Illinois Health and Hospital Association

For over 125 years, La Rabida Children's Hospital in Chicago has been improving the lives of patients with complex medical conditions and disabilities or who've experienced abuse or trauma. The hospital's integrated approach to healthcare includes addressing patient needs beyond medical care. To address community needs, its two food pantries tackle food insecurity and its Children's Advocacy Center supports those impacted by abuse and violent crime. Other programs provide free evidence-based trauma care and free screenings for type 1 diabetes to ensure access to care.

Addressing Community Needs

Many La Rabida patients and families are impacted by social drivers of health, the non-medical factors that influence health, well-being and quality of life. With food insecurity tied to healing, growth and development, La Rabida offers quality, nutritious foods through food pantries in the hospital's outpatient center and inpatient unit. Families can take what they need—no questions asked—as part of an effort to ensure families have healthy, nutritious food options.

"Supporting our families goes beyond medical care, and the La Rabida Food Pantry is an extension of who we are, what we do, and how we care," the hospital said.

Between 2023-2025, the pantries provided meals to 818 families—serving 3,605 people including 1,368 adults and caregivers and 2,237 children.

Like with food insecurity, experiencing abuse or violent crime can have a profound effect on health and well-being. The La Rabida Child Advocacy Center (CAC) responds to new reports of such experiences 24/7. Services offered through La Rabida's CAC—the second busiest in Cook County—include case coordination, forensic interviews, legal/Dept. of Child and Family Services life-cycle support, and community resources. The La Rabida CAC also offers child abuse prevention programs in schools.

Providing Accessible Healthcare

Every year, the La Rabida Chicago Child Trauma Center (CCTC) provides expert-level evidence-based trauma care to over 200 children and their families at no cost, something rarely seen elsewhere. The care is designed for individuals facing physical and sexual abuse or having witnessed violence and trauma. Assessments show 92% of children reported exposure to two or more trauma events and 73% reported four or more events in fiscal year (FY) 2024.

La Rabida works with University of Chicago Medicine Comer Pediatric Mobile Medical Unit to provide trauma-informed care to underserved and uninsured children at Chicago Public Schools, daycare centers, and community organizations on Chicago's South Side. The CCTC also offers free training on trauma-informed care to empower nurses, care coordinators and others to create safe and positive interactions to reduce the chance for re-traumatization. Nearly 2,000 people have been trained since the program began, with 907 trained in FY 2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) alone, representing a 52% increase year over year, and a 128% increase since FY 2019.

Another program, the La Rabida Chicago Children's Diabetes Center, in 2024 began free screenings of patients' first-degree relatives for type 1 diabetes. Those who show a likelihood of developing the disease can receive a new Food and Drug Administration-approved medication that can postpone disease onset. Over 100 individuals have been screened so far.

"This new program is a big step toward improving access to testing and treatment for at-risk individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity, which is integral to our mission," the hospital said.

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