



Making Change

2017/2018 Annual Report



Making Change *Happen*

Our Mission

EverThrive Illinois works to improve the health of women, children, and families over the lifespan.

Our Vision

A society in which everyone is able to live their healthiest life.

Our Values

- Health Equity
- Diverse Voices
- Strong Partnerships



A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Partners,

It has been a busy and amazing year for EverThrive Illinois, as well as for me since I joined the organization as Executive Director in March 2017. I have spent my 20+ year career in community organizing, policy formation, and advocacy; always fighting to make a real and lasting impact for families across Illinois. I couldn't have imagined a better fit for me than EverThrive IL, with its mission to improve the health of women, children, and families over the lifespan.

This year marks our 30th anniversary, and while every year has presented its challenges, this past year was especially difficult – from the aftermath of a three-year state budget impasse to federal threats to our nation's health care system and an increasing partisanship that stifles positive change. EverThrive IL has met these challenges with commitment and passion, knowing we can and we must do better. In this annual report you will read a small sampling of our success stories, each made possible by the change makers who embody our mission. Looking forward, there can be no doubt that the challenges will continue, and likely intensify in the coming year – and we are ready.

At the same time we respond to external threats, we have also taken time to face inward – reflecting on the work we are doing and the impact we hope to have. During 2017, our board and staff assessed our place in the larger public health field and refined our purpose, one that will take us through whatever the future holds. Guided by a new strategic plan, this organization will continue to change, needing always to be responsive to the ever-changing external environment. However, we will never lose our focus on improving the health of mothers, babies, and their families in everything we do. With our plan, and this Annual Report, we reaffirm our mission, vision and values, and continue our work to create lasting change.

I urge you to use this annual report as a stepping stone to learning more about EverThrive IL. There is something meaningful happening here every day as we make change, whether by helping to frame public policies, engaging communities to build knowledge and power, partnering with other organizations to magnify impact, and by increasing access to services for women, children, and families. We will continue to fight for the policies and programs that enable every Illinoisan to live their healthiest life.

I hope you will join us in making change in 2018.

Sessy Nyman

Executive Director

Changing Lives in Unexpected Ways



“Youth advocacy day helped me to think bigger about my future. Thank you EverThrive Illinois for providing young people like me an opportunity to lead our healthiest lives.”

Nada McMullen

Teen Parent

When high school freshman Nada found out she was pregnant, it changed her life. She struggled to find the care she needed for herself and for her baby. At the doctor’s office, they told her that her medical card was not active, and she needed to pay hundreds of dollars she didn’t have.

When Nada learned about Simpson Academy for Young Women, Chicago’s only school exclusively serving pregnant and parenting teens, things started to change for the better. Simpson Academy is home to a school-based health center – a model of health care delivery EverThrive IL advocates for, supports, and works closely as the Illinois affiliate of the national School-Based Health Alliance. Through the school-based health center, Nada could get the care she needed while continuing her high school education. Today, her son Gerardo also gets the care he needs from the clinic as a healthy toddler.

Youth Advocacy Day 2017 marked the next change for Nada “and her son through the clinic. EverThrive IL took Nada and more than a hundred other students from around the state to Springfield to learn about and engage in advocacy, meet with legislators and share their story at a rally. They talked about the importance of adolescent health, why their school-based health centers matter, and how their lives are changed because of them.

While in Springfield, Nada had a chance to watch legislators at work debating bills that would affect her and her son’s lives in Illinois. She didn’t expect government to be so exciting.

That experience with EverThrive IL in Springfield created a significant shift in Nada’s view of her future. “I used to think that maybe I would go to cosmetology school. After attending youth advocacy day, I don’t want to limit myself. Maybe I’ll be a lawyer or a legislator who fights for programs like my school-based health center. I’m beginning to plan for college. With the support of my school, my school-based health center, and EverThrive IL, I’m working hard for my son and me.”

Changing the Conversation to Change Lives



“You have to know how to set a comfortable tone to enable people to receive information that’s very sensitive and private. When talking to people who may not have had these conversations before, and don’t have access to the same information or resources –it makes all the difference.”

Sheila Sanders

EverThrive Illinois Outreach
and Education Manager

From the very beginning, EverThrive IL has worked in partnership with grassroots organizations like March of Dimes, Healthy Start, and local health departments in addition to state agencies – all to improve maternal and birth outcomes. Through it all, one thing continually became clear – gaps exist at every level. There were gaps in services, for sure. But more fundamental were the gaps in critical information that needed to be addressed before anything else could happen.

EverThrive IL stepped up to the plate to address this inequity, knowing that health education needed to start far before the conversation around reproductive health.

And so in 2007, Sisters Making a Change, affectionately referred to as SMAC, was born. This weekly discussion group at Chicago’s Robeson High School became a platform to help teen girls understand their bodies and lay the groundwork for helping them understand reproductive health, wellness, and safety. Topics ranged from personal health and hygiene, to healthy relationships. “Conversations were not always easy, but we got a sense early on that the girls didn’t know how to take care of these things that are vital to staying healthy and safe,” said Sanders.

SMAC ran for five years, and ongoing education was implemented through regular programs and issue-based workshops in 12 schools across Chicago’s south and west sides. The need was ongoing, but stable funding was increasingly threatened, so EverThrive IL developed a sustainability plan that centered on developing a ‘peer-to-peer’ model of education and training. This model served to engage and empower youth to talk about sensitive women’s health issues with their peers, provided ongoing and responsive training, and served as a gateway for many young women to enter into professional careers in the health field. The opportunity to change the approach to reproductive health offered the chance for the message to be more appropriate and responsive for the targeted audience. The end result was a generation of women changing the future for countless other women and girls.

“Trends change, and what’s effective now may not be as effective in five years,” said Sanders. “So at EverThrive IL we are always thinking about how we may need to evolve to meet people where they are.”

Illustrating real impact in the fight to repeal the Affordable Care Act



“EverThrive Illinois gave us timely, on the ground, community-focused data – a solid foundation for our efforts to defend health care for millions across our state.”

**U.S. Representative
Jan Schakowsky**

Illinois 9th District

Early in 2017, efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act moved from threat to credible danger to an all out crisis. Most alarming was the focus on dismantling Medicaid – the country’s largest health insurance program for poor families.

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL district) was at the forefront of the battle to defend the ACA and ensure access to health care for all Americans. She knew from the beginning that data was key to framing a strong argument, and would demonstrate the real impact the ACA has had on improving health in Illinois. To meet this challenge head on, EverThrive IL went to work researching the true scope of just how many Illinois lives could be at risk, as well as the devastating economic impact an ACA repeal would have on over 1 million Illinoisans, and the state’s overall economy.

EverThrive IL’s in-depth research and analysis resulted in the nation’s first district-specific enrollment calculations, creating powerful tools that provided each of Illinois’ members of Congress with the true cost of ACA repeal for their constituents. Along with each fact sheet, EverThrive IL provided stories of real families who rely on Medicaid and the ACA, and the difference access to high quality health insurance has made in their lives. In doing so, EverThrive IL helped protect progress made by the ACA and defended our most vulnerable communities by working alongside elected leaders. EverThrive IL is transforming powerful information into powerful advocacy – and it’s changing lives every day.

The Making of a Change Maker



“EverThrive Illinois gave me the training, confidence and opportunity to share my story to advocate for change. Now, I’m working hard to give back to my community.”

Bear Maxwell
Single Parent

Every new father has challenges, but Bear had more than his fair share. His infant daughter’s mother had hidden her drug use from him, but not from the Department of Children and Family Services. They told him either baby Abby or her mother could live with him, but not both.

Bear chose parenthood – marking a change from his own childhood without his dad around. That decision marked a huge change in Bear’s life. First, he enrolled Abby in Head Start to ensure her development wasn’t delayed due to her mom’s drug use. Bear saw the changes in Abby’s development right away – and it made him want to keep fighting for her future. Bear learned about EverThrive IL from his case worker and became involved with the consumer- led Maternal Child Health Family Council EverThrive IL convenes, and he hasn’t looked back since.

“This organization cares; they care about better access to medical care, better programs for children and they help create policies that really work for people like Abby and me. I immediately became part of something bigger; something that was changing the direction of my life and the life of my community.”

...and the changes kept coming.

As Bear learned how to use storytelling for advocacy, he also began to overcome social anxiety – where before he struggled to even make eye contact during conversations. By working with EverThrive IL, he learned the skills needed to tell Abby’s story and started to understand how this storytelling was key to making change. This was evident in a conversation Bear had with a mayor who thought Head Start was “just overpriced daycare.” By sharing his own experience and Abby’s story, Bear changed that mayor’s mind, creating a ripple effect for maintaining and supporting Head Start in that community.

Today, Bear is part of a statewide network of parents through the EverThrive IL MCH Family Councils. He is a Parent Ambassador for his Early Head Start Program and he has become an effective advocate with other parent-advocates in Springfield and Washington D.C., fighting for what kids need. He is also working with Senator Dick Durbin’s staff to create a resource guide for other parents struggling to understand opioid use disorders, and where they can get the help they need.

“I want to always be part of the change that improves my community, and to make sure my daughter Abby grows up healthy.”

Building power in communities to make change



“With EverThrive Illinois by our side, the staff and students at Morton East High School stood together to protect our School-Based Health Center from cuts in the Cook County budget. EverThrive IL’s feedback and support was invaluable. We told our story and it made a difference! What a great representation of what true advocacy means.”

Maria Castillo, MSW, LCSW
Psychiatric Social Worker

Budget cuts seem like an everyday thing in Illinois, but this time it hit closer to home and it had the potential to hit hard.

Morton East Adolescent Health Center is the only school-based health center funded through the Cook County Health and Hospitals Systems. It serves the students of District 201, including Cicero, Berwyn, McCook, Stickney and Lyons.

After the repeal of the Cook County Sweetened Beverage Tax, the County Board proposed cutting this school-based health center. Students, community and staff quickly mobilized. Maria Castillo, the center’s social worker, enlisted the help of EverThrive IL which had helped defend the center in previous years.

The goal was clear: save the school-based health center at Morton East. The need was urgent as there was not much time to get the right message to the right people at the right time.

To take part in a series of public hearings hosted by the Cook County Board of Commissioners, EverThrive IL helped staff and students to prepare and deliver compelling testimony in defense of this research-driven model of care. Students provided first-hand accounts of how their lives were transformed by the school-based health center. They recounted stories of how the health center’s behavioral health services helped them overcome trauma, abuse, depression and suicide ideation.

In the end, the Morton East Adolescent Health Center was spared, and the thousands of students who had relied on their services for the past 20 years could rest assured that the SBHC stands strong. EverThrive IL provided leadership so our partners could use their voices, leverage their experiences, and – in the end – come together to create meaningful change.



A Message from the Board Chairman

Dear Partners,

As we take stock of 2017, it's clear that EverThrive Illinois met challenges and made change with focus and zeal and unflagging energy. This is an organization and a team of professionals who step in and solve problems.

With that perspective, it would be easy to sit back, take a breath, and aim for a less demanding 2018. Unfortunately, the environment in which we work tirelessly to improve the lives of women, children, and families promises to be – if anything – more daunting than ever.

I know I speak for the entire Board and staff when I say how proud I am of this incredible organization, and how grateful we are for the organizations and supporters who have partnered with EverThrive IL to make real change where and when it's needed most. Our work lifts up communities, lends a voice to those who too often go unheard, and fights for the families that make this state great. For that, we thank you.

And with your support going forward, we will continue to deliver the change that can make every community across our state a place where families thrive.

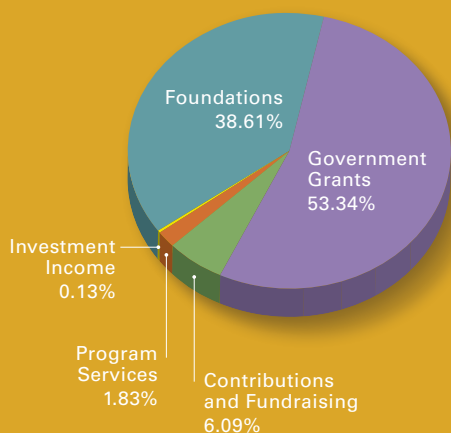
George R. Smith, Jr., EdD, MPH

EverThrive Illinois Board Chairman

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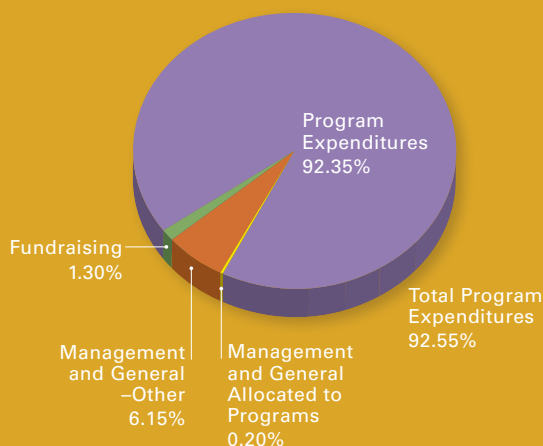
UNRESTRICTED REVENUE SOURCES

Total \$1,658,311



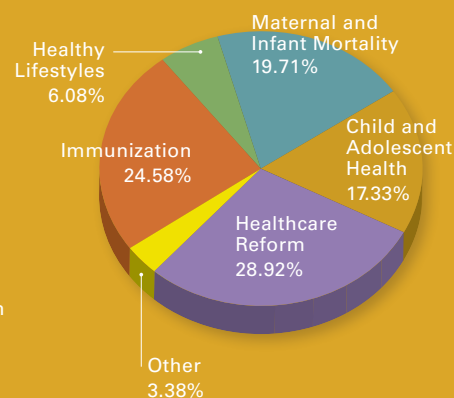
EXPENDITURES

Total \$1,866,124



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Total \$1,727,155



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Join us in improving the health of women, children, and families!

EverThrive IL looks forward to continuing the work of making change for years to come, but we couldn't do it without the support of our partners, members, and change makers like you. Be a part of building a healthier Illinois. Become an EverThrive IL member, donate to support our work, and connect to a network of maternal and child health advocates across the state. To find out more, visit www.everthriveil.org/get-involved.



“This organization cares; they care about better access to medical care, better programs for children, and they help create policies that really work for people like me my daughter. I immediately became part of something bigger; something that was changing the direction of my life and the life of my community.”

Bear Maxwell
Single Parent



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