Northwestern Medicine is committed to collaborating with local organizations that align with its mission to improve the health of communities by addressing community health needs, providing care that's accessible to all and helping drive economic growth through education and development initiatives.

The health system works with more than 300 local organizations that provide access to nutritious food, shelter and other essentials, and support initiatives that help improve the health of communities. In 2024, Northwestern Medicine provided more than $18 million in grant funding to community organizations, reflecting the health system's commitment to building a healthier Chicagoland.

Addressing Community Health Needs

Exposure to violence can lead to grief, depression and other mental health challenges. To address mental health needs for those who have experienced trauma in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, Northwestern Medicine supports Bright Star Community Outreach (BSCO).

Financial assistance from Northwestern Medicine, UChicago Medicine and United Way of Metropolitan Chicago has helped the organization launch a helpline through its The Urban Resilience Network (TURN) Model, which trains faith and community leaders to provide free trauma counseling and, if needed, referrals to a mental health professional.

"With Bright Star Community Outreach and Northwestern Medicine partnering, the one statement that I would make is a game-changer," said Chris Harris Sr., BSCO CEO and pastor of Bright Star Church of God in Christ. "Northwestern Medicine partners are seen as part of the fabric of the community."

Northwestern Medicine also provides financial support for Kelly Hall YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, which offers no-cost health screenings, and education like Mental Health First Aid training to assist staff in identifying and taking steps to help individuals struggling. Kelly Hall YMCA Operations Director Jarita Hearn said, "If it wasn't for Northwestern Medicine, I'm not sure what we would do. We are in a community where there's major crises going on, on the street, so Mental Health First Aid means that we can see somebody having an issue, and it can be addressed ."

Providing Accessible Health Care

Northwestern Medicine clinicians dedicate their time and services to Family Health Partnership and Erie Family Health Centers, community organizations that both serve communities with a high number of residents who are living in poverty and lack health insurance or are underinsured.

"We've been working with Northwestern Medicine since they came into the area, and the partnership has been tremendous," said Suzanne Hoban, Executive Director and Founder of the Family Health Partnership Clinic. "They've really personalized the access to specialized care and really helped us get our uninsured patients in for additional services. Northwestern has been such a great partner."

"Whether a patient has a highly complex pregnancy or a routine delivery, one philosophy that Northwestern Medicine and Erie share is every pregnant patient deserves the highest quality of prenatal care and a top-level hospital experience for delivery," says Erie Family Health Centers President and CEO Lee Francis, MD, MPH.

Training Future Clinicians

The Northwestern Medicine GCM Grosvenor Scholars Program is helping build tomorrow's healthcare workforce by introducing Chicago students at George Westinghouse College Prep in Garfield Park and on the DuSable High School Campus in Bronzeville to careers in medicine and science.

Select rising sophomores to seniors learn on-site from leading physicians and scientists at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. They also attend summer intensives, educational seminars and trips, and interactive learning experiences.

Westinghouse College Prep principal W. Terrell Burgess said, "we're grateful for a partnership that invests in our students and gives them a sense of possibility and belonging in a field where they can make a real difference."