

Who Do Community Health Centers Serve?

Nationwide, community health centers (CHCs) serve as the medical home for more than 20 million people at over 8,000 sites in all 50 states and the U.S. territories. With a charge to serve the medically underserved, CHCs are often located in geographic regions where few other medical services or resources are available.

CHC patients are often low-income and more likely to have a chronic medical condition such as diabetes, asthma or hypertension. In addition, CHCs serve many homeless individuals and those who struggle with HIV and/or AIDS.

In Illinois, community health centers serve as the medical home for more than 1.2 million patients at over 425 sites – 275 traditional and 150 special population sites. Over 50 percent of patients are enrolled in Medicaid, Family Care or the All Kids programs; while 32 percent have no health insurance at all.

What Services Do Community Health Centers Provide?

Through a staff of physicians, physician assistants, nurses, dentists, psychologists and other health professionals, CHCs provide an array of services to patients, including primary, dental and mental health care. Many CHCs also provide substance abuse counseling, chronic disease care management, disease screening, emergency medical services, patient education and preventive care services; as well as ancillary services such as job search and placement assistance, teen pregnancy counseling, HIV awareness and treatment, and assisted living programs.

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Clinical Rotations In Community Health

The Illinois Student/Resident Experiences and Rotations in Community Health (SEARCH) Program

The SEARCH Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

What is a Community Health Center?

Community, Migrant, Homeless, and Public Housing Health Centers—referred to as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) or community health centers (CHCs)—are nonprofit, community-directed health care providers serving low income and medically underserved communities.

Created by Congress, the national network of community health centers provides high-quality, affordable primary and preventive care for those whom other providers often do not serve, regardless of the individual's ability to pay.

In order to achieve the “federally qualified” status, community health centers must:

- Be governed by at least a 51 percent majority patient board who make decisions about programs, services and expenditures.
- Be located in a medically underserved area or provide care to medically underserved populations.
- Provide comprehensive primary and preventive care services, including dental and mental health.
- Employ physicians who are board certified or eligible for certification.
- Establish a formal relationship with one or more hospitals, which includes admitting privileges and 24-hour access to services.
- Submit comprehensive health plans for their geographic area.

What is the SEARCH Program?

The Illinois Student/Resident Experiences and Rotations in Community Health (SEARCH) program, funded by the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), offers training opportunities to qualified health professional students and primary care residents at community health centers (CHCs) located in urban/rural areas of Illinois. Students gain valuable, hands-on clinical and community health experiences by working on multidisciplinary teams providing care in medically underserved areas in Illinois.

Program Objectives

- Increase recruitment and retention of health care professionals in areas determined to have shortages in medical services by expanding the number of high-quality, service linked training opportunities available in these communities.
- Enhance teaching capacity of CHCs in Illinois.
- Facilitate and strengthen community/academic linkages.



Program Eligibility

Community-based training opportunities exist for primary care residents and medical/osteopathy, nurse practitioner, certified nurse midwife, physician assistant, dental health and some behavioral health students.

Program Requirements

- Enrollment in an accredited health professions program.
- Interest in community-oriented care.
- Commitment to serve the medically underserved.
- Appreciation of cultural diversity.
- Academic good standing.



Program Benefits

- Opportunity to train in multidisciplinary, culturally diverse community settings.
- Chance to learn about public health issues that impact the delivery of care to underserved populations.
- Prospect of exploring future residency/employment opportunities.
- Modest stipend.
- Housing assistance and modest reimbursement for approved travel expenses may be available in limited circumstances.

Program Management Team

The Illinois SEARCH management team is comprised of senior staff members of the Illinois Primary Health Care Association (IPHCA) and the Western Illinois Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) who have in-depth knowledge of community health centers and health professions training expertise.

IPHCA is a nonprofit trade association of community health centers that strives to improve the health status of medically underserved populations by fostering the provision of high-quality, comprehensive health care that is accessible, coordinated, community-directed, culturally-sensitive and linguistically-competent.

Western Illinois AHEC brings expertise in the community-based education of health professional students and residents within the state of Illinois, as well as nationwide connections to benefit the Illinois SEARCH program. AHEC's mission is to improve primary health care through educational partnership between academia and communities.



Participating Community Health Centers

Asian Human Services Family Health Center
Chicago Family Health Center
Community Health Improvement Center
Community Health Partnership of Illinois
Erie Family Health Center, Inc.
Greater Elgin Family Care Center
Heartland Community Health Clinic
Lake County Health Department/CHC
Lawndale Christian Health Center
Near North Health Service Corporation
PCC Community Wellness Center
PrimeCare Community Health, Inc.
Whiteside County Community Health Clinic
Will County Community Health Center



For information about services, communities and disciplines trained at each participating site, as well as application instructions, please visit www.iphca.org.

Please do not contact participating Community Health Centers directly.