

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



# EXECUTIVE LETTER

This past year, all of us had to navigate the challenges of the pandemic. Even though the world slowly reopened, the public health crisis brought to light the many long standing injustices and inequities in our health care system. It also highlighted the reality that we are all connected to one another, and that our individual health is connected to the collective health of our communities. In other words, none of us exists in a vacuum; our health choices do not impact us solely on an individual basis, but have a ripple effect across our neighborhoods, cities, and country.

This year reaffirmed what we already knew: the work EverThrive Illinois does to ensure that child-bearing people, their children, and their families have access to comprehensive health care makes us all stronger. We seek to strengthen the health of our state by strengthening the health of those most impacted by the inequities we witness daily: systemic racism, income inequality, geographic and financial barriers, and cultural stigmas.

EverThrive Illinois works every day to overcome these injustices. This past year we achieved so much by working together and placing equity at the forefront of our programs and initiatives. Among our accomplishments were:

- We led advocacy to **pass Illinois House Bill 158, which expands Medicaid coverage for home visits and doula services**, saving lives of birthing people, particularly those of Black Illinoisians, who are acutely at risk of experiencing severe complications from pregnancy and childbirth. With this focus on the maternal health crisis, we helped to advance birth equity within the State of Illinois.
- We embarked on a robust vaccine outreach and education effort prioritizing the most underserved communities in Chicago through the **COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Initiative**. This campaign targeted misinformation and solidified our voice as a trusted source for accurate information.
- Along with AllianceChicago, we co-led the **Chicago Collaborative for Maternal Health (CCMH)**, which implements community maternal health intervention that brings together health care and community, social service providers, people with lived experience, and policymakers to address maternal mortality prevention in Chicago.

These are just a few of the programmatic highlights of the past year, and they set the stage for the exciting future we have ahead of us. None of our work would be possible without supporters like you. It is thanks to our incredible community that we can look back on this past year with pride and a sense of accomplishment, while also looking forward to the work we have before us.

In partnership,



**Chi Chi Okwu, MPH**  
Executive Director



**Anna Assenmacher**  
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# YEAR IN REVIEW

This past year, EverThrive Illinois made a significant impact on health equity in Illinois and beyond. Through community engagement, capacity building, and advancing policy, we pursued critical community initiatives, stood up and sustained life-saving programs, and lived our values throughout it all. Below are some of the ways we challenged the status quo and advanced health care for those who need it the most.



## DISTRIBUTED MASKS THROUGH MASKS FOR MOMS ILLINOIS

As a founding partner of Masks for MOMS, EverThrive Illinois created communications toolkits for use by partners and facilitated paid social media advertising to find volunteers to make and donate cloth masks for distribution. Masks for Moms Illinois distributed more than **22,000 masks to pregnant and postpartum people and their families in the Chicago area**. Masks were contributed by more than 130 volunteers and distributed in partnership with 40 community health centers and hospitals.

## ADVANCED CONTRACEPTIVE JUSTICE

EverThrive Illinois convened 21 organizations and institutions in Reproductive Justice to develop quality improvement metrics to measure quality, person-centered, and non-coercive contraceptive care. We also piloted a contraceptive-informed clinic model in three school-based health centers. Additionally, **we partnered with Illinois reproductive justice organizations, such as the Chicago Abortion Fund, Illinois Caucus of Adolescent Health, and National Asian and Pacific American Women's Forum to form re.ad.just**, which facilitated a public awareness campaign to help people better understand their rights to access contraception and abortion.





## SECURED FUNDING AND PROVIDED TRAINING ON MENTAL HEALTH FOR YOUTH

Before the pandemic, one in five young Americans had a diagnosable emotional, mental, or behavioral health disorder; yet the majority of youth who need care do not receive it. School-based health centers (SBHC) are effective providers of timely, confidential, and affordable behavioral health services. EverThrive Illinois, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Public Health, provided training and technical assistance to Illinois' SBHCs for more than 20 years and serves as the leader of the Illinois School Based Health Alliance. We supported SBHCs throughout the pandemic, **securing \$3 million in additional funding so they could weather school closings, helping them to navigate changing policies, and creating guidance for reopening clinics.**



## INCREASED VACCINE CONFIDENCE

With the pandemic, confidence in public health and vaccines is more important than ever. EverThrive Illinois executed a digital campaign in the Chicago, Edwardsville, and Peoria regions to encourage birthing people, parents, and caregivers to get flu shots. We also **completed direct outreach to over 6,323 people through businesses, early voting locations, food banks, community colleges, and nonprofit organizations and hung door hangers about vaccination events and flu shots at 25,950 homes.** In addition, we strengthened community informed vaccine messaging, trained 98 social service providers to increase their capacity to talk to patients about vaccines, and distributed COVID-19 vaccine information that would reach 130 maternal and child health organizations and 120 food banks throughout Chicagoland. We also launched a digital media campaign, through which we educated parents and young people directly about the importance of keeping up to date on routine adolescent vaccinations. The digital media campaign was a huge success, seen by more than 1.6 million people.

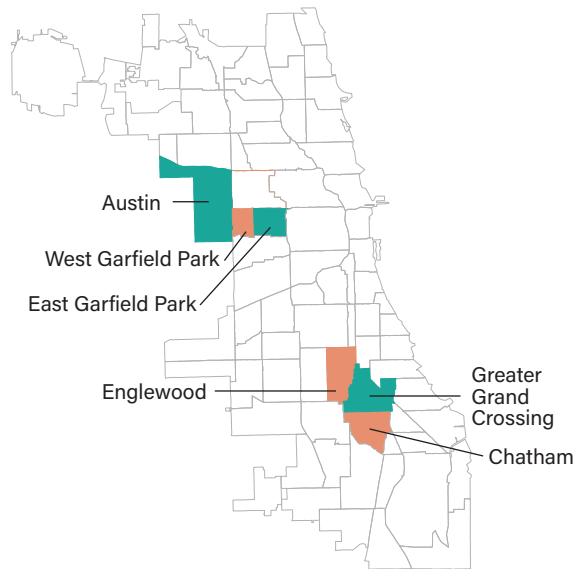
# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

## Chicago Collaborative for Maternal Health

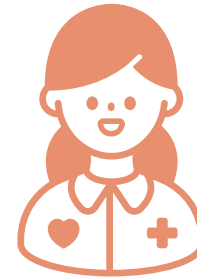
In 2018, the Illinois Department of Public Health released its first report on maternal mortality, which identified that the Chicago area had the highest rate of pregnancy-related mortality in the state. Moreover, there were significant disparities by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

As such, EverThrive Illinois, along with Alliance-Chicago, co-founded the Chicago Collaborative for Maternal Health (CCMH), which brings together health care providers, social service providers, people with lived experience, and policymakers to address maternal mortality in Chicago. Now in its second year, the Collaborative's focus has been on connecting directly with people who have personally experienced serious illness or lost family members to pregnancy-related causes and training social service providers, case managers, doulas, and others so that they are better aware of the warning signs that contribute to maternal mortality. What we learn across the project and by working across different stakeholder groups is helping us to better develop solutions to this life-threatening problem.

Through community surveys and focus groups, EverThrive Illinois identified themes in barriers to postpartum care, which included family history, lack of understanding around terms and concepts, and cultural stigma in Black communities.



6 neighborhood focus areas primarily comprising low-income, Black communities: Austin, East and West Garfield Park, Englewood, Greater Grand Crossing, and Chatham



Trained 71 home visitors, parent coaches, nurse interns, case managers, doulas and other social service providers to increase understanding of warning signs and referral options

Surveyed 330 community members to understand where they receive health information and barriers to health care access



Hired two outreach workers to engage in community outreach, building partnerships, and conducting interventions within focus neighborhoods



## Among EverThrive Illinois' goals for the next few phases of the Chicago Collaborative for Maternal Health are:

# 1

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Use the findings from surveys and focus groups to inform a health education campaign conducted by EverThrive IL



# 3

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Advocate for stronger policies around maternal morbidity and mortality, with an understanding of how the history of oppression and racism further create barriers for patients



# 2

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Bridge the gaps that currently exist in the clinical setting between service providers and patients; offering tools for both clients to understand the terminology that service providers use and how service providers relate to the language that patients use and their experiences



# LOOKING FORWARD



We recently completed a three-year strategic plan that outlines priorities to ensure that all people have access to high-quality health care. Moving forward, we seek to:

## ACHIEVE BIRTH EQUITY

We will ensure that pregnant and postpartum people in Black and Brown communities receive the high-quality care and services they need to have a safe and healthy birth.

## INCREASE VACCINE CONFIDENCE

We will provide community-centered education to address the root causes of vaccine reluctance, including systemic racism within the health care system that breeds mistrust.

## ADVANCE CONTRACEPTIVE JUSTICE

We will work to ensure that all people have the social, political, and economic power, rights, access, and resources to receive contraceptive care that maintains bodily autonomy.

## EXPAND ACCESS TO COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE

We will secure high quality health insurance for all people and the holistic health care they need to thrive.

## LIVE OUR VALUES

We will increase our staff capacity, resource development, and board effectiveness, centering our values in our organizational practices to achieve greater impact and strengthen our leadership statewide.

**Together, we can transform the health care ecosystem.**



# SUPPORTERS

Thank you to the health champions who made this work possible in FY20!

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