

For a quarter-century, NorthShore University HealthSystem's school-based health clinic has cared for underserved adolescents in Evanston—at no cost to their families.

Formed in 1996, the Evanston Township High School (ETHS) Health Center is part of the system's efforts to break down health disparities and barriers to care for adolescents who need it most, including those brought to the U.S. as refugees and have limited access to care.

In 2020, more than 3,600 students visited the center for free services, including:

- Preventive care, including physical exams and immunizations;
- Ongoing care for chronic medical problems;
- Health and wellness education; and
- Diagnosis and treatment of acute illness and injury.

NorthShore fully funds and staffs the center, which is a collaborative partnership with ETHS and the Evanston Health & Human Services Department.

"We've had consistent support from our three original partners for 25 years who see the value of providing quality primary care for adolescents in the community, particularly those lacking financial resources and access to care," said Julie Russell, a nurse practitioner who has been with the clinic since its inception.

Ida Joyce Sia, the clinic's lead nurse, said NorthShore's partnership remains strong with ETHS and the Evanston health department. "[They understand] the critical importance for us to remain open throughout the pandemic—even when schools suspended in-person learning and went virtual."

Although the clinic offered telehealth and virtual visits during the pandemic, most students opted for in-person care.

This community engagement has allowed clinicians to build trust among patients, while obtaining vital insight to strengthen programs and services—a key component of NorthShore's commitment to improving the health and well-being of all families.

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