

# Cook County at a Glance



Toni Preckwinkle  
Cook County Board President

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# 2017

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# A Letter From the President

January 22, 2018

To the residents of Cook County:

Each year, Cook County government strives to best serve the needs of all residents of the County. 2017 was no different, and while we faced fiscal challenges, we also did our best to provide efficient, modern and responsive services and to act as responsible fiscal stewards on your behalf.

Since I took office in 2010, we have shrunk County government by more than 14 percent. We have cut \$851 million in spending, reduced indebtedness by 11 percent.

At the same time, Cook County runs a top-notch public health and hospitals system. We are at the forefront of implementing criminal justice reform from our unique place at the intersection of justice stakeholders, from the County-run court system to the employment of public defenders, state's attorneys and Sheriff's staff. We oversee basic administrative government functions such as elections and the treasurer's office.

We are directly investing in communities across the County through violence prevention grants, economic development initiatives, workforce training and transportation infrastructure projects.

Almost half of Cook County's budget is spent on public health, and we are continuing to expand our role as a provider of insurance to Medicaid patients and a provider of services to all, regardless of need. In 2018, we expect to serve approximately 400,000 members in our Medicaid managed care program, CountyCare, as it was selected by the State to be one of seven Medicaid coverage providers in Illinois. We are committed to ensuring that Cook County residents have access to high-quality, affordable preventative care because a healthier Cook County benefits everyone while reducing costs.

We at Cook County are proud of our legacy as a social safety net for our residents, and at time when other governments are failing to meet the basic needs of their residents, we are focused on safeguarding our vital responsibilities.

In short, we do a lot to make sure Cook County works. The following Annual Report is designed to share some of the highlights of our impact last year and our goals for the year ahead.

As always, we are looking forward to doing the hard work necessary to continue to improve County government and appreciate your interest in learning more about what we're doing on behalf of our residents.

Toni Preckwinkle  
Cook County Board President



# Expanding Quality Insurance Coverage

CountyCare, the managed Medicaid plan of the Cook County Health and Hospitals System (CCHHS), was one of a handful of providers chosen by the State of Illinois to insure Medicaid patients in 2018.

Through a series of strategic acquisitions, this means that CCHHS likely will likely be the insurance provider for approximately 400,000 Cook County Medicaid beneficiaries.

Through CountyCare, CCHHS is able to: provide quality coverage and a medical home to its members, give access to more than 130 health centers and hospitals throughout the County, and promote healthier living through a focus on preventive and primary care.

Before expanding in 2017, CountyCare provided coverage to 140,000 Cook County residents. In November, CountyCare welcomed 160,000 new members from Family Health Network. In January 2018, approximately 115,000 members from Aetna Better Health of Illinois will have the opportunity to join CountyCare.

"I wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for CountyCare. For eight years I was homeless. CountyCare introduced me to a social worker. My social worker helped me find housing. Not only did CountyCare give me medication and doctors, but they found me a home."

"I've learned to take care of myself way better than I used to. From a scale of 1 to 10, I started at a 2 and I'm at a 10 and a half now. I have asthma and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), and I had it in the worst way. I had to gasp for air... From head to toe, CountyCare is my life."

Linda Hooker  
Stroger Hospital patient  
and CountyCare member

These new members, like all CountyCare beneficiaries, will enjoy access to high-quality health services, developed through 180 years of expertise at CCHHS, at no cost to them.

**160,000** New members acquired November 2017

**115,000** New members acquired January 2018

**Total: 275,000** Potential New CountyCare Patients in 2018

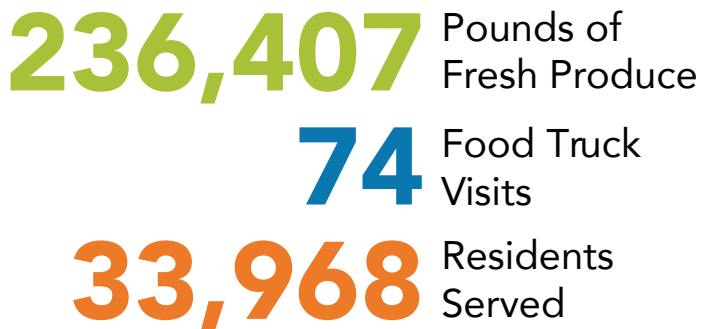


# Food as Medicine

Cook County Health and Hospitals System (CCHHS) is investing in communities across the County through its "Food as Medicine" initiative, which helps to combat food insecurity in vulnerable populations by increasing access to free or low-cost fresh food.

2017 saw the expansion of CCHHS's innovative Fresh Truck partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Through this partnership, CCHHS conducts medical screenings of community members for food insecurity, and the Food Depository brings fresh food trucks to 11 of CCHHS's community health centers to make free food deliveries to patients and other neighbors in need.

Through November 15, the Fresh truck made 74 visits to the following community-based health centers across Cook County: Logan Square, Cottage Grove, Robbins, Oak Forest, Englewood, Prieto, the CORE Center, Austin, Cicero, Woodlawn, and Near South.



Most of the individuals benefiting from the Fresh Truck screened positive for food insecurity at a CCHHS health center visit.

Additionally, CCHHS has partnered with the Black Oaks Center for Sustainable Living to run farmers markets in multiple locations throughout the County. These markets accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Plan (SNAP) vouchers and match dollar-for-dollar what patrons spend up to \$20, meaning that participants receive \$40 worth of fresh produce while only spending \$20 of their benefits.

These food initiatives are just one piece of a holistic effort from CCHHS to ensure that Cook County residents are living healthier lives.





# Progress in Criminal Justice Reform

2017 was a significant year in Cook County's efforts to ensure that families, communities and workplaces are not disrupted by a criminal justice system that has historically and disproportionately affected non-violent offenders who cannot afford bail and young people who have been left behind by systemic failures elsewhere.

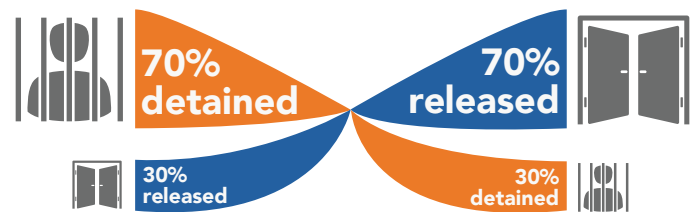
The Justice Advisory Council (JAC) under President Preckwinkle's leadership has spearheaded important efforts at the state and local level to ensure more fairness and equity in the criminal justice system, including improved bond court procedures, juvenile justice reform and the right-sizing of the criminal justice system.

Since President Preckwinkle became President of the County Board, the population at the Cook County Jail has dropped from more than 10,000 inmates to less than 6,000 as of December 2017.

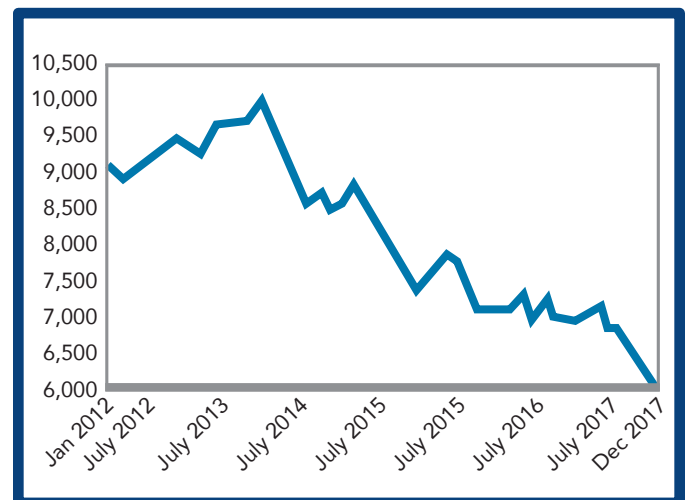
This important work has been recognized nationally. In 2017, the MacArthur Foundation awarded Cook County a

highly competitive, \$1,850,000 Safety and Justice Grant to support the County's commitment to further reducing the jail population. (Photo above)

## Bond Court Reform



## Jail Population Reduction



The grant money will support an automatic court reminder program, efforts to divert people from arrest and improved case processing to further reduce the detained population.

In October 2017, President Preckwinkle was honored with the inaugural State Champion Award from the Shriver Center recognizing her extensive work on criminal justice reform.

Meanwhile, young people charged with serious offenses are far less likely to be charged as adults since President Preckwinkle successfully championed legislation that has sharply reduced the number of youth who can automatically sent to adult criminal courts. This has improved outcomes and significantly lowered the population in the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center.

Legislation approved in 2017 in Springfield, championed by President Preckwinkle and facilitating the automatic expungement of juvenile records, promises to help thousands of young men and women reach their full potential by giving them more access to educational and employment opportunities.

In 2017, the JAC awarded and extended grants in the areas of Violence Reduction and Prevention, Recidivism Reduction, and Restorative Justice totaling \$3,901,667. These grant recipients serve more than 6,000 individuals in high risk communities. Overall, the JAC funded more than 50 providers throughout the county's 17 districts.

"We, at Westside Health Authority, have found the Cook County Justice Advisory Council Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Grant funding very useful in supporting on-site services which address our clients' thinking. More specifically, this grant funds our main goal of building relationships with at-risk youth, offenders and the formerly incarcerated in order to instill cultural values, address criminal thinking and culturally rebellious thinking that damages their success. These services are designed to interpret self-destructive attitudes and reframe them into positive productive thought in order to move our clients forward."

Roger H. Ehmen  
Director, Community Re-entry &  
Employment Services  
Westside Health Authority

**50** Providers serving all 17 districts  
**6,000** Individuals served  
**Total: \$3.9M** Grants given

# A More Equitable and Inclusive Region

Regions represent the new competitive landscape in today's rapidly changing global economy. Over the past four years, Cook County has been working collaboratively with the City of Chicago and the collar counties to further the economic growth of northeastern Illinois through initiatives related to manufacturing, exporting, foreign direct investment and transportation. These efforts culminated in the recent establishment of a regional economic development entity called Chicago Regional Growth Corporation.

"We know that regions with the least inequality perform the best economically. We can only have success as a region if we ensure that everyone contributes to, and benefits from, our economic growth."

Toni Preckwinkle

**\$3M** Federal funds leveraged to build  
**446** units of affordable housing  
in **Harvey**, **Chicago Heights**,  
**Park Forest** and **Robbins**

At a sub-regional level, Cook County's south suburbs have historically been a key source of people and firms driving the regional economy forward. They remain asset-rich, housing over 20 percent of suburban Cook County's population and nearly 15 percent of its businesses. However, in recent decades, parts of the south suburbs have struggled as they have become increasingly disconnected from the regional economy. This growing exclusion of an area so integral to the economic fabric of metropolitan Chicago is a serious concern and a challenge that is being addressed through a new initiative.

## South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative

In response to the challenges facing the south suburbs, the County launched the South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative (SSEGI) as a comprehensive and catalytic effort to reposition the south suburbs over the next decade. Phase I, a fact finding effort, was completed in 2017 and recommends comprehensive, integrated, transformative initiatives and strategies for exploration and implementation

in Phase II. These include: driving regional innovation in regional industry clusters, establishing the south suburbs as the region's "Green Playground," developing housing and consumer amenities to attract new residents and improve the quality of life of existing residents, and creating institutional infrastructure for further coordinating economic growth strategies in the sub-region.





# Expanding Access to Opportunity for Cook County Youth

This year, Cook County implemented two new programs for young adults to engage in summer employment, mentorship, job training, career exploration and leadership development: Opportunity Works and Career Launch.

More than 33,000 young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 are disconnected from both work and school in suburban Cook County. At the same time, many employers report a shortage of skilled workers. Opportunity Works places young adults in subsidized internships, exposes them to viable careers, expands their skill sets, and connects them to the training and resources they need to achieve long-term employment in growing industries.

The program targets south and west suburbs, but is open to all of suburban Cook County, offering sector-specific training in Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL); Information Technology; and Manufacturing.

## Opportunity Works

- 72** Businesses hosting interns
- 184** Participants in internships
- 203** Participants in training programs
- 133** Participants transitioned to work or education

Opportunity Works is a partnership between the Office of the President of Cook County and the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership and has already led to employers hiring interns into permanent positions.

Sponsors of Opportunity Works include: Ariel Investments, Chicago Blackhawks, Chicago Bulls, Chicago White Sox and the Obama Foundation.

Career Launch, administered by the Justice Advisory Council, is an employment program serving young adults ages 16 to 24 who are residents of Austin, Back of the Yards, South Shore, and the south suburbs, and features job readiness, sector-specific training, job placement and retention support and wraparound services, including transportation.

Both programs launched in Summer of 2017 and will continue and expand in 2018.

"I like that in the summer job program I created a resume. I now have a work permit and I'm looking for a part-time job. I am going to school now too."

*Career Launch Participant*

"I learned that I like public speaking and I enjoyed mock interviewing. These skills were very helpful."

*Career Launch Participant*

## Targeted Investment for Businesses and Residents

Cook County invests in infrastructure to support the economic health and communities of the sub-region. Two major initiatives spearhead this investment: Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Invest in Cook. CDBG has funded 59 capital improvement projects in the south suburbs.

Transportation is key to a vital economy, and Cook County has invested more

than \$20M in major truck route improvements serving busy industrial corridors in the south suburbs. These improvements have led to manufacturers being able to increase production of goods and remain in Cook County. The Invest in Cook program has led to the investment of \$7.2M of County funds for design engineering, research, and implementation, with another \$7.6M matched from other funding sources.

**59** Capital improvement projects  
**43** Tax incentives  
**\$159M** Private investment  
**1,500** Jobs created





# An Award-Winning Year for the Forest Preserves

In 2017, the Forest Preserves of Cook County added one new designated Illinois Nature Preserve and two new designated Land and Water Reserves: Harms Flatwoods, Bobolink Meadow and Jens Jensen Grasslands and Woodland. These designations provide some of the highest levels of protection for open land in the state. They also recognize the incredible restoration work that has gone into preserving these spaces. Dedicated volunteers and strong partnerships have helped the Forest Preserves work towards an ambitious goal of increasing the amount of high-quality open land in Cook County.

## 50 Cook County Youth Participate in the Forest Preserves Experience

The Forest Preserves Experience Program is a partnership between the Forest Preserves, Friends of the Forest Preserves and the Housing Authority of Cook County (photo above).

This five-week paid summer internship program consisted of 50 young people ranging from 15 to 18 years old who come from families who utilize the services of the Housing Authority of Cook County.

Throughout the program, participants conducted hands-on work at local forest preserves, learned about the environment

during educational days, met with and learned from conservation professionals and participated in a Green Career Panel.

In addition to the skill sets they acquire, the program exposes urban youth to the outdoors which can develop into a deeper, life-long connection with nature and an appreciation for plants and animals.

As one graduate named Sydney said: "This program has made me a better person. I learned how nature has helped us as human beings and how to appreciate nature."



## Awards and Recognitions



Metropolitan Planning Council recently awarded the 2017 Burnham Award for Excellence in Planning to the Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail and the Cal-Sag Coalition for the work done to connect communities in south Cook County via the Cal-Sag Trail.

The Cal-Sag Trail was first imagined in 2004 and currently offers more than 13 miles of multi-use paved trail. Once complete, the trail will stretch more than 26 miles and connect 14 communities and more than 185,000 people.

The Forest Preserves' Camping Leadership Immersion Course received the Park and Recreation Program – Class II Award from the National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials for its innovative approach to connecting people to nature.

Another prestigious recognition for the Forest Preserves in 2017 went to General Superintendent Arnold Randall, who won the 2017 Motorola Solutions Foundation Excellence in Public Service Award from the Civic Federation (photo below).

**93,361** Volunteer hours  
**52,518** Campers  
**94** Tabling events  
**401** Educational programs





Toni Preckwinkle  
President  
Cook County Board of  
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