

SUBURBAN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE COUNCIL  
ANNUAL REPORT 2020

2020  
The  
Unprecedented  
Year



Access to Care  
FILLING THE GAP FOR THE UNINSURED

**Our mission is to facilitate access to primary health care services for residents of suburban Cook County and northwest Chicago who lack such access because of financial barriers.**



## **Our Challenge in 2020: COVID-19, The Pandemic**

The global pandemic has intensely impacted our Access to Care members—some of the populations most negatively affected by it.

Most of our members are people of color—historically underserved in health care. Many work front-line and essential-worker jobs. Part of the populations that became infected faster and with more dire health outcomes, Access to Care members were also more likely to face food and housing insecurity as a result of job losses.

Our focus in 2020: To relieve some of the pandemic-related member worries; to help support them by providing even easier access to health care services and to share frequent, relevant information.

Access to Care (ATC) welcomes all residents of our service area regardless of race, religion, country of origin, gender identity, orientation, physical and mental ability.

ACCESS TO CARE IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROGRAM FOR LOW-INCOME, UNINSURED AND UNDER-INSURED RESIDENTS OF SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY AND NORTHWEST CHICAGO.

**We asked Access to Care members how they have been affected by the pandemic.**

"Greetings ATC! Hope You are Well and Thank You for allowing me to continue to receive medical assistance, which due to ATC's extreme generosity, has literally SAVED MY LIFE! Regarding 2020, it was a very challenging year, emotionally, financially, and physically! Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, I have been unemployed since March 2020, subsequently, I sign-up weekly to receive benefit from the local food-pantries and community resources - and if there are programs that will [provide] assistance financially, please let me know how I can enroll. THANK YOU AGAIN ATC FOR CARING THE WAY YOU DO!"

"I have been with Access to Care for 10 years. If it were taken away I have nowhere to go for my health care needs. I do not drive and my Access to Care doctor is close to me. I was also diagnosed with COVID-19 and ATC helped me by [telling me about] a place where I can go to be seen."

"I lost my job for 5 months because of COVID."

"Both my roommates and I lost jobs. One had to move out, so the two renters

remaining had to cover increased rent. I did have a positive COVID test and experienced a flu like illness. I am still having shortness of breath on exertion, but I'm hoping this isn't permanent."

"Lost my job and health insurance, still unemployed. Difficulty with everything since."

"I work in the restaurant industry which is being systematically attacked. No money. Difficulty buying groceries, RX, personal care products, etc."

"NO MONEY FOR THE RENT. NO MONEY FOR FOOD. NO MONEY FOR CLOTHES."

"Lost my job been going to food pantry. Unemployment is not enough to cover my bills."

"Being a single mom, I have not been able to work due to online classes for my 6 year old child. It's been such a big challenge of having to make a choice of either work or home schooling."

"Loss of job, difficult pay mortgage."

"Loss in wages, difficulty deciding whether to pay rent, bills or food. Our only vehicle keeps breaking we have no other means of safe transportation during pandemic especially to keep my kids safe and healthy. I have a special needs toddler who is more vulnerable to viruses. I can hardly expose him outdoors now new mutations are even scarier. I have had to postpone appointments due to car being unsafe to drive. We have no garden for our young kids to play safely and socially distanced plus weather is not helpful. My husband and I are going through depression and marital challenges."

**These are some of their stories, in their own words.**



## **Dear Friends of Access to Care,**

What an unprecedented year 2020 was for the world, our nation, and our local communities!

The COVID-19 pandemic took over and altered our daily routines and sadly took many lives. The impact on the economy, including states and municipalities, has been devastating. The impact on our psyches and the way we work and socialize are still being felt as the pandemic continues. And, as usual, those who are most vulnerable in our society have suffered disproportionately. These are the folks Access to Care serves daily.

We have always been the only health care coverage option for our members. In 2020, we met unexpected and unplanned challenges by redirecting and focusing our efforts. We identified how we could be most helpful to our members during this time. We modified procedures and provided information to our members about the virus. In addition to health-safety measures, this information included expanded referrals to organizations that help with financial and food scarcity issues and other social conditions that impact health.

Beyond the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic, our members continued to access health care through the program for their usual, ongoing care. As with many organizations and businesses, we served our members from remote locations, when necessary.

Access to Care supporters faced many demands and challenges of their own. We are grateful for their continued partnership in 2020, when our members' needs were also challenging and acute.

Access to Care is an effective and efficient model that uses existing health care infrastructure and is a lean operation. This has allowed us to quickly pivot to meet the extraordinary demands of the times.

We are confident that with the support of our donors and community partners, including the network of health care providers, we can continue to respond to the known and the unanticipated challenges ahead.

With hopes for a healthy future for all,



Tony Bono  
Board Chair



Kathryn Franklin  
President & CEO

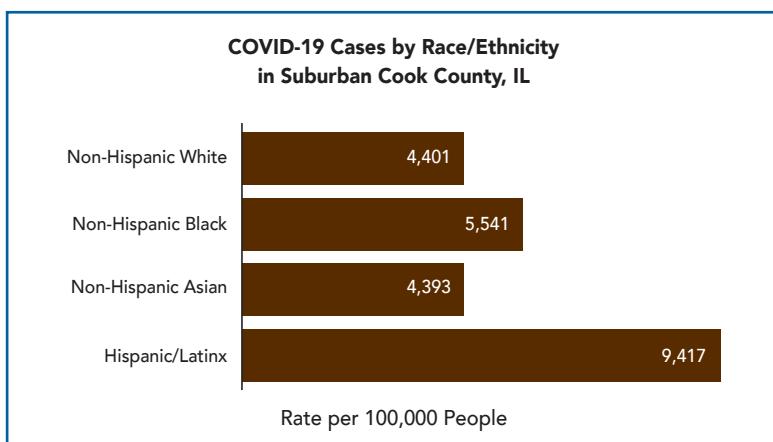
# COVID-19 and Access to Care Members

According to data from the Illinois Cook County Department of Public Health, 10.5% to 31.7% of suburban Cook County residents tested positive for COVID-19 over a five month period in 2020. An Access to Care member sampling showed a 22.3%

positivity rate among those tested for approximately the same time period.



The Latinx/Hispanic population in suburban Cook County had the highest rate of COVID-19 cases with more dire results than the general population. 64% of Access to Care members identify as Hispanic/Latinx.



Member polling provided these insights into our members' pressured lives during the initial months of the pandemic:

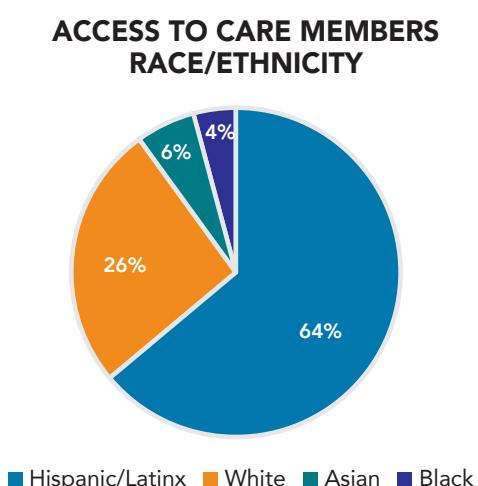
Over 53% had concerns for their safety because of working at high-risk jobs.

46.8% either lost jobs or were unable to work due to the pandemic.

46% were concerned about lack of child-care services and providing remote learning while trying to work.

40.6% suffered from depression due to pandemic related issues.

31% were unable to pay bills or buy food.



## 2020 Highlights

We served nearly 6000 members.

New applications to the program increased significantly on a daily basis.

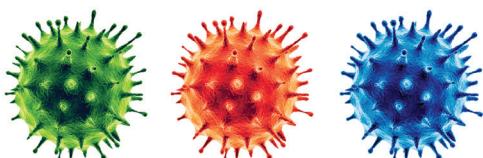
We continued to provide health education through our bi-monthly diabetes education newsletter, in English and Spanish, through the U.S. post and emails.

We conducted outreach activities, in-person and virtually, through more than 600 contacts with community groups, to introduce the program and sign-up eligible individuals. Fewer in-person activities were conducted due to the pandemic.

We increased our social media and digital activities significantly; utilized more print advertising, interviewed a medical expert to address issues of "COVID Fatigue" in a video for our website. We were able to utilize communication vehicles that had the potential to reach 3 million individuals, including interviews with local television stations in English and Spanish.

Our staff responded to 5,000 phone calls requesting help because we are a trusted organization in the community. Our Resource Desk provided information and referred community members (including non-ATC members) to resources for various needs beyond health care coverage, including food banks, job centers, immigration help, etc. We also referred people to the County Medicaid program, if eligible.

We received a grant from Cook County Health to assist in COVID-19 contact-tracing activities.



**On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Access to Care responded not only to members, but to all the communities served by the program.**

## Our Response to the Pandemic

**We implemented immediate programmatic changes, provided frequent communications in English and Spanish, and collaborated with trusted partners to share information and resources to those who had been negatively and disproportionately affected by COVID-19.**

We made the following accommodations:

Temporarily suspended program enrollment fees in light of economic challenges

Did not terminate members due to lack of re-enrollment; regardless of the expiration date, their membership remained active

Helped members cover the cost of their prescription co-payments through the Access to Care Rx Relief Fund (certain restrictions applied; most members were eligible to receive their medications at a zero co-pay)

Supported sheltering in place by allowing members to receive a 90-day supply of medication, at the 30-day supply co-pay rate

Made online ATC application available by May 2020 in English and Spanish

Provided expedited over-the-phone ATC application assistance with bilingual staff

Removed any barriers to program access, especially important to those without health care coverage because of pandemic-related job losses, allowing immediate receipt of program benefits (applicants were presumed eligible and had 90-days to document eligibility to continue in the program for the full 12-month term)

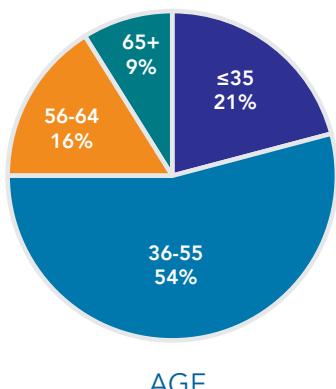
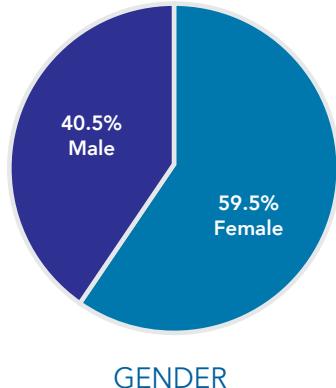
Communicated with members quickly and frequently about COVID-19 symptomology, public health safety guidance, health care access, and modifications to the ATC program

Communicated options for non-medical needs and resources especially: housing services, bill payment assistance, help with rent and mortgage, food insecurities, unemployment, mental health, and immigrants' rights

## Our Members

Nearly 25% of our members are diabetic compared to about 6% of the general population.

About 25% of members receive medications through the program, for 3 or more disease states.



Over 45% of members are below the federal poverty level.

Prior to the pandemic over 70% of members were employed.

Over 80% of members had no health care coverage prior to joining the program.

## We work efficiently and effectively

Access to Care's annual cost for each member was \$625 in 2020.

For that amount, we delivered unlimited access to primary care services in our members' own communities.

88% of Access to Care resources support program services.

Public funds provided by Cook County Health were leveraged with donated services of approximately \$5,000,000.

Access to Care enables individuals to remain productive and contributing members of society. Untreated chronic illness impacts quality of life including the ability to work and be productive.

Members identify over 20 different languages as their primary language. The top three are Spanish (59%), English (24%) and Arabic (11%).

Many ATC physicians are bilingual and the program tries to match members with physicians who can speak their primary language.

## Most frequent diagnoses and services

### Diagnosis

Hypertension  
Diabetes  
Thyroid Disorder  
Anxiety Disorder  
High Cholesterol

### Laboratory Procedures

Complete metabolic panel (CMP)  
Hemoglobin, glycated Lipid panel  
Complete blood count (CBC)  
Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH)

### Radiology Procedures

Mammogram  
Lower extremities  
Breast ultrasound  
Chest  
Spine

### Medications by Therapeutic Class

Diabetes  
High Cholesterol  
High Blood Pressure  
Calcium Channel Blockers  
Diuretics

## “What Access to Care Means to Me”

“I am the daughter of someone who has had Access to Care benefits for the past few years and a Cook County citizen. I pray that you have never been in a position where your diabetic mother hesitated seeing a doctor because she could not afford it and you could do nothing. You see her and your dad working tirelessly at just above minimum wage jobs. These jobs prevented them from getting any Medicaid benefits but due to the astronomical cost of health insurance offered to them, could not afford health insurance offered on the [Affordable Care Act] Marketplace. Her employer was small enough to not have to offer health insurance.

I did my research and math and found that more than 3/4 of my mom’s income would go just to pay the premiums on a bare essentials health insurance plan. This would leave barely anything to pay for food and utilities!

Then I found out about Access to Care. It allowed my mother to have a caring provider that managed her health without her worrying that she will not be able to afford dinner. Access to Care covers her DOCTORS visits. She is very responsible and follows through with all MD recommendations. She is so happy that she has someone that can provide such wonderful care and she feels TAKEN CARE of! It does not cover hospital visits, diagnostics, etc.; we know that. But it provides a sense of security that right now, we are TAKEN CARE of.

I have no idea what to do if this program does not exist.”



# Our Community

Townships, municipalities, and social service agencies including those that address concerns such as food shortage, housing, immigration, and employment help Access to Care link members and the general public to needed services. Listed on this page are those who served as registration sites in 2020, helping us enroll members and build awareness of the program for those who are in need.



**THE AREAS WE SERVE:**  
Suburban Cook County and  
northwest Chicago  
(west of Pulaski Rd and  
north of North Ave)

Access to Care is endorsed by the Institute of Medicine of Chicago, the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians, the Illinois chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Northern Illinois chapter of the American College of Physicians and is officially supported by the Chicago Medical Society and is a previous recipient of the Governor's Hometown award.

## NORTH

ACCESS at Northwest Family Health Center  
ACCESS Genesis Center for Health and Empowerment  
Barrington Township  
City of Des Plaines  
Elk Grove Township  
Frisbie Senior Center  
Greater Elgin Family Care Centers (Creekside, McHenry, Seneca, Streamwood, Summit)  
Hanover Township  
Maine Township  
Niles Township  
Northfield Township  
Northwest Compass  
Omni Youth Services  
Palatine Township  
Schaumburg Township  
Village of Arlington Heights  
Village of Mt. Prospect  
Village of Wheeling  
Vista Health Center  
Wheeling Township

## SOUTH AND CHICAGO

ACCESS Family Health Society  
Arab American Action Network  
Arab American Family Services  
Aunt Martha's Chicago Heights Community Health Center  
Bremen Township  
Cook County Department of Public Health  
Orland Township  
Palos Township  
Park Forest Township  
Rich Township  
Southland Ministerial Health Network  
TCA Health Center  
Worth Township

## WEST

Berwyn Township  
ACCESS Des Plaines Valley Health Center  
Leyden Township  
Norwood Park Township  
Oak Park – River Forest Food Pantry  
Proviso Township  
Town of Cicero

# Donors and Supporters

Cook County Health continued to be key to the success of the program in 2020. We have long standing relationships with townships and municipalities. Many serve as intake sites enrolling their constituents in the program and/or contribute funds. These public funds are enhanced by many private foundations and individuals who care about the community and its people. In addition to the generous donors listed here, we are very grateful to the many physicians and providers who give their services at substantial discounts. On behalf of those we serve, we thank all of them for their continuing commitment and generosity.

## PUBLIC

Cook County Health  
Barrington Township  
Elk Grove Township  
Leyden Township  
Niles Township  
Northfield Township  
Palatine Township  
Riverside Township  
Schaumburg Township  
Wheeling Township  
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Village of Mount Prospect  
Village of Schaumburg  
City of Des Plaines

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# **The Access to Care Program**

## **Filling the gap for the uninsured and the underinsured**

We have served over 125,000 unduplicated community residents and many of them for several years.

ATC contracts with over 500 physicians and hospitals to offer deeply discounted care to ATC members.

### **Member Benefits:**

**Unlimited visits with a primary care physician in their own community for \$5 per visit**

**Unlimited laboratory and x-ray services for \$5 per test**

**Prescription plan with local pharmacies: \$15 for generic, \$30 for preferred brand, or \$40 for non-preferred brand name prescriptions**

**Behavioral health support, including 8 sessions for \$5 each. Additional sessions available on a sliding fee**

**Breast ultrasounds for \$5**

**Free diabetic testing strips**

**Free vaccinations for flu and pneumonia**

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**Friends of Access to Care can help provide our community with primary health care.**

**Donations can be made through our website  
[www.accesstocare.org](http://www.accesstocare.org)**

**or**

**by directly contacting our office  
[info@accesstocare.org](mailto:info@accesstocare.org) 708.531.0680**

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Suburban Primary Health Care Council (SPHCC), Westchester, IL  
708.531.0680 [www.accesstocare.org](http://www.accesstocare.org) [www.facebook.com/accesstocare](http://www.facebook.com/accesstocare)

*The not-for-profit corporation that administers the Access to Care program, was formed in 1988 by a confederation composed of the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, Inc., the Cook County Department of Public Health, the Northwest Suburban Cook County Health Care Task Force, and the Park Forest Health Department.*