

7/31/20 Board Meeting – Public Testimony from Marjorie Fujara, MD

An Ounce of Prevention...

With gun violence and COVID-19 continuing to dominate the news, we must look for connections between the challenges we face in hopes of uncovering new links and the root causes that can help us drive better solutions. And although it may seem unlikely, child maltreatment is related to both gun violence and COVID-19. This is something we are well aware of, as Cook County Health was the recipient of a three-year, \$750,000 Department of Justice grant for the Child Safety Forward initiative, which is aimed at reducing child fatalities and recurring injuries due to abuse and neglect.

It is now well established in the scientific and public health communities that the legacy of child abuse persists well into adulthood. Survivors of child abuse are at increased risk of developing serious chronic health issues including cancer, hypertension and diabetes. They are much more likely to struggle with substance abuse and mental illness. As adolescents, they are more likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system and in romantic relationships that become violent. Through advances in neuroscience, we now know that early adverse experiences, like abuse and neglect, disrupt brain development and leave survivors expecting a serious threat around every corner. Because the flight-or-flight response is easily triggered in survivors of early abuse, a simple misunderstanding or disagreement can quickly escalate and become deadly when a gun is involved.

Aside from the direct threat of serious illness and death from COVID-19, the pandemic has created unprecedented isolation. School and day care closures, disruption in worship services, and purposeful avoidance of elderly grandparents has resulted in the erosion of the support networks many parents rely on, greatly increasing their stress levels. Parental stress is a well-known risk factor for maltreatment.

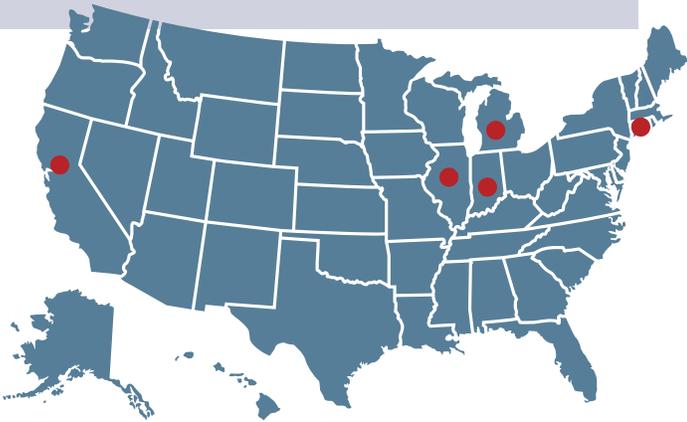
Cook County Health is among five demonstration sites chosen to participate in Child Safety Forward. This national initiative is using a collaborative, community-based approach to develop and implement an innovative strategic plan. Core stakeholders include experts in child welfare and maternal infant health, educators, primary care and mental health providers, faith leaders and community members. Simulation training for investigators, geographic risk analysis to identify “hot spots” for multiple forms of interpersonal violence, multi-disciplinary team training, evidence-based parenting interventions, and a public awareness campaign are some of the planned strategies to be implemented in the last two years of the grant.

By recognizing how the challenges facing our county are interconnected and bringing innovative strategies and new stakeholders together to collaborate, we look to implement solutions that help families thrive.

Cook County Health

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime is funding a demonstration initiative to develop multidisciplinary strategies and responses to address fatalities or near-death injuries as a result of child abuse or neglect.

Cook County Health, Illinois was 1 of 5 demonstration sites in the nation chosen for this grant.



Retrospective reviews of child fatalities and serious injuries will be conducted in **three counties** to help identify family and systemic circumstances for those deaths.



An average of **10,000** reports are made annually in the state of Illinois for deaths, or serious injuries, due to suspected child abuse or neglect.

It is estimated, **50%** of children who die from fatal injuries caused by child maltreatment have had **no previous contact with the child welfare system**



Community stakeholders will explore potential service gaps that may place children at risk for maltreatment including:

- Healthcare providers
- Community members
- Maternal infant health providers
- Educators
- Social service providers
- Faith leaders
- Law enforcement
- Child welfare
- Child advocacy fields

In addition to facilitating information sharing, Cook County will:



Convene simulation training and multi-disciplinary team training



Facilitate access to telehealth services with a Child Abuse Pediatrician



Utilize risk analysis mapping of neighborhood “hot spots” of interpersonal violence



Implement sustainability plan



Within Our Reach

Good morning Members of the Cook County Health Board,

My name is Consuelo Vargas and I am a Registered Nurse at Stroger Hospital in the Emergency Department. I am one of the RNs who presented exhibits in the grievance for non-nursing duty pay. Registered Nurses were delegated by management to perform tasks of other departments when our focus should have been on patient care. During this time the intensity of our work increased immensely. We won our grievance because we had proof showing that management delegated these tasks to RNs and we demand to be paid for the work that we did. As the Chief Nurse Rep of Stroger Hospital I have an overall sense of what RNs are concerned about and this is at the top of the list. It is 2020 The Year of The Nurse but it certainly doesn't feel like it. CCHHS fails to acknowledge all that the RNs have done during this pandemic. CCHHS fails to recognize that without RNs it would no longer exist. As Nurses we showed up because our patients rely on us to be here to care for them. We could have put up a fight as these directives were being given but were more concerned with making sure our patients received the care they needed and that we had PPE to stay safe. We got many a thank you, I am proud of you, I am glad you are here, and God bless you from our patients. This is what keeps many RNs here at Stroger. Unfortunately, in the past few weeks I have spoken to nurses every week that are planning to leave the system. These nurses are from different units and with flu season combined with COVID a couple of months away any RN that leaves will not be replaced by then. At this point any argument in trying to convince RNs to stay is futile. We want nothing more than to be paid for the work that we did. We don't want a pizza party. We don't want anything with the word hero on it. We don't want the Nike shoes that are already gone because they were given to other departments. We don't want the Crocs shoes that are already gone because they were given to other departments. We don't want words of thanks or appreciation because they are empty and without meaning. We just want to be paid for the work that was delegated to us during this pandemic. The previous CEO left last year but is making a more than comfortable \$500,000 this year. The previous CFO gave himself a nice \$60,000 salary increase in one year. Clearly CCHHS finds money when they want and give it to who they want and not necessarily to who deserves it. Do what is right. Do what is just. Pay us for the work we did.

Thank you

My name is Lorina Cesario and work in the Medical Intensive Care Unit as a Clinical Nurse I. Nursing is not an easy job. Every day we make sure that our patients are well taken care-of, for some, good care means that a patient gets to see another day. During COVID-19, our skills as nurses are pushed to the test. Nothing could have possibly prepared us for the situation at hand. However, as nurses, we had the duty to step up and not show fear. As a MICU nurse, not only did I have to watch over these patients on the brink of death, I potentially expose myself and my family to COVID-19. I spend HOURS in these rooms making sure patients get the care they deserve AND more because of the “non-nursing duties” that I have to perform due to the pandemic. I have to take hours of extra time and work so to preserve what little PPE we have left. That’s not the issue though. I joined nursing because I want to help people, but that doesn’t mean I do not want to get compensated for my work. I still have a family to feed. A family that has a higher chance of contracting COVID-19 because of the work I have to do. Hazard pay MUST be given to the nurses. Other nurses in the area are receiving it ALREADY because the hospitals they work at recognize the time, work, and risk their nurses experience while working at a hospital during a pandemic. Cook County carries even more COVID-19 positive patients than some of these hospitals as well. What is stopping Cook County from recognizing the effort THEIR nurses put in? Nurses are STRUGGLING. We NEED the support of the hospital to persevere. I don’t need or even WANT a poster on the wall telling me that I’m a “hero”. If Cook County wants to recognize me for being a hero, then compensate us for the work we put in.

My name is Mildred Austin and I am a Clinical Nurse I in the Emergency Department at Stroger Hospital. I am speaking to the board today to directly refute management's allegations that registered nurses have not been performing additional non-nursing duties during this global pandemic.

When patients are positive for COVID-19 in the ED, Doctors and Registration do not enter the patients room but instead call nurses into the rooms to asses and register patients to act on their behalf. Emergency Room Technicians s don't enter the room for blood draws or EKGs, environmental will not pull the garbage, dietary will not pass trays. Transportation will not take them to CT or Xray. As a nurse you become the primary care giver performing all of these above tasks that were once implemented by other members of the team. So RNs are now taking on more responsibility but our normal job duties have not changed. If anything are patients are sicker and more acute.

The ED is the frontline for COVID-19. Nurses see them at that front desk, in triage and in their rooms. Exposure can occur at any given point during our shift. Nurses are the ones taking on the most risk and performing duties outside of our job description to protect our colleagues from exposure. I ask the board that we be compensated the non-nursing duties that we perform. We have gone above and beyond for our patients and I think this is the least management can do to show their support. Thank you.

"My name is Peter Sesi and I am a Clinical Nurse II in the Trauma ICU. Our lives have changed forever since March of 2020. The things that we have seen can never be forgotten and the death of our colleagues will always be something that will haunt us for the rest of our lives. Not only did I have to self-isolate from my family but I missed the birth of my sister's first child, life changing moments that I put aside to continue to provide care to the people of Cook County. I have worked for Cook County Hospital for the last eight years and during this pandemic it was US nurses who stood up and took charge and helped without a second thought. During this time the former ANE (Associate Nurse Executive) rounded every morning assigning us different and new duties designed to conserve PPE (personal protective equipment) and limit the exposure of other non-nursing staff. Eventually the nurses were the only staff who entered COVID or suspected COVID patients rooms. We did everything from tray passing, to cleaning rooms constantly, to vent changes, to respiratory treatments, and documenting for the physicians so they didn't have to enter the room. This was and continues to be a very challenging time for us as nurses. Management changed the nursing process daily and management provided minimal information leaving the nurses to question whether these new procedures were safe for our patients. Finally after voicing all of our concerns we filed a grievance regarding all of the non-nursing duties we were assigned. Our hearing officer, Sharon Goss, ruled in favor of the nurses claiming that management had breached our contract for having all NURSING staff at Stroger complete tasks that are outside of our contractual job description. Unfortunately during the resulting negotiations for our non-nursing duty pay, we have been insulted and questioned on the work we have been doing for months. We the nurses provide endless care for the Cook County Community yet we are questioned and asked "did you really work that hard?" Not only was I a nurse during this time, I was a clerk, I was dietary, I was environmental service, I was respiratory, and I was the person who stood beside you during one of the hardest times of your life. I was the person who cared for your loved one, I was the person who risked my life for you. I do my job with all of my heart and a clear conscience knowing that I care for all my patients as if they were my own loved ones. So please help us understand why the managers, who have not been at the bedside, are questioning my work as a nurse and the additional duties that I have done. They are claiming in negotiations

that I didn't take on extra tasks and that I would not be eligible for extra pay and nor would my colleagues in the critical care division. I'm stunned and I'm insulted. 2020 is the year of the nurse, now I know what that means to Cook County. It means this is the year nurses will be expected to do everything for free. I'm proud of how we rose above everything to serve our patients, I wish my employer felt the same."