



An Affiliate of the
CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE REPORT: 2025

Gilda's Club Chicago
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Mission Statement: Gilda's Club Chicago (GCC) uplifts and strengthens people impacted by cancer by providing support, fostering compassionate communities, and breaking down barriers to care.

Under-Resourced Community Support

Providing high-quality, culturally responsive cancer support services to Chicago's diverse population is a fundamental component of Gilda's Club Chicago's work. This commitment is especially important when serving communities that face historic and systemic racism and inequality, where too often critical services and resources are often geographically or financially out of reach.

Accessibility is critical to equitable service delivery. Gilda's Club activities are always free of charge and income information is not requested of participants because this could create a deterrent to participation for many individuals. In 2024, GCC served 3,247 individuals through 17,782 visits to service. Of participants reporting over the last year, 25% were African American; 5% were Asian/Pacific; 18% were Hispanic; 7% were Other; and 44% were Non-Hispanic White.

Gilda's Club works towards this goal of accessible services through dedicated community outreach, local programs, and a delivery model that provides both online and in-person sites for activities. Virtual services are available by livestream and through an online library available on our website. In-person activities are available at Gilda's Club's downtown Clubhouse and at its main hospital partner sites (Advocate Christ Medical Center, Lurie Children's Hospital, Mount Sinai Hospital, and Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center at Northwestern University Medical Center), and community-based locations that partner with Gilda's Club to make services available where individuals live and are being treated. In local hospitals, Gilda's Club staff are present in infusion clinics and outpatient oncology areas, offering information and drop-in services such as support groups and wellness activities.

Gilda's Club has dedicated staff members to serve community locations, including a Hispanic Community Program Coordinator and Community and Faith Program Manager, who connect



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with safety net hospitals, local clinics, faith communities and community health centers. Signature annual events, such as Cinco de Mayo and Soulful Social, are also important ways to reach new members and engage existing participants where they live, in addition to activities co-hosted with local partners. Gilda's Club Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator works with committed volunteers to regularly attend events and health fairs at various Chicago area locations. Over the last year Gilda's Club staff attended 38 community events, reaching more than 2000 individuals.

Gilda's Club Chicago has also worked to ensure cultural competence in its programs. This includes working with diverse facilitators who reflect those served, creating targeted programs for specific audiences, and providing bilingual support groups and activities. Such culturally inclusive services are critical to consistent participation in cancer support services in under-resourced communities, which research has shown is vital to decreasing distress levels. GCC's online platforms also remove barriers to participation and provide enhanced opportunities for more targeted, relevant, and culturally rich programming in partnership with Gilda's Club affiliates across the country.

Gilda's Club's community work is grounded in its relationships with local partners. Such connections are important to educate staff around the needs unique to each community, as well as receiving and making referrals, and creating aligned programs and events. In addition to its main hospital satellite sites, Gilda's Club works with local safety net hospitals such as Ascension St. Mary and Ascension St. Joseph, Advocate Trinity, and Advocate South Suburban, Holy Cross, UI Health, and Mount Sinai. Locally based partners provide referrals for new members and co-sponsor educational activities and events. An example is Blue Door Neighborhood Centers in Morgan Park, Pullman, and South Lawndale, which provide space for monthly activities, including in-person support group sessions. Gilda's Club also works with The Resurrection Project's breast cancer group ELLAS, UI Health, Enlace, Equal Hope, Centro San Bonifacio, Access Community Health Network, and LUCERO (Latinos United for Cancer Education, Research and Outreach).

To reach and serve youth and teens, Gilda's Club has relationships with Kessum (formally Camp Kessum), Pickles and Bright Spot Network (support for families with young children), and the Junior League of Chicago, which facilitates family events and social activities. Lectures and educational workshops with Pickles and Bright Spot Network provide parents with invaluable information on managing the challenges of cancer with young children. And local schools from across the Chicago area make referrals and host Gilda's Club staff for GCC@School presentations on behalf of their school communities.

Continued development of community collaborations creates a network of resources that Gilda's Club staff can bring into the community, whether through referrals or partnerships for



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special events. In addition, outreach to communities of color focuses on long-standing relationships with faith communities (Apostolic Church of God and Christ, Christ Universal Temple, Trinity United Church of Christ, and Oakdale Covenant Church), which rely on GCC's Community and Faith Program Manager for resources, on site programs, and one-on-one outreach. Other faith communities are reached throughout the year through pulpit presentations and attendance at community events.

Finally, Gilda's Club Chicago's affiliation with the Cancer Support Community provides staff with access to the most current research and best practices around cancer support. Gilda's Club participates in the CSC's Health Equity in Action initiative, which includes research and programs focused on cancer care disparities. Gilda's Club also utilizes CSC's research and learnings from affiliates across the country to develop new programs and outreach strategies. The CSC's Cancer Experience Registry, for example, provides targeted and geographic-specific survey data on quality-of-life concerns of those with cancer. The CER has been utilized in partnership with GCC at two hospital sites, Advocate Christ Medical Center and Mount Sinai Hospital, providing quantitative aggregate data specific to those populations.

Once engaged, Gilda's Club offers participants a comprehensive menu of daily programs, available in person and online, including:

- Group support and education: monthly Spanish and/or English language groups; monthly women of color group; monthly groups aligned with local churches; and targeted breast cancer specific groups;
- Educational lectures on treatment-related topics and healthy lifestyle workshops that have a focus on stress reduction and nutrition (mind-body workshops, exercise, meditation and yoga classes, social activities, and art therapy) for patients and caregivers;
- Social opportunities that provide opportunities to interact with others in similar circumstances;
- Resource referrals where GCC staff can work with participants and family members to meet specific challenges, including financial, specialized medical, or social services;
- Noogieland programs for children and teens, including specialized support groups, art therapy, wellness workshops, social activities, and kids/teen camp.

Services are led by Chief Program Officer Kathleen Boss. Kelly Walsh, Associate Director, Hospital and Community, manages the community-based staff leading the program's day-to-day activities, including Hispanic Community Program Coordinator Jasmine Carrasco, and Community and Faith Program Manager Kassandra Billups. Ms. Carrasco and Ms. Billups are Gilda's Club's advocates and representatives in communities, acting as liaisons to local partners,



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providing assistance with developing culturally responsive services and events, and identifying program facilitators.

Number of clients served: Event and outreach data shows that Gilda's Club engages more than 2,000 individuals through community-based programming each year. To more specifically track those served from high-need communities, Gilda's Club utilizes zip code data for participants and partner organizations paired with census low-income data. This limited collection of zip code data is used because Gilda's Club does not collect individual income information. Zip code data for 2024 showed that of the 54 zip codes served in the City of Chicago, 29% had poverty levels above 15%.

Total amount budgeted by your organization for the program: GCC's current budget for programming in under-resourced communities totals \$418,580. This budget continues to increase as programming has returned to being provided in person, at Clubhouses and in the community.

Percent that program budget is of total agency budget: 18%

Percent of program budget that is directly reimbursed by third party payers: 0

Percent of program budget that is covered by public/private grants: GCC's budget is funded 100% by private support; 21% of that comes from private corporate and foundation grants.