

Wellness West Produces 2025 Impact Highlights

Wellness West continues to deliver remarkable patient outcomes, according to the healthcare transformation collaborative's recently completed 2025 Impact Highlights report.

Among the findings of Wellness West patients in 10 West Side zip codes of Chicago:

- 85% of patients accessed preventive or ambulatory health services, compared to the state average of 73%.
- 74% achieved hypertension control at their most recent encounter, compared to 56% statewide.
- 66% achieved diabetes control at their most recent counter; the state average was 58%.
- 46% received a follow-up visit within seven days of behavioral health emergency department discharge, compared to 35% across the state.

Other findings show that 46% of Wellness West patients are Hispanic and 42% are Black. Nearly 45% are ages 41 to 60 years old, almost 27% are 61 years old or older and 21% are ages 18 to 40.

[See the full report](#)

[Wellness West website](#)

2025 Impact Highlights

An Wellness West, we envision a thriving, healthy West Side of Chicago where healthcare and social services are accessible to those who need them most.

Wellness West brings together 4 hospitals, 13 health centers, 4 mental health centers, and 20 community-based organizations across the West Side zip codes.

Our strength is rooted in strong emergency alignment, powered by a highly collaborative and integrated team. More than 500 Community Health Workers (CHWs) serve as trusted advocates and navigators, bringing lived experience, deep community understanding, and meaningful connection to every interaction. The results of all this effort are highlighted in this document. Wellness West is using lives.

Life expectancy should not be dictated by geography. We combat systemic inequities by ensuring West Side residents have access to coordinated care, critical resources, and respectful, person-centered support.

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Our Impact
The West Side faces a 10-year life expectancy gap compared to the Chicago Loop. Wellness West is addressing the root causes and driving measurable results. Wellness West ends every day to address these inequities. And it's working.

In 2025, hypertension and diabetes control rates exceeded state benchmarks. Behavioral health redesigns declined, such as housing reduced emergency department visits.

Together, we make wellness possible on the West Side.

Average life expectancy of Chicago Loop: **87.3 years**

Average life expectancy of West Side communities: **71.4 years**

Wellness West Partners on Blood Pressure Screenings

Wellness West is proud to partner with the American Heart Association to bring community-based blood pressure hubs and CPR Emergency Response Plans to West Side neighborhoods.

By equipping our partners and residents with these life-saving tools, we are taking immediate action against cardiac arrest and promoting heart health equity.

As part of Live Healthy Chicago, Wellness West supports the blood pressure screenings being performed this summer at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, a Wellness West partner organization.

Know Your Numbers. Protect Your Health.

Wellness West, in partnership with the Live Healthy Chicago program, is supporting free blood pressure screenings this summer.

To learn more, contact the Puerto Rican Cultural Center:
prcc-chgo.org

Wellness West
Partnering for Health Equity

A Healthcare Transformation Collaborative
HTC
Healthcare Transformation Collaboratives

Wellness West Appears at National Conference

Wellness West continued to build its reputation as a thought leader in June at the National Association of Social Workers' 2026 NASW National Conference, themed "Beyond the Breaking Point: Connection Through Purpose and Power."

NASW National Conference
June 10-13, 2026
Marriott Marquis | Washington, DC

Wellness West Project Director Nicole Milano, MSW, LCSW, spoke on "Building Bold Partnerships: How Social Work Powers Community-Led Integrated Care." The event took place June 10-13 in Washington, DC.

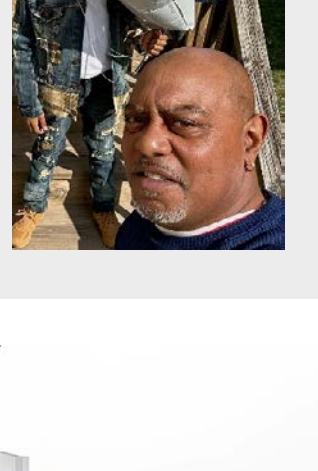
Thousands of social workers, like-minded professionals and social work thought leaders took advantage of opportunities for professional development, continuing education and networking. They engaged in thought-provoking conversations tackling the most pressing issues facing the social work profession across the world.

Mission Moment: Addressing Jackie's Hypertension

Controlling Jackie's hypertension matters — not just to him, but to the people that depend on him.

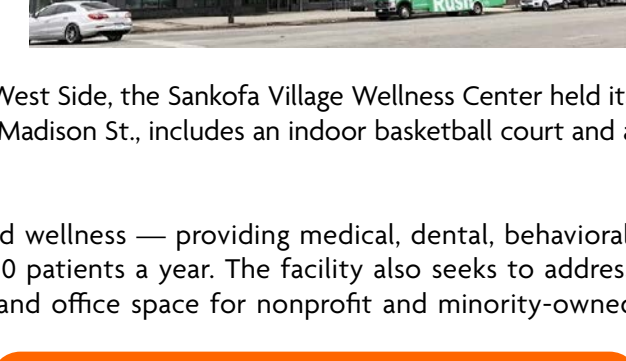
Jackie has sole custody of his 10-year-old grandson, Anthony. He also takes care of his elderly mom, who lives upstairs. During a visit to his primary care at Cook County Health, Jackie was screened for food insecurity. Jackie said rising grocery prices had him scared. He didn't know where to turn. He was referred to Breakthrough to access the food pantry and to enroll in the Wellness West Instacart program. Jackie also took advantage of Breakthrough's Christmas store pop-up.

Today, Jackie's blood pressure is nearly at target. He says the monthly Instacart deliveries have been a game changer.



Partners Join New Wellness Center in West Garfield Park

Wellness West partner organizations are part of a new \$48 million wellness center in West Garfield Park. Rush University Medical Center, West Side United, Erie Family Health Center, Equal Hope and the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago, in addition to the Garfield Park Right to Wellness Collaborative, will have facilities at the recently opened Sankofa Village Wellness Center.



With the goal of improving health and quality of life on Chicago's West Side, the Sankofa Village Wellness Center held its grand opening in April. The 60,000-square-foot facility, at 4305 W. Madison St., includes an indoor basketball court and a running track on the gym's upper level.

The Center is intended to serve as a new hub for neighborhood wellness — providing medical, dental, behavioral, reproductive, substance abuse and HIV prevention care to 6,000 patients a year. The facility also seeks to address reduced life expectancy on the West Side. It includes a clinic and office space for nonprofit and minority-owned businesses.

[Read more about the Sankofa Village Wellness Center](#)

Humboldt Park President and CEO Honored as a 'Chicago Titan'

Wellness West Board Chair Jose R. Sanchez, who also serves as President and CEO of Humboldt Park Health, was recently recognized as a member of the 2026 Chicago Titan 100. The honor recognizes his 15 years of leadership in transforming safety-net hospitals and advancing health equity across the city.

Read all about Jose's remarkable career and service in the cover article of Hispanic Executive magazine, where he is lauded for transforming Humboldt Park Health into a national model for equity, access and community-anchored care.

[Read article](#)

Esperanza Health Centers Hires Erie Family Health Staffer as CEO

Nicole Kazee will become President and CEO of Esperanza Health Centers on July 1. She had been at Erie Family Health Centers for nearly a decade, most recently serving as chief strategy and transformation officer. Esperanza and Erie are both Wellness West partner organizations.

Nicole brings nearly 20 years of professional and academic experience in the health care safety net. Prior to her role at Erie, she served as assistant vice chancellor for strategy at the University of Illinois Health and Hospital System.

As President and CEO of Esperanza, she will lead an organization that delivers care to more than 57,000 patients annually at seven clinic sites, a dedicated behavioral health center, two benefits navigation centers, and a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE).

[Learn more about Esperanza's hiring](#)

Loretto President and CEO Honored by Crain's Chicago Business

Wellness West Board Secretary Tesa Anewishki, who also serves as President and CEO of Loretto Hospital, was recently named a 2026 Crain's Chicago Business Notable Leader in Health Care. She was recognized for her leadership and commitment to advancing health equity and access and for continuing to make a meaningful impact on Chicago's West Side.

The list included local hospital and clinic executives, clinicians, researchers, non-profit heads, innovators, insurers and advisers shaping health care delivery and policy. The honorees "illustrate how Chicago-area institutions are adapting, partnering and investing to improve outcomes for patients and communities," the Crain's article said.

[View the full list \(subscription required\)](#)

Leaders of Wellness West Partners Honored by Chicago Defender

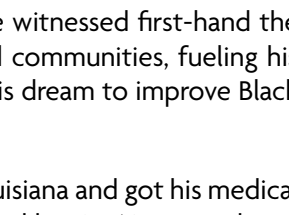
The Chicago Defender recently recognized several leaders of Wellness West partner organizations as 2026 Standout Healthcare Professionals. The 25 honorees included:

- **Tesa Anewishki**, President and CEO, Loretto Hospital
- **Dr. Ngozi O. Ezike, MD**, President and CEO, Sinai Chicago
- **Marsha E. Gorens, MC**, Gynecologist & Hormone Therapy, Rush University Medical Center
- **Dr. Kalisha Hill, MD, MBA, FCAP**, Chief Medical Officer, Prime Healthcare
- **Dr. Pierre Johnson, MD**, Obstetrician Gynecologist, Loretto Hospital
- **Dr. Bishop Horace E. Smith, MD**, Pediatric Hematologist/Oncologist, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital
- **Dr. Paris Thomas, PhD, CEO**, Equal Hope.

[See the full list of honorees](#)

Loretto's 'Fibroid Slayer' Draws International Attention

A Loretto Hospital doctor is attracting attention due to his expertise in using laparoscopic techniques to treat uterine fibroids. Dr. Pierre Johnson, a board-certified OB/GYN specializing in high-risk obstetrics, gynecologic surgery and pelvic floor repair, is internationally known as the "Fibroid Slayer."



His work has been featured in media outlets such as The New York Times Magazine, WGN News, the Chicago Tribune and ABC 7 Chicago Eyewitness News. Dr. Johnson recently removed a 27-pound fibroid from a pregnant patient who is due in August.

Uterine fibroids are common growths in or on the walls of the uterus that occur in approximately 40% to 80% of people with one. By 50 years old, 9 out of 10 Black people with a uterus have fibroids. But, according to a study published in NIH PubMed Central, non-white patients were 50% less likely to receive minimally invasive surgery compared to white patients.

"I'm at Loretto Hospital by design and by choice," he told Afro News in a May 4 article. The hospital, he says, "understands my vision. They respect what I do."

Loretto opened its Women's Wellness Center last year and brought Dr. Johnson aboard to lead it. "We are thrilled to welcome the esteemed Dr. Johnson to the Loretto Hospital family and advance the work of specialized, deserving care for women," Loretto Hospital President and CEO Tesa Anewishki said in a May 2025 news release.

Dr. Johnson was born at Chicago's Mercy Hospital and raised on the South Side. Growing up, he witnessed first-hand the negative impact of implicit bias on the health and well-being of underserved, under-resourced communities, fueling his passion for equitable care. Inspired by the Black OB/GYN who treated his mother, he pursued his dream to improve Black women's health and fight disparities.

As the oldest child of a single mother of five, Dr. Johnson graduated from Xavier University of Louisiana and got his medical degree at the University of Illinois, where he was the only Black student in his class. He completed his OB/GYN residency at Southern Illinois University and has worked at Mercy, Ingalls and Mount Sinai hospitals.

"I believe every woman should have the option to protect and preserve her uterus," Dr. Johnson said. "More than a doctor, I am an advocate for women and a partner in their healthcare journey."

New Law Will Broaden Menopause Coverage, Workplace Protections

The Illinois General Assembly in May approved legislation — sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Kimberly A. Lightford and Rep. Yolanda Morris, both of Chicago — that will address gaps in women's health care by reducing barriers to perimenopause and menopause care and preventing workplace discrimination for people who experience related health conditions.

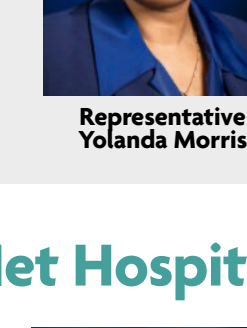
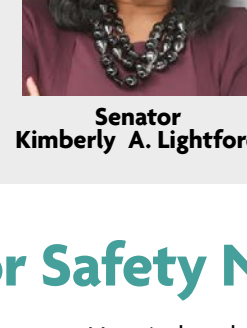
The new law is an effort to improve access to healthcare, expand education, and bring greater clarity to workplace protections for individuals experiencing menopause. It is being hailed as a meaningful step toward addressing a long-overlooked area of women's health.

Menopause affects nearly all women, with approximately 80% experiencing symptoms that can significantly impact overall health, well-being and workplace performance. Despite its widespread impact, gaps in education, insurance coverage and workplace understanding have contributed to inconsistent support for those experiencing symptoms.

"Illinois must lead the way in offering comprehensive care to patients who experience perimenopause and menopause symptoms, and we can only do that by reducing the obstacles to treatment that far too many women have faced," Senator Lightford said. "By requiring private health plans to cover evaluations and treatments when necessary, we can directly reduce financial barriers to care and promote preventive efforts that combat chronic menopause conditions."

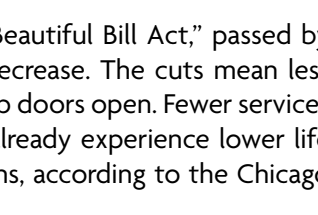
"This is about making sure people are not left to navigate this stage of life without information or support," Representative Morris said. "By improving education, strengthening access to care and clarifying workplace protections, we can help individuals stay healthy and fully participate in the workforce without unnecessary barriers."

The Menopause Equity and Care Act, [House Bill 5284](#), takes effect January 1, 2027.



State Budget Includes Funding for Safety Net Hospitals

Safety net hospitals — including Wellness West partners Sinai Chicago, Loretto Hospital and some Cook County Health community clinics — got some good news in the \$55.9 billion annual budget passed by the Illinois General Assembly on June 1.



The state budget for Fiscal Year 2027 includes an additional \$10 million dedicated to support Detroitally Qualified Health Centers, which serve mostly Medicaid recipients and uninsured patients and rely heavily on government reimbursements.

"It invests in our healthcare system, from safety-net hospitals who not only treat our state's most vulnerable, but also our economic drivers in our communities, to funding free and charitable clinics to serve people without insurance or who are underserved," State Sen. Elgie Sims of Chicago, the Senate Democrats' lead budgeteer, said of the budget.

Previous cuts to FQHCs' federal funding — found in H.R. 1, sometimes called the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," passed by Congress in 2025 — meant uncompensated care would go up and revenue sources would decrease. The cuts mean less money, which means making some tough decisions about which services to cut in order to keep doors open. Fewer services could make things worse for underserved communities on the South and West sides that already experience lower life expectancies. There is an 11-year life expectancy gap between Black and non-Black Chicagoans, according to the Chicago Department of Public Health.

Advocates say low-income patients don't have many options if their local safety net hospital closes, WTTW-11's "Chicago Tonight: Black Voices" reported in July 2025. People could end up not seeking preventative care and pushing off routine check-ups until their conditions become life-threatening emergencies.

"We consolidated agencies and we increased transparency and fiscal accountability to support safety net hospitals and nursing homes," Gov. J.B. Pritzker said at a June 1 news conference.

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