures.
- Champion communication justice and equitable access.

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

The strongest candidates will be experienced nonprofit or mission-driven leaders combining strategic thinking, sound judgment, emotional intelligence, and the ability to build meaningful relationships.

The ideal candidate understands how philanthropy, community engagement, organizational culture, and financial sustainability advance a nonprofit's mission. They will be enthusiastic about donor cultivation, sponsorships, fundraising events, and serving as CHAT's leading fundraiser and public representative.

Prior Executive Director experience is not required, but some successful fundraising experience is. Candidates with significant senior leadership experience who are ready for broader executive responsibility are encouraged to apply. A clinical or speech-language pathology background is not required.

DESIRED EXPERIENCE AND ATTRIBUTES

- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.
- Significant leadership experience in nonprofit, philanthropic, education, healthcare, advocacy, or mission-driven settings.
- Demonstrated networking, relationship cultivation, and stakeholder engagement.
- Fundraising, donor cultivation, sponsorship, or related philanthropic experience.
- Enthusiasm for leading events, campaigns, and community engagement.
- Experience partnering with a nonprofit Board.
- Financial acumen, including budgeting, stewardship, and resource allocation.
- Strong communication and public speaking skills.
- Experience supporting teams and navigating change.
- Strategic problem-solving, adaptability, and commitment to equity and inclusion.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

The successful candidate will be approachable, empathetic, and collaborative, listening carefully, communicating clearly, and leading by example. They will recognize that CHAT's greatest strength is its people and respect staff expertise at every level.

The next Executive Director will provide high-level leadership while empowering clinical and operational professionals within their areas of expertise. They will

bring confidence without ego, enthusiasm tempered by practical realities, and a willingness to do the work necessary to move the organization forward.

Above all, CHAT seeks a leader who combines compassion with accountability, strategic vision with action, and commitment to communication justice with the practical leadership needed to sustain a nonprofit.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS / HOW TO APPLY

CHAT offers a competitive salary and benefits package and a flexible work environment supporting professional autonomy and community engagement.

The anticipated salary range is from $110,000 to $140,000 annually, commensurate with experience. Comprehensive benefits include health insurance, six-seven weeks of combined annual holidays and paid time, and a 401K matching program.

This is a full-time, flexible hybrid role based in Chicagoland. CHAT's clinic is in Lombard, with programs and partnerships throughout the region. The Executive Director will have flexibility in scheduling, an anticipated regular presence at the Lombard office, and in-person participation in community meetings, donor cultivation, and fundraising events throughout the area. Some evenings and weekends will be required.

CHAT anticipates welcoming its next Executive Director in late winter or early spring, 2027.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates should submit a single PDF containing a current résumé and letter of interest describing relevant leadership and fundraising experience, relationship-building strengths, and interest in CHAT's mission.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:
Email expressions of interest to careers@chatwithus.org

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
December 15, 2026

MORE INFORMATION:
chatwithus.org