

# EVER THRIVE ILLINOIS

CHAMPIONS FOR HEALTH EQUITY



# EXECUTIVE LETTER

In 2022, EverThrive Illinois (EverThrive IL) has been focused on elevating the communities we serve in a world still recovering and rebuilding in the wake of the pandemic. COVID-19 exacerbated the challenges many Illinoisans already faced due to decades of systemic racism: lack of access to stable housing, food, childcare, and a continuing source of income.

The lingering public health crisis of COVID-19, increasing economic challenges, and the rollback of the landmark Roe v. Wade Supreme Court Decision has further underlined the stark disparities in health outcomes experienced in Black and Brown communities. Now more than ever, we know it is critical to ensure that vaccines and reproductive health care resources are available to communities most impacted by injustices.

This past year we achieved so much through our comprehensive, coordinated strategies to promote health, wellbeing, and justice in Illinois.

## Among our accomplishments in FY2022 were:

- We used the results of the surveys and focus groups to develop a **community-based health education campaign called “The Gathering,”** aimed at explaining maternal mortality and morbidity and offering community resources to prevent future deaths.
- We continued and strengthened our work in **robust vaccine outreach, education, and immunization efforts prioritizing the most underserved communities in Chicago through our COVID-19 digital campaign.** This campaign targeted misinformation and solidified our voice as a trusted source for accurate information.

This is just a snapshot of our work from this past year, which you can explore further throughout this report. Our team is excited to build on our successes from this year and to continue to innovate new strategies to combat health disparities in 2023.

As we reflect on the past year, we are reminded that this work would be possible without the partnership of the communities we serve and supporters like you. Thank you for partnering with us to ensure that all Illinoisians have the resources needed to thrive

In partnership,



**Chi Chi Okwu, MPH**  
Executive Director



**Anna Assenmacher**  
Board Chairperson

<sup>1</sup> EverThrive IL recognizes that reproductive justice issues impact people of all gender identities. Currently, reported maternal deaths in Illinois are represented as “women.” For this reason, we use “women” through out this report. Additional improved data collection and research is needed to understand better whether transgender or gender diverse people have been impacted by maternal mortality and morbidity

Even before the pandemic tore through our country, women in the United States were experiencing a steady 20-year rise in maternal morbidity and mortality, with pregnant women today facing a 50 percent higher risk of mortality than their mothers. The most vulnerable are women of color who have experienced long standing disparities in access to quality health care.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed cracks in the health system leading to circumstances where infectious disease grossly impacts the most vulnerable, especially pregnant women. The deadly, lingering pandemic in 2022 has demonstrated just how precarious community health is and why public health should be a dire concern to all.<sup>3</sup>

According to 2022 Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) data, as of 2020, **the gap in life expectancy between Black and white Chicagoans increased to 10 years.** For the first time in decades, **life expectancy for Black residents of Chicago fell below 70 years.** **Chicago Latinx residents saw a more than 3-year drop in life expectancy** between 2019 and 2020, the steepest decline for any group, and have lost a total of 7 years of life expectancy since 2012.

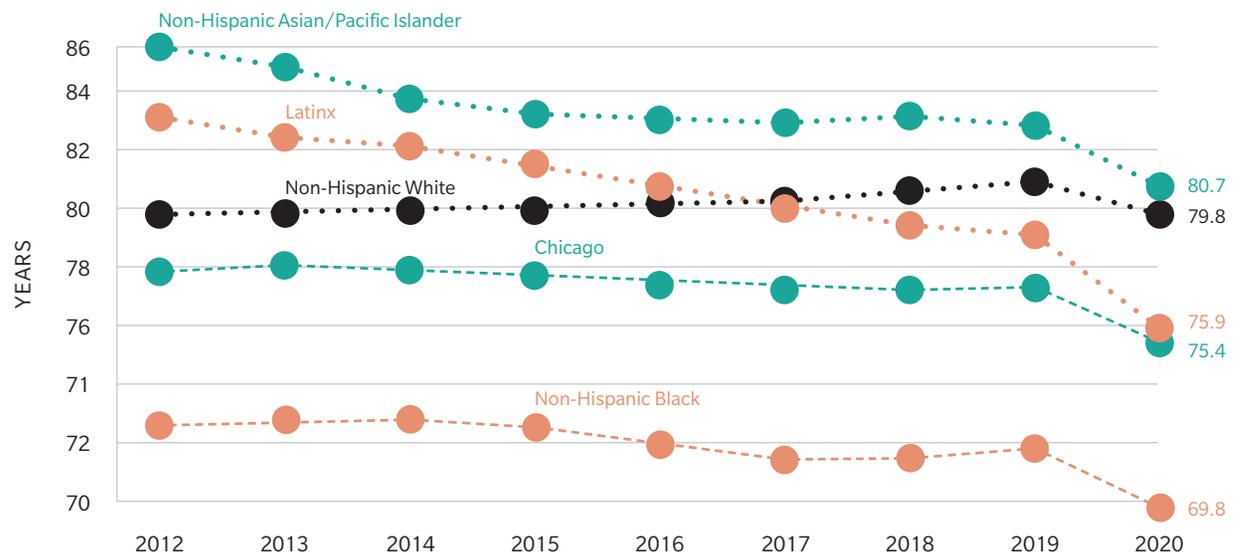
In so many ways, this racial life expectancy gap is a story about the despair and disconnection caused by COVID-19 and related social upheaval and deeply rooted structural racism.

In 2022 the CDPH Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Report found evidence of what we have known to be fact for some time: Non-Hispanic Black women and women living in communities with higher economic hardship, or worse economic conditions, bear the largest burden of maternal morbidity and mortality. And we know why: disparities in maternal and infant mortality are rooted in racism.

Racism including systemic and structural racism and provider bias is the leading contributor to why Black women are not receiving optimal health care and are dying.

This year, EverThrive IL put our mission into action, to fight for health care equity for individuals, families, and marginalized communities. We work tirelessly to achieve reproductive justice in the health care ecosystem through community-driven partnership, policy action, and systems change. Successfully achieving our mission means that every person who lives in Illinois has the resources and support necessary to determine if, when, and how to become a parent and to parent their children in safe and sustainable communities. In order to make this reality, we must continue to confront the inequities highlighted and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Life expectancy in Chicago declined during pandemic's first year with biggest drops among Black and Latinx residents



<sup>2</sup> Gorodetsky et. al, 2021  
<sup>3</sup> Gorodetsky et. al, 2021

# In FY22, EverThrive IL reached 6,289 individuals through our community outreach, provider trainings, and coalition work. Some of our key accomplishments in FY22 included:

**Training 91 social service providers on the maternal mortality crisis and identifying opportunities for community-based organizations (CBOS) to support pregnant and postpartum people in communities.**



**Developing and launching our COVID-19 digital campaign to address myths and encourage families, pregnant people and caregivers to get vaccinated. This campaign had a reach of 234,302 people.**



**Consulting with 10 birthing hospitals in Illinois on patient and community engagement strategies.**

**Educating 24 providers in Roseland, Woodlawn, and Englewood on common community myths around the COVID-19 vaccine and how to address them.**

**Partnering with the Healthy Illinois Coalition to successfully advocate for the expansion of Medicaid coverage for undocumented individuals ages 42 years of age and up.**



**Developing and launching a community-centered health education campaign “The Gathering” to help pregnant and postpartum people in areas with high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity understand postpartum warning signs and better advocate for themselves with health care providers. This campaign responded to findings from 330 surveys.**



**In conjunction with Family Connects Pilot Program (a universal nurse home visiting program) worked to identify gaps in care and resources for postpartum individuals and their families in the south side of Chicago.**



**We hosted widely attended roundtables and town halls, including:**

- In June 2022, EverThrive IL and the CDPH hosted a “Roundtable Discussion: Increasing COVID-19 Vaccination Rates Among Black/African Americans in Chicago.” Attendees brainstormed recommendations on how the City and partners can continue to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates for Black/African American Chicagoans.
- Throughout the year, EverThrive IL has hosted four successful Maternal and Child Health Virtual Town Halls with over 760 attendees total. The town halls focused on the impact that housing insecurity, substance abuse and treatment, not getting the COVID-19 vaccine, and Medicaid health plans have on pregnant and postpartum people.

# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT



## Increasing Vaccine Confidence

For almost 20 years, EverThrive IL has been involved in community-centered vaccine education efforts focused on diseases like measles, flu and HPV in Chicago and Illinois. Since the beginning of the pandemic we have increased our vaccine outreach, education, and immunization efforts focused on communities with the lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates to support families in Illinois trying to make the educated decision for themselves.

In addition to providing evidence-based COVID-19 resources, we incorporated our flu promotional and educational materials to both reduce the likelihood of twin epidemics and to begin to address the myths surrounding vaccines in general.

Our approach is driven by community partnership and direct feedback from the communities most impacted by the health injustices. To continue to develop our community-centered vaccine education campaigns and strategies, we worked with existing community advisory groups to solicit feedback on the needs in their communities and to advise in the development of programs.

One example of this type of partnership was the Roundtable Discussion: **“Increasing COVID-19 Vaccination Rates Among Black/African Americans in Chicago.”** We co-hosted this event in partnership with the CDPH and had over 75 community leaders and CBO representatives in attendance. Participants brought their lived and community experience to the table to brainstorm new innovative strategies to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among Black/African American Chicagoans.

Recommendations included:

1

Increase alignment of COVID-19 messaging across sectors, ensuring educational materials are representative of Black/African American communities and include testimonies from trusted community members.

2

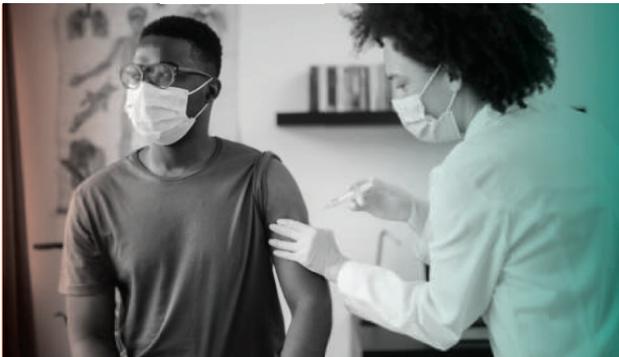
Expand events and tailored messaging toward specific communities or populations.

3

Expand the use of community members as vaccine ambassadors/educators to build trust within communities.

4

Maintain practices that reduce access barriers for each appointment in the vaccine series.



In the coming year, EverThrive IL will continue to work with CDPH and other community partners to implement these recommendations and reduce the disparities in vaccination rates. We will continue to build and strengthen our community outreach worker teams to serve as influential messengers and address the concerns of those most impacted by the disparities on an individual basis.

**Our work would not be successful without our amazing team of outreach workers who conduct 1:1 educational outreach within their own communities.**

The reproductive justice tenants include working to ensure that everyone has the right to raise their families in safe and sustainable communities and the last few years have reminded us that healthy communities cannot exist without equitable access to vaccinations. We are committed to ensuring that all communities in Illinois, specifically those with the most disparities, have the resources and access they need to make the best choices for their families.

## Additional immunization accomplishments in FY22 included:

- Creating a new COVID-19 curriculum, expanding our long-standing Community Immunization Education Guide Toolkit with up-to-date content on COVID-19 and addressing vaccine hesitancy with patients.
- Preparing healthcare and social service providers for ongoing response to COVID-19 and the resulting aftermath in communities we focused on providing regular information and resources for understanding and addressing vaccine hesitancy and helping them to understand what community members were prioritizing.
- **Educating 24 providers** in Roseland, Woodlawn and Englewood on common community myths around COVID-19 vaccine and how to address them.
- Developing and launching our **COVID-19 digital campaign** to address myths and encourage families, pregnant people and caregivers to get vaccinated. **This campaign had a reach of 234,302 people.**
- Providing 1:1 health education through Chicago-based outreach for **1,975 individuals.**



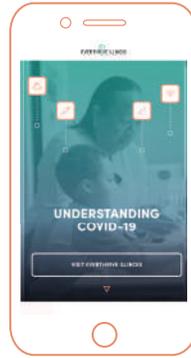
## Outreach Worker Testimonial

“I’m an EverThrive IL outreach worker with diabetes and high blood pressure. I got the vaccine and booster shot to keep my family safe and protect my health. I also wanted to continue going out into the community and keep people around me safe. Thankfully, when I did get COVID-19, I only had a mild cough. When I’m doing outreach work, I share my experience about getting the vaccine with residents.

As outreach workers, we are passionate about what we do in the community. You can find us in neighborhoods passing out COVID-19 vaccine information, key chains, sanitizers, and masks. People are happy to get these things to keep themselves safe. What makes EverThrive IL different from other organizations doing this work is that our outreach workers speak to people individually or as a group. We are listening, answering questions, and building trust. When we do these things and provide good information, residents bring more people to connect with us. This allows us to create a stronger community network.”

—Mary Gray, EverThrive IL Outreach Worker

# 2022 BY THE NUMBERS



**234,302**

people viewed our COVID-19 digital campaign



**6,289**

individuals reached through our community outreach, provider trainings, and coalition work

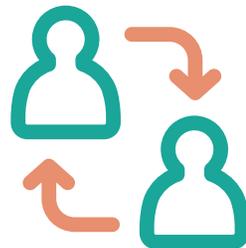
**91**

social service providers trained on the maternal mortality crisis



**760**

people attended our Maternal and Child Health Virtual Town Halls



**1,975**

individuals provided with 1:1 health education through on the ground outreach



**24**

providers educated on how to address common myths around COVID-19 vaccine

# LOOKING FORWARD



**As we enter into a new fiscal year and the second year of our strategic plan, we will continue to make strides to ensure that all people in Illinois have the access, resources, and health care necessary to create and sustain healthy families on their own terms.**

## In FY23, we will work to:

### ACHIEVE BIRTH EQUITY BY ...

Training social and health providers on the maternal mortality crisis in Chicago to address the root causes, and also reaching 30,000 community members with the highest maternal morbidity and mortality rates in Chicago through The Gathering Campaign

Expanding our partnership with CDPH/ Family Connects through leadership of community alignment boards (CAB's) on the southside of Chicago. These CAB's will be focused on identifying and addressing the gaps in resources for postpartum individuals and families

### INCREASE VACCINE CONFIDENCE BY ...

Educating 10,000 Chicagoans in communities with the highest disparities about the importance of COVID-19 and flu vaccines through peer-to-peer health education

Promoting infant and child vaccinations statewide  
Training social service providers on immunizations messaging and equipping them to address current and emerging myths

Launching a city-wide Equitable Vaccine Advisory Council

### ADVANCE CONTRACEPTIVE JUSTICE BY ...

Building power with a social education campaign providing community members with updated policy information around contraceptive justice care

### EXPAND ACCESS TO COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE BY ...

Conducting focus groups to better understand the telehealth experience of Medicaid recipients

Supporting school-based health centers and providing technical training focused on the needs of adolescents

Advocating for the expansion of Medicaid for undocumented people of reproductive age

**Together, we can continue to make reproductive justice a reality.**

# SUPPORTERS

Thank you to the health champions who made this work possible in FY22!

## CORPORATE AND NON-PROFIT PARTNERS

AHS Family Health Center  
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois  
Cressey & Co  
Erie Family Health Centers  
Humana  
Jasculca/Terman & Associates  
Johnson & Johnson  
Katten Muchin Rosenman  
Legal Council for Health Justice  
McMaster-Carr Supply Co.  
National Womens Health Law Center  
Northwestern Memorial Healthcare  
Rush University Medical Center  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Warady & Davis  
William Blair

## FOUNDATION AND GOVERNMENT FUNDERS

Chicago Department of Public Health  
Chicago Foundation for Women  
Community Catalyst  
The Chicago Community Trust  
Community Memorial Foundation  
Conant Family Foundation  
Groundswell Perigee Fund  
Healthy Communities Foundation  
Illinois Department of Public Health  
Irving Harris Foundation  
Albert Pick, Jr. Fund  
JB and MK Pritzker Family Foundation  
Merck for Mothers  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
VNA Foundation

## DONORS

|                      |                        |                    |                   |                         |                        |                    |
|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Salim Ahmed          | Saima Chaudhry         | Beth Garrett       | Loretta Lattiyak  | Ralph Nach              | Gabrielle Sauder       | Amber Watson       |
| Sharisse Allen       | Mary Noel Chavez       | Ireta Gasner       | Beverly Lavitt    | Carol Navin             | Julie Schmidt          | Julie Webb         |
| Lauri Alpern         | Veronica Chavez        | Nathan Gayeski     | Robert Lawson     | Pat Navin               | Heidi Schuette         | Joyce Weiner       |
| Jaquenette Anderson- | Kylie Cheung           | Benjamin Gemkow    | Mia Layne         | Sara Navin              | Maleia Scuefield       | Lawrence Weiner    |
| Algee                | Rashmi Chugh           | Judith Goode       | Salina Lee        | Paul Nepermann          | Tarita Scurlock        | Maria Weydemuller  |
| Timika Anderson      | Brett Clark            | Ozie Goodwin       | Sally Lemke       | Molly Nowels            | Steve Sellers          | Kalin Wise         |
| Reeves               | Jill Clark             | Linda Gordon       | Marcia Levin      | Kristen Nuyen           | Anastasie Senat        | Lisa Wiseman       |
| Amy Assenmacher      | Angelica Cleveland     | Rochelle Gorey     | Joan Lindsay      | Kevin O'Brien           | Leah Siegel            | Josh Worden        |
| Anna Assenmacher     | Mark Coe               | Amy Granzin        | Thomas Lindsay    | Chi Chi Okwu            | Dominique Sighoko      | Elizabeth Wunschel |
| Jeffrey Assenmacher  | Judith Coffey Hedquist | Julia Greenberger  | John Longman      | Jackie Olson            | Balamurugan            | Ryan Yamamoto      |
| Joe Assenmacher      | Betsy Covell           | Dani Griffith      | Christian Lopez   | Kelly O'Shea            | Sivakolunthu Vel       | David Yu           |
| Claudia Baier        | Lisa S Cowhey          | Arden Handler      | Caleb LoSchiavo   | Taylor Overstreet       | Ross Skinner           |                    |
| Patrica Bailey       | Martin H Cozzola       | Robin Hannon       | Kenneth Magner    | Ankit Patel             | Laurel Smith           |                    |
| Rachel Baird         | Dana Harrison          | Dana Harrison      | Melissa Maldonado | Orlett Pearson          | Christopher Smyre      |                    |
| Becca Bakal          | Deborah De La Cruz     | Gail Harrison      | Molly Mallon      | Charles Peterson        | Amy Sokol              |                    |
| Debra Bakal          | Bob Deily              | Jeffrey Henderson  | Gabriella Masini  | Mon Pitschmann          | Barbara Staples King   |                    |
| Jeffrey Bakal        | Amy Dolan              | Jennifer Henderson | Sarah Masinter    | Shannon Pohl            | Citseko Staples Miller |                    |
| Zachary Bakal        | Jim Donenberg          | Hannah Henry       | Ellen Mason       | Heather Porter          | Tawanna Streater       |                    |
| Barbara Baker        | Chad Doobay            | Stuart Hertzberg   | Judith Mason      | Jo Ann Potashnick       | Michael Taitel         |                    |
| Laurence Baker       | Louis Dore             | Sue Hertzberg      | Joel Mathew       | Meril Pothen            | Darius Tandon          |                    |
| John Baker Welch     | Mary Driscoll          | Janine Hill        | Donna Matteis     | Christina Pruitt        | Shiv Tandon            |                    |
| Ellyn Bank           | Richard Drucker        | Adrienne Hines     | Karen May         | Sheetal Rai             | Haley Tanzman          |                    |
| Bruce Banks          | Carla Edelston         | Leslie Hines       | Marci May         | Jamjuree Reankit        | Lawrence Tanzman       |                    |
| Donald Banks         | Angela Ellison         | Janet Hoffman      | Heather McCarty   | Tamara Reed Tran        | Lashonda Tate          |                    |
| Deborah Barclay      | Tina Erickson          | Julie Hoffman      | Melissa Merrick   | Robert Remer            | Anitta Thomas          |                    |
| Lawrence Berlin      | Susan Evans            | Abigail Holicky    | Gail Metrick      | Phillip Restle          | Joseph Thomas          |                    |
| Michael Berry        | Raymond Fernando       | Lindsay Hugh       | Jacob Metrick     | Gena Rieger-Olson       | Ariel Thomas Sansing   |                    |
| Susan Bizzell        | Lauren Fifarek         | Christopher Huh    | Scott Metrick     | Suzanne Rietema         | Tanya Titus            |                    |
| Bill Blum            | Barbara Fishman        | Elena Ivanova      | Jesse Meyer       | Barbara Riley           | Paul Tucker            |                    |
| Cori Blum            | Sarah Flanagan         | Kristine Jackman   | Beth Michaels     | Iris Rogers             | Ashlee Van Schyndel    |                    |
| Maura Brannigan      | Barbara Flynn Currie   | Timothy Jackson    | Tamela Milan-     | Luis Roman              | Erin Vogel             |                    |
| Jen Brown            | Nicole Ford            | Lejia Johnson      | Alexander         | Maureen Ruder           | Sarah Wagener          |                    |
| Jane Brownley        | Beatrice Friedman      | Rebecca Johnson    | Ruth Miller       | Michelle Saddler        | Milton Wakschlag       |                    |
| Alison Byrnes        | Renee Friedman         | Shyonna Johnson    | Sidney Miller     | Cindy San Miguel        | James Waligora         |                    |
| Stephen Canzona      | Ronald Friedman        | Courtney Jones     | Annet Miranda     | Yazmin San Miguel       | Kathy Waligora         |                    |
| Clara Carrier        | Janet Froetscher       | Lauren Jones       | Carmen Mitchell   | Octavia Sansing         | Jena Wallander         |                    |
| Gail Cavanagh        | Nivair Gabriel         | Minji Kang         | Yamile Molina     | Veronica Sansing Foster | Gemkow                 |                    |
| Maria Cejtin         | Ausannette Garcia-     | Victoria Kim       | Kiela Moreno      | Farukh Sarkulov         | Angela Waller          |                    |
| Anita Chandra-Puri   | Goyette                | Katharine Kreissl  | Jack Hugh Murchie | Brian Sauder            | Victoria Watkins       |                    |

# THE TEAM

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Leadership

**Anna Assenmacher**

Dept 11  
Chairperson

**Barbara Staples King**

Self-Employed  
Vice-Chairperson

**Betsy Covell, MS**

Nokia  
Secretary

**Sarah Flanagan**

AAR Corp  
Treasurer

### Directors

**Anita Chandra-Puri, MD**

Northwestern Medicine,  
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's  
Hospital of Chicago

**Mary Driscoll, MPH, RN**

**Courtney Jones**

**Loretta Lattyak, RN, Med**  
(Retired)

**Mia E. Layne, MD**

Contemporary OB/GYN Chicago

**Ellen Mason, MD**

John H. Stroger, Jr Hospital  
of Cook County

**Marci May**

Jasculca Terman Strategic Communications

**Jesse Meyer**

Northwestern University's Feinberg School  
of Medicine, Northwestern Medical Group

**Ankit Patel**

Ventas, Inc

**Sheetal Rai**

Fifth Third Bank

**Cindy San Miguel, MPH**

Sinai Urban Health Institute

**Michel S. Taitel, PhD**

Walgreens

**Ariel Thomas Sansing, MS**

Northwestern University's  
Feinberg School of Medicine

## STAFF

### Executive Team

**Chi Chi Okwu**

Executive Director

**Kathy Waligora**

Deputy Director of External Affairs

**Priscilla Chawla**

Deputy Director of Operations  
and Finance

**Andie Baker**

Deputy Director of Strategy  
and Programs

### Staff

**Arias Benitez-Perez**

Immunization Equity Manager

**Tela Elzy**

Community Engagement Coordinator

**Jordyn Hester**

Communications Coordinator

**Max Horwitz**

Business Operations Manager

**Talibah Johnson**

Community Engagement Manager

**Kevie Lusby Smyre**

Policy and Advocacy Director

**Tamela Milan-Alexander**

Community Engagement Director

**Endia Moore**

Business Operations Coordinator

**Kristen Nuyen**

Capacity Building Director

**Diana Pando**

Communications Manager

**Kirbi Range**

Associate Director, Birth Equity

**Ariana Roman**

Adolescent Health Manager

**April Thompson**

Community Engagement Coordinator

**Ceci Tipiani-Fuentes**

Associate Director, Immunizations

**Leslie Wooten**

Development Director

1006 S. Michigan Ave.  
Suite 200  
Chicago, IL 60605  
(312) 491-8161

[www.everthriveil.org](http://www.everthriveil.org)  
[info@everthriveil.org](mailto:info@everthriveil.org)

Follow us on Facebook,  
Twitter, and LinkedIn  
@EverThriveIL

EVER  
THRIVE  
ILLINOIS  
CHAMPIONS FOR HEALTH EQUITY

