



**Howard & Evanston
Community Center**



**metropolitan[™]
family services**

IMPACT REPORT
JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025

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July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

We provide the tools and resources to **mpower** individuals, enabling their independence, and offering a better chance for a brighter tomorrow.

Welcome from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Looking back on 2025, I am struck by the strength and generosity that run through every part of the Howard & Evanston Community Center. This year has been one of progress and possibility, made real by the people who walk through our doors and those who stand beside us.

Adult Education became a gathering place for global voices, with learners from 50 countries surpassing Illinois' performance goals and advancing toward new careers and opportunities. In Re-Entry Services, participants like Tatayana demonstrated what's possible when determination meets support, moving from Fresh Start workshops to earning a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and preparing to launch a business. Our Youth Services gave young people space to create, lead, and mentor, while our Food Pantry provided nearly half a million pounds of food to neighbors balancing impossible choices.

At the heart of it all are the volunteers and supporters who make this work possible. Your time, commitment, and belief in our mission transform programs into pathways and challenges into opportunities.

Together, we are not only responding to urgent needs but also shaping futures filled with dignity, stability, and hope.

Yours in service,



Jason Kaiser
Executive Director



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Adult Education

ADULT EDUCATION AT HECC: BUILDING SKILLS, OPENING DOORS

HECC's Adult Education program helps adults build literacy, language, and academic skills needed for work, college, and everyday life. In 2025, the program served 307 students and exceeded our state's measurable skills gains goal. We have a very diverse group of adult learners. Students represented 50 countries and spoke 42 languages, creating a vibrant, multicultural learning community. Adult Education is the first step on a career pathway. Our program empowers adults with the knowledge, confidence, and opportunity to build brighter futures for themselves and their families.

CLIENT IMPACT STORY: *Tatiana Abomo*

Tatiana's experience in HECC's Community Health Worker (CHW) program sparked her passion for maternal and child health and opened doors to new opportunities. After she completed her CHW training, Tatiana was offered a position as a maternal health advocate with Sinai Hospitals, but the commute proved too difficult to meet her family needs. In the meantime, she has been actively involved in a community pregnancy group, participating as both a learner and a mentor. Determined to keep growing, she earned her GED in record time, studying 16 hours a week and working with a tutor nearly every day. Tatiana also received the Gateway Scholarship through City Colleges of Chicago, which provides free tuition and books for high-performing adult education students transitioning into college. She has since completed an ESL Transitions course and begun her first college credit class, building a foundation for a career serving women and families.



307

STUDENTS ENROLLED
*from 50 countries and
speaking 42 languages*

57.5%

MEASURABLE SKILLS GAINS
(MSGs)
+3.5% over FY24

9

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY
(HSE & FORMERLY GED) EARNED
+4 over FY24

18

HSE SUBTESTS PASSED
Subtests count as an MSG

216

(70%) STUDENTS REPORTING
ACHIEVING A PERSONAL GOAL
+24% over FY24

Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Impact

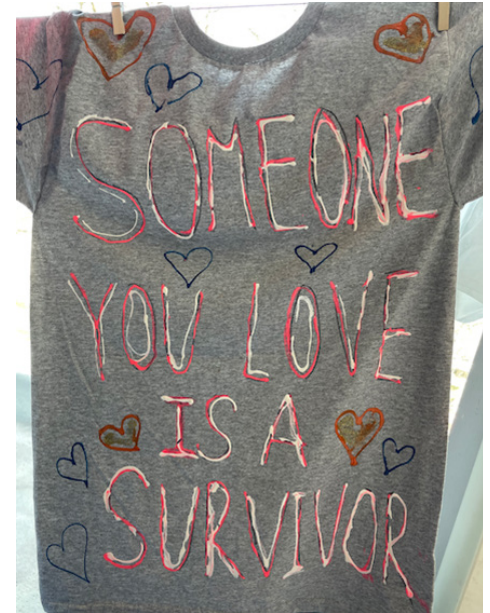
The HECC Domestic Violence Program provides compassionate, trauma-informed support for individuals and families experiencing intimate partner abuse. Services include crisis intervention, safety planning, counseling, and legal advocacy to help survivors find safety and stability. Education on the cycle of abuse, coping skills, and self-care empowers participants to regain control of their lives. Financial and housing assistance, along with referrals to HECC programs and community partners, help remove barriers to independence. Through a supportive and nonjudgmental approach, the program helps survivors heal, rebuild confidence, and create safer futures for themselves and their families.

A SURVIVOR'S STORY

For survivors, being in a violent relationship can feel like a merry-go-round with no way off. One young client, only 21, wanted the abuse to stop but didn't know how. She was raising her baby, working part time, and attending college while living with an abusive partner who frequently hit and choked her, accused her of cheating, and called her names.

After a violent incident that brought child protection services into her life, she began counseling through our Domestic Violence Program. At first, she felt forced to attend and doubted it would help. Over time, with patience and emotional support, she began to believe that a life free from abuse was possible.

She obtained an emergency protection order that became permanent and continued counseling, learning coping skills and self-care while rebuilding her confidence. With our help covering rent and utilities, she began to stabilize. Today she is healing, thriving, and breaking the cycle of abuse for herself and her child.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DATA

CLIENTS SERVED:

202

TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS OF
DIRECT SERVICE:

3,622.50

TOTAL NUMBER OF SUPPORT
GROUP HOURS:

271.5

TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL
COUNSELING HOURS:

1,623.25

TOTAL NUMBER OF EMERGENCY
ORDERS OF PROTECTION GRANTED:

60

TOTAL NUMBER OF PLENARY ORDERS
OF PROTECTION GRANTED:

18

TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSING
ADVOCACY HOURS:

104

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEGAL
ADVOCACY HOURS:

583

TOTAL NUMBER OF
OUTREACH EVENTS:

18

TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS
REACHED IN OUTREACH:

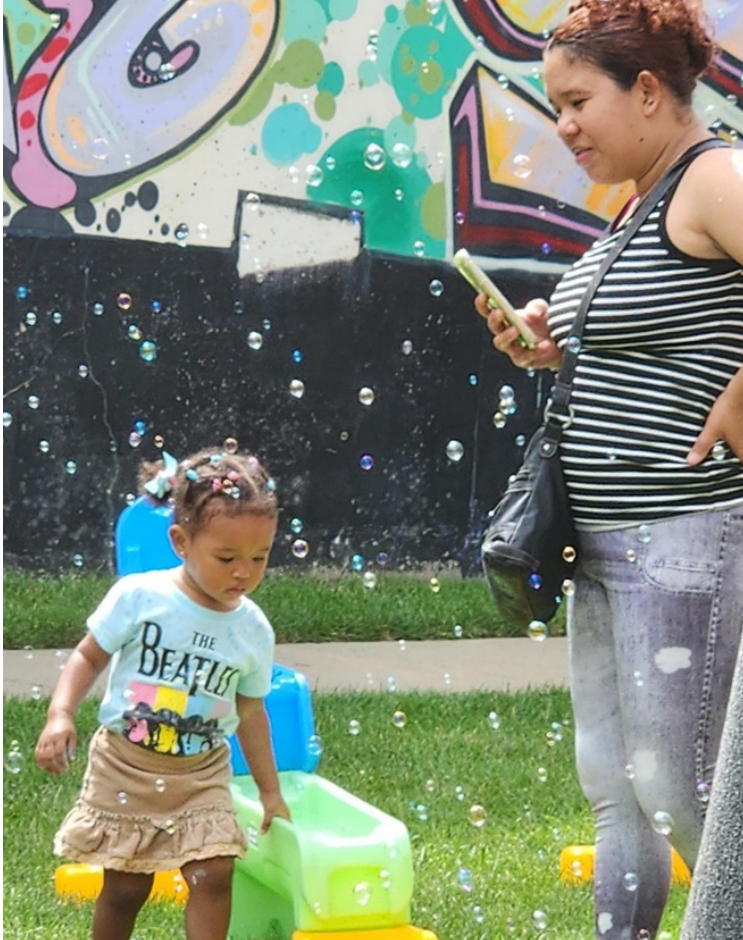
1,521

TOTAL NUMBER OF
HOTLINE CALLS:

399

Early Learning

HECC's Early Childhood Education operates out of the Sheila Reynolds Berner Family Center in Chicago. The program offers year-round care and learning for children ages 0-5 and their families. Through Early Head Start, it serves 48 infants and toddlers, and through Head Start, 36 preschoolers receive daily early education and school readiness interventions. For working families needing longer hours, we participate in Illinois Action for Children's Child Care Assistance Program so children can stay in care while their parents work.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

This year, our program strengthened family partnerships through monthly engagement meetings on parenting, social-emotional development, health, nutrition, and safety. We began with Curriculum Night and Parent Orientation, setting a collaborative tone for the year. Families participated in sessions on school readiness, positive discipline, and special education referrals, as well as literacy events like Family Reading Day and community activities such as Splish Splash Field Day and a Holiday Celebration with gift card support. Monthly Coffee Tables offered welcoming spaces for dialogue, while the Parents as Teachers curriculum provided families with tools and activities to support their child's learning and development.



CLIENT SUCCESS STORY: Rivera Family (names changed for privacy)

The Rivera family joined our infant room after immigrating to Rogers Park. As first-time parents, Jose and Isabel faced the challenges of adapting to a new country, caring for their daughter Emilia, and managing financial stress on a single income. Staff provided essentials such as diapers and clothing and connected them to food pantries, the Rogers Park Free Store, and the library. Emilia initially struggled with separation anxiety, but her teacher created a nurturing classroom and, with support from our mental health consultant, helped Jose and Isabel learn techniques to comfort Emilia and build her confidence. As Emilia adjusted, Isabel began focusing on her own goals. She enrolled in HECC's Adult Education classes to improve her English, worked with staff to build a resume and practice interviews, and eventually secured a part-time job at an early learning center to contribute to her family's financial security. The family is now thriving. Today, the Riveras feel more secure and empowered, celebrating Emilia's milestones with pride and hope for the future.

KEY DATA

100% Enrollment in our Head Start (3-5 years old) and Early Head Start (0-3 years old) programs

25% Enrollment of children with disabilities in both programs

80% Overall Attendance Rate

SCHOOL READINESS MEASUREMENTS

85%

LITERACY

80%

MATH

88%

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

87%

PHYSICAL

85%

LANGUAGE

83%

COGNITIVE



Food Assistance

The Howard & Evanston Community Center Food Pantry provides free, nutritious, and culturally representative groceries to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. Operating as a client-choice model, the pantry allows clients to select items that best meet their household's needs and preferences, promoting dignity and reducing waste. In 2025, HECC distributed nearly 500,000 pounds of food, a 6 percent increase over 2024, reflecting growing demand as families face rising costs for food, housing, and transportation. The pantry serves residents of Rogers Park and an increasing number of households from Evanston and surrounding neighborhoods. Supported by partnerships with the Greater Chicago Food Depository and community donors, the pantry remains a vital lifeline for working families seeking consistent and reliable food access.



Christopher Perez, Re-Entry and Pantry

HECC FOOD PANTRY

FROM SERVICE TO SECOND CHANCES: *Christopher's Path Forward*

Our volunteers are the backbone of the HECC Food Pantry, and Christopher Perez's journey shows how service can spark transformation. He first came to HECC through a court-ordered community service requirement, choosing to fulfill his hours at the pantry. What began as an obligation quickly grew into commitment. Christopher's consistency, reliability, and positive spirit impressed staff, especially Food Pantry Coordinator Silvina Mamani, who connected him to our Intake & Referral Team. Through them, he joined the HECC Re-Entry Program and Fresh Start Workshop, marking his shift from volunteer to participant.

After completing his service hours, Christopher chose to stay. He excelled in the Fresh Start Workshop and went on to complete Metropolitan Family Services' Job Readiness Training, building new skills and confidence. With support from his Case Manager, he entered the Chicago Transit Authority's Second Chance Program. Christopher's story illustrates the power of connection, opportunity, and true second chances.



Silvina, Pantry

FY25 PANTRY DATA

5,818 Total Served

(Individuals and Households)

52,202 Total Pantry Visits

(Individuals and Households)

8.4 visits *(Average per Household)*

9.2 visits *(Average per Individual)*

498,272 lbs. of Total Food Distributed

Client Intake Services

This program year marked the beginning of HECC's client intake services. Every prospective client now begins with a short interview designed to identify needs and introduce the full range of services available. This process reduces barriers between programs, strengthens care coordination, and ensures clients receive support in a comprehensive and connected way.

Through our integration with the nine other Metropolitan Family Services (MFS) sites across Chicagoland, which together responded to more than 27,000 inquiries in 2025, clients benefit from access to a broad network of resources. When a need cannot be met within MFS, our strong external referral partnerships provide additional pathways to support.

The intake service has become a vital entry point and bridge between program areas, helping clients navigate complex challenges and ensuring that no matter where they begin, they are connected to the right care and resources for their journey forward.

FY25 INTAKE & REFERRAL DATA

641

TOTAL CALLS

98.6%

OF CALLERS GETTING
AT LEAST 1 REFERRAL

97%

OF CALLERS GETTING
AT LEAST 1 INTERNAL REFERRAL

374

INTAKE CALLS WITH
0-10 MINUTES DURATION

207

INTAKE CALLS WITH
11-20 MINUTES DURATION

61

INTAKE CALLS WITH
20+ MINUTES DURATION



Re-Entry Support Services

HECC's Re-Entry Support Services program helps returning citizens rebuild their lives with stability and opportunity. Each participant begins with a criminogenic risk and protective factor assessment to identify strengths, challenges, and likelihood of returning to prison. This guides an individualized plan developed with a Case Manager and Career Coach. Clients also participate in the Fresh Start Training, which helps participants overcome barriers to successful community re-entry while building workplace skills and exploring career pathways. Clients are then connected to employment, vocational training, and wraparound services such as housing, healthcare, and counseling. Through this comprehensive approach, HECC supports each person's progress from re-entry to long-term success.

RE-ENTRY SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

FROM FRESH START TO CDL: *Tatayana's Journey*

A year ago, Tatayana entered HECC's Fresh Start Job Readiness Training workshop determined to change her future. She set her sights on earning a CDL and building a transportation career. Following the program's pathway, she first secured stable employment, quickly landing a job at Culver's. Three months later, she returned with pay stubs, ready to advance into CDL training.

The road wasn't easy. Tatayana faced setbacks and retook tests, but her persistence paid off when she earned her CDL. She began driving trucks, then applied for a CTA bus driver position while continuing work with a logistics company. Now, she's preparing to launch her own logistics business and is leasing office space to bring that vision to life.

Tatayana's story shows the power of determination combined with opportunity. By following Fresh Start's steps of employment, training, and advancement, she transformed a bold decision into a thriving future.



Tatayana, Re-Entry Success Spotlight

KEY DATA

181 individuals completed the Fresh Start Workshop, graduating from **13 cohorts** that build core re-entry, decision-making, and workforce readiness skills.

89% (161 participants) completed an Individualized Re-Entry Plan, demonstrating strong engagement and follow-through on personalized goals for stability, employment, and reduced risk behaviors.

Extremely low recidivism among participants on parole: Of the 29 individuals on IDOC parole at enrollment, only one recidivated, reflecting the program's effectiveness in supporting compliance and reducing justice-system involvement.

Workforce Services

HECC WORKFORCE: BUILDING PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

In 2025, HECC launched HECC Workforce, combining re-entry employment services with adult education to better serve community job seekers. The program helps returning citizens, adults with limited English, and others facing barriers to employment build skills, confidence, and career connections. Re-entry staff build trust and connect participants with employers, while adult education staff provide English learning, high school completion, and career training that prepare people for advancement. Together, they offer one strong, coordinated workforce pathway. A major highlight was the April 2025 Job Fair, which drew 341 job seekers, 12 employers, and 4 partner organizations representing industries such as healthcare, hospitality, logistics, and public transit. HECC Workforce is helping neighbors turn hard work into meaningful employment and brighter futures.



Job Fair Registration

Inside Job Fair



KEY DATA

128 job placements

10 people entering Commercial Driver's License training (with 4 already licensed)

38 earning health-related certificates

20 advancing into higher education or vocational programs

Youth Services

HECC's Youth Services provide a safe and engaging space where young people learn, grow, and explore their potential. Programs combine academic support, creative expression, and skill-building to prepare youth for success in school, work, and life. Through afterschool and summer opportunities, participants engage in STEAM learning, media production, mentoring, and leadership development while building confidence and teamwork. Social-emotional learning and prosocial activities promote resilience, problem-solving, and healthy relationships. From hands-on projects like art and coding to career readiness workshops and field trips, HECC helps youth develop skills, discover strengths, and create pathways to brighter futures.

2025 SUMMER MEDIA & PRODUCTION PROGRAM RECAP

This summer, HECC's Media & Production Program brought together young creators for six weeks of hands-on learning in digital media, livestreaming, video editing, and career preparation. More than a technical workshop, the program fostered confidence, creativity, and teamwork while exploring storytelling through technology.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- **LIVESTREAMING**
Students used OBS Studio to run live broadcasts, host tournaments, and stream LEGO builds.
- **VIDEO EDITING**
Starting in CapCut and moving into DaVinci Resolve, they learned pacing, captions, and audio balancing.
- **CONTENT CREATION**
From thumbnails to highlight reels, students produced polished, engaging media.
- **CAREER PREP**
Each participant built a resume, identified strengths, and explored media career paths.

IMPACT

Students produced edited videos, designed graphics, and completed livestreams. Beyond technical skills, they strengthened communication, problem-solving, and teamwork—skills that will benefit them in school, work, and creative projects.



Youth

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

PEER MENTOR: *Kiermarr*

This summer, Kiermarr excelled as a peer mentor while leading elementary-age members in building a Snap Circuit Moonbase. In this hands-on STEM project, students designed a model lunar base powered by real electronic circuits. Using color-coded snap pieces, they connected switches, lights, and motors to simulate how power might work on the Moon. Kiermarr's patience, encouragement, and clear explanations helped younger students understand how electricity flows and stay motivated through each step.

At the Clubhouse, peer mentoring helps youth build leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. Kiermarr's success shows how young leaders can inspire others through teamwork and shared learning.



Thank You to All Our Donors

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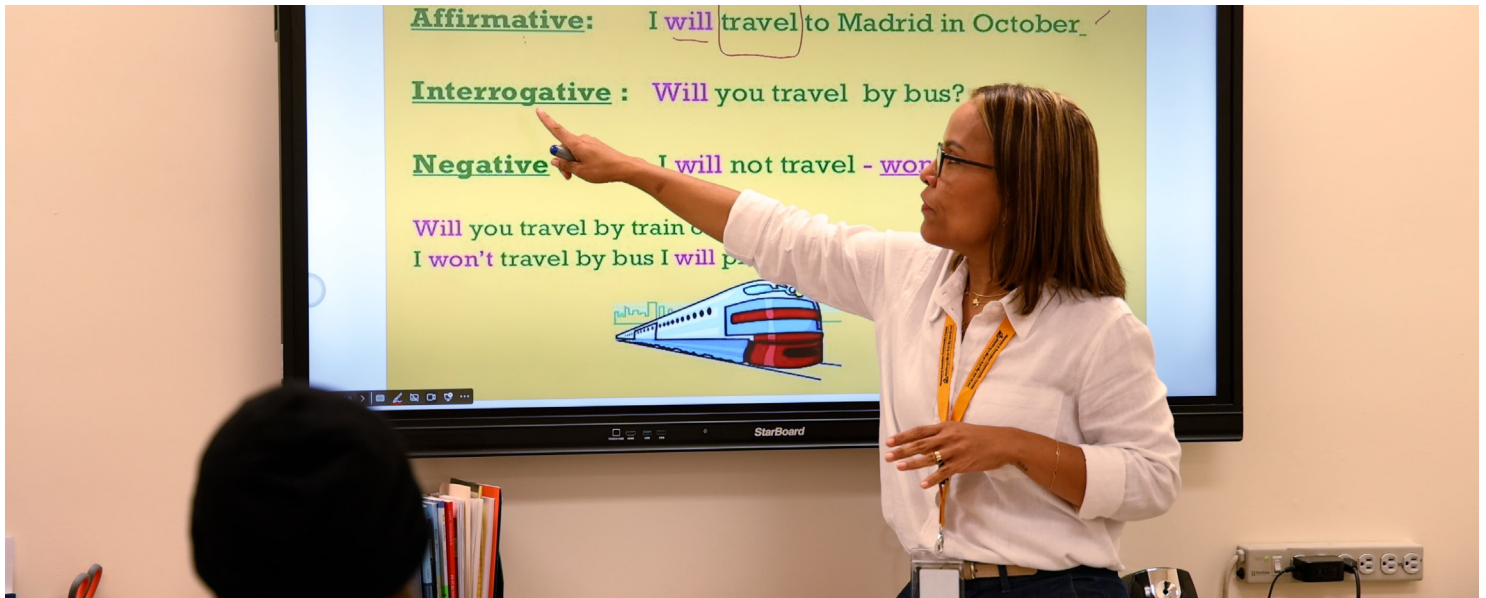
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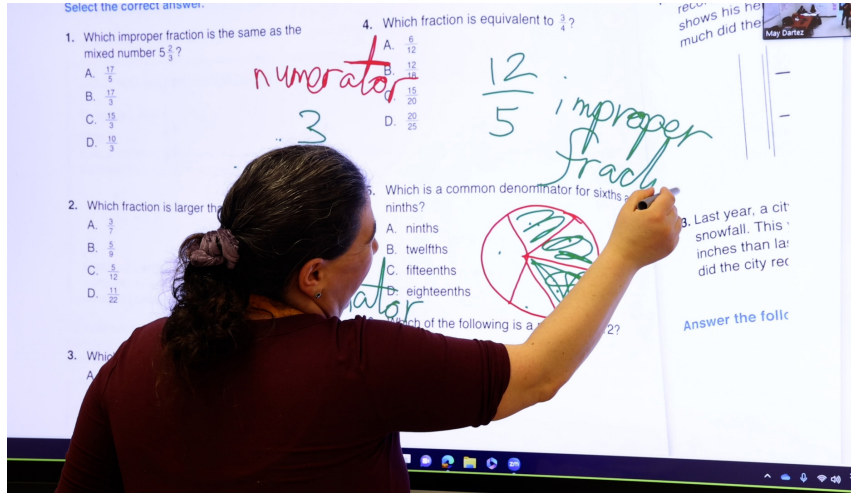
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