

ANNUAL REPORT

A YEAR OF COURAGEOUS CHANGE.

2024

EXECUTIVE LETTER

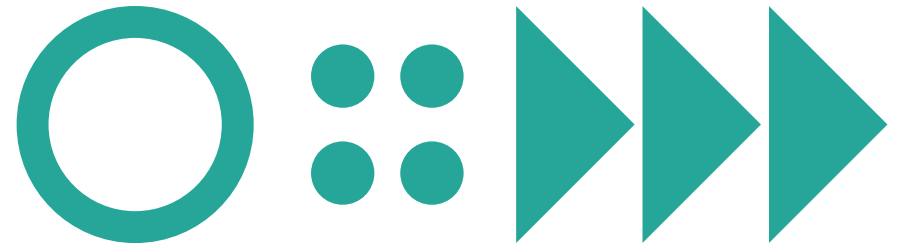
As we reflect on the progress we have made this year, we are filled with gratitude for your unwavering commitment, generous support, and shared passion for fostering a healthier Illinois. With your help, we've been able to advocate for policies that foster equitable health care, provide vital resources to communities in need, and stand as a beacon of support for reproductive justice.

In this year of courageous change, our collective efforts have borne fruit in the form of landmark policies that position Illinois as a national leader in reproductive health care. These achievements are a testament to our steadfast commitment to birth equity, expanding access to comprehensive health care, and to the advocacy necessary for health equity and justice.

The journey toward creating a health care ecosystem that honors and enhances the lives of those most affected by reproductive injustice is a collaborative effort. Your belief in our mission, your partnership in our endeavors, and your investment in our vision have been the cornerstone of our accomplishments, as detailed in this annual report.

As we look to the future, November stands as a pivotal juncture with the promise of new prospects and persistent challenges.

Rest assured, EverThrive Illinois will be ready to embrace the future, whatever it may hold. We will stand on the frontlines, defending



Medicaid and reproductive rights if challenged, and we will advocate for more inclusive reproductive justice policies when opportunities arise.

In the coming year, we will not simply react to circumstances; we will proactively shape a healthier and more equitable future for Illinois. Your continued support is vital for this endeavor. Together, we will champion courageous change and forge a path to a brighter future.

In partnership,



Chi Chi Okwu, MPH
Executive Director



Barbara Staples King
Board Chairperson

YEAR-IN REVIEW



Our Courageous Work

This past year the fruits of our consistent, courageous work led to incredible change! As we wove together advocacy, community-driven education, community engagement, and strategic partnerships, we developed holistic, health care solutions centered on those most impacted by pressing injustices. Our efforts have achieved real results that impact the lives of Illinoisans every day. A few highlights from the year include:

Advocacy

After years of advocating for state policies to correct disparities in the health care ecosystem, EverThrive IL celebrated this year's monumental state-wide legislative rulings. **Illinois House Bill 5142** dictates that health insurance companies must cover pregnancy-related and abortion services without extra costs. In addition, it requires private insurance to cover services provided by midwives, doulas, and lactation consultants. **Illinois House Bill 2499** prohibits the sale of junk insurance plans that do not meet the minimum standards under the federal Affordable Care Act. **Illinois Senate Bill 3136** creates the Family Recovery Plans Implementation Task Force which will review and recommend models of family recovery plans for pregnant people and families struggling with substance use disorder.

Education

Now in its second year, **The Gathering** continues to increase its reach, proving to be a valuable resource for Black pregnant people and their communities. This digital resource provides tools for Black pregnant or recently pregnant people and their friends and families to empower them to care for and advocate for themselves and their loved ones.

Community Engagement

For over 25 years, we have helped increase vaccine confidence in Illinois. Our **National Infant Immunization Campaign**, involving digital media and face-to-face outreach, continues to offer individuals living in Black and Brown communities in Chicago accurate education on the importance of vaccines and helpful connections to immunization providers.

Strategic Partnership

After a highly competitive open grant process, **MacKenzie Scott's Yield Giving awarded EverThrive Illinois \$2 million** to support our mission to achieve reproductive justice in the health care ecosystem. This award allows us to move swiftly and boldly to expand our programming, drive policy change, and connect with more community members.



OUTREACH IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

My name is Me'sha Burton, and I am a Community Outreach Worker at EverThrive Illinois. The community outreach worker position is important because many people in the community don't have the information they need. Having an individual disseminate the information is vital so everyone can be knowledgeable about what's going on when it comes to vaccines.

I feel it's so imperative to build trust in a community because it starts in the community and the community is what makes us who we are. If we don't have the community with lived experience, how are we able to reach individuals?

Our outreach workers have also impacted the community by reaching the unreachable. There's people who don't feel like talking, but when someone from EverThrive IL comes with a positive attitude, a pleasant smile, and they come in generosity with free gifts and comfort them with a listening ear that turns everything around.



Me'sha Burton,
EverThrive IL Outreach Worker

2024 BY THE NUMBERS



60,553

community members were reached by EverThrive IL in FY24 through our community outreach initiatives.

201

health and social service providers, advocates, and families from across Illinois convened during our webinars focused on maternal mental health.



276,300

individuals engaged in our fall and winter vaccine campaigns, which raised awareness about the heightened risks of COVID-19 and Influenza and highlighted the urgency and efficacy of vaccinations.



45,810

people were involved with *The Gathering*, expanding the reach and impact of our health education campaign aimed to assist pregnant and postpartum individuals.



54

stakeholders assembled through coalitions and expert advisory committees to advance health equity and drive meaningful change.



152,293

individuals were informed about the importance and safety of infant immunizations through our ***National Infant Immunization Week Campaign***.

SHOWERING YOUNG FAMILIES WITH SUPPORT



Coinciding with *National Infant Immunization Week*, EverThrive Illinois hosted its 2nd Annual Community Baby Shower on April 27, 2024 at the Homan Square Community Center in North Lawndale. The event aimed to educate families on the importance of immunizations and share resources to support the health of children, parents, and parents-to-be.

Talibah Johnson, EverThrive IL's Community Engagement Manager, presented information on local immunization resources, while Chicago U-Medics provided First Responders' call training which educated community members on how to call first responders in an emergency. Local vendors, including the Chicago South Side Birth Center and County Care, were present to connect families with valuable services such as maternal mental health care, insurance coverage information, doula care, and literacy programs.

The baby shower served as both an educational event and a celebration for the community, offering food, games, and a raffle for WNBA Chicago Sky tickets. Attendees received gift bags, which included essential baby items like clothes, diapers, and breastfeeding supplies.



“

Many families don't get the opportunity to have their own baby shower due to socioeconomic barriers or other circumstances, so it was amazing to host one for the entire community to celebrate parents and their little ones,

”

Hailey Steele,

EverThrive IL's Birth Equity Manager.

The event also underscores EverThrive IL's mission to support families facing challenges in the health care system. "Community engagement opportunities like the baby shower allow us to cultivate a positive reputation with community members, stakeholders, and funders. We also inspire others to join us and create a ripple effect of change," said Talibah Johnson.

Outreach programs improve health and economic outcomes for community members and make it a better place to live, work, and play. EverThrive Illinois plans to host this event annually to provide much needed support to families.





BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

My name is Arias Benitez - Perez and I'm the Immunization Equity Manager. I know that EverThrive Illinois is making a difference based on the conversations that I have with community members and stakeholders. Constantly, we're being told that they've never been invited to a table where they could be thought partners with the Chicago Department of Public Health and other health entities. We also have stakeholders saying that they've never been able to hear directly from community members.

The Equitable Vaccine Advisory Council (EVAC) is unique to other approaches to immunization education, mainly because we're bringing different community members and stakeholders together to be thought partners, to discuss barriers, and really talk about their lived experiences with vaccinations and access to care in general. It definitely means the world to me to be able to bring people together that may have never been in the same room, and share those lived experiences and amplify that hyperlocal perspective. The most important thing to remember about EVAC is that we are accountable to community members and the stakeholders who are in the room are accountable to the community. It's something we take very seriously.



Arias Benitez - Perez,
Immunization Equity Manager

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

For nearly 40 years, EverThrive Illinois has been advancing the health and safety of Illinoisans by supporting access to quality health care and providing resources to achieve health equity. In FY25, we will focus our efforts on four strategic priorities to foster a healthier, stronger state for all:

Achieve Birth Equity

We will ensure that pregnant and postpartum people in Black and Brown communities receive high-quality care for safe and healthy births by expanding access to culturally sensitive perinatal physical and mental health services and creating resources for navigating these systems. Our initiatives include developing region-specific workshops with social service providers, enhancing universal newborn support systems, and advocating for policies to improve access to pregnancy and postpartum care.

Expand Access to Comprehensive Health Care

We will ensure that everyone has access to high-quality, affordable health insurance and the holistic health care they need to thrive. This includes developing resources to improve health literacy and immunization rates, expanding the community health worker

program and certification beyond Chicago, and strengthening consumer protections and benefits for all Illinoisans. Additionally, we aim to enhance access to care for adolescents, empowering them to confidently navigate the health care system.

Unite With Partners to Advance Reproductive Justice

We will expand our network of partners across the state to build momentum and advance reproductive justice. This includes increasing EverThrive IL's presence in central and downstate regions, strengthening collaborations with hospitals and medical schools, and enhancing our infrastructure to support partnership development and structural change.

Create Safe and Sustainable Communities

We will create systems that address the economic, social, and structural needs of families to enhance their health and well being. This includes improving access to housing, transportation, paid family leave, and reducing food insecurity for new families through WIC advocacy and promotion.

OUR TEAM

Executive Team

Chi Chi Okwu, M.P.H.
Executive Director

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Deputy Director of Strategy and Programs

Priscilla Chawla
Deputy Director of Operations and Finance

Kathy Waligora, M.S.W.
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Arias Benitez-Perez
Immunization Equity Manager

Kaja Cook
Community Engagement Coordinator

Elizabeth Gonzalez
Associate Director, Birth Equity

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Kelly Hubbard, M.P.H.
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Talibah Johnson
Community Engagement Manager

Vanessa Jones
Development Director

Elena Mandarino
Public Health Associate,
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Tamela Milan – Alexander
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Hailey Steele
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Women Unite!

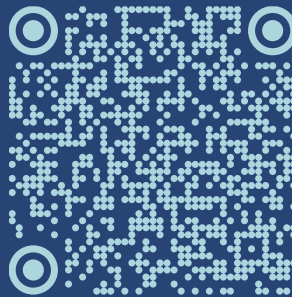
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1006 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 200

Chicago, IL 60605

(312) 491-8161

www.everthriveil.org

info@everthriveil.org

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