



**2026 Community Health Care Report**

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Mission: Kids Above All Illinois' (KAA) mission is to build better lives for children and families impacted by poverty, violence, and injustice.

1. Since 1894, Kids Above All has served high-risk and underserved communities in the city of Chicago, as well as throughout Cook, DuPage, Kane and Lake counties, through its early childhood development, supportive housing, and mental health counseling services. These populations include children, youth and young adults, individuals from low-income households, and members communities of color, who face persistent barriers to community resources, supportive services, and mental health care and may not traditionally be engaged in the formal health system due to stigma, transportation barriers, cost concerns, or lack of trust in institutional providers.

In FY2025, KAA served 4,332 clients, with an average age of 18. Age distribution includes 30% ages 0–5, 19% ages 6–12, 10% ages 13–18, 7% ages 19–24, 10% ages 25–30, 21% ages 31–54, and 3% age 55 and older. Its clients were racially and ethnically diverse, with 59% identifying as Hispanic/Latinx, 31% Black/African American, 4% White/Caucasian, and approximately 1–2% each identifying as Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or other backgrounds; about 1% are undisclosed. The agency served a primarily female population (67%), with 31% male and about 2% undisclosed. In terms of language, 60% of clients are English-speaking and 38% Spanish-speaking, with about 1% speaking other languages. Geographically, clients are concentrated in Cook County (42%) and Lake County (44%), with an additional 10% in Kane County and a small percentage spread across other counties.

KAA's understanding of community need is grounded in both quantitative and qualitative assessments. This includes public data indicating increased rates of anxiety, depression, and social disconnection, particularly among youth and at-risk populations, as well as referrals from local school and community partners whose participants experience stress and trauma related to economic instability, community safety, and family disruption.

In addition, Kids Above All incorporate direct feedback from participants, families, and community stakeholders through client questionnaires completed after presentations and consultations, health assessments, and client satisfaction surveys.

This combination of formal data and lived experience has informed the agency's approach to expanding access to programs that prioritize early intervention, social connection, and community-led support.

In response to identified needs, KAA has developed and implemented targeted strategies to increase accessibility to its services. These include:

### **Home-Based and Flexible Service Delivery Models**

KAA utilizes home-based and flexible service models, such as virtual counseling, to reduce barriers that often prevent underserved populations from accessing care. By delivering services directly within participants' homes, virtually, or in convenient community settings, KAA eliminates common obstacles such as transportation challenges and scheduling conflicts. This approach ensures that individuals and families can engage in environments where they feel most comfortable, significantly increasing participation and continuity of care.

### **Focus on Prevention and Early Intervention**

Rather than relying solely on reactive models of care, KAA emphasizes preventative strategies, including pre-natal parenting support, early childhood development and counseling services. This approach is particularly important for underserved populations who are less likely to access formal support and community resources early.

### **Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Programming**

Kids Above All prioritizes programs that reflect and respect the cultural identities and lived experiences of participants. Staff are trained to create inclusive, trauma-informed environments that center participant voice and foster psychological safety. Where possible, KAA also actively recruits staff who reflect the communities being served, helping build trust and relevance in program delivery.

### **Partnerships to Extend Reach and Continuity of Care**

KAA collaborates with schools, community organizations, and service providers to identify participants who may benefit from additional support. These partnerships allow for referrals and connections to more intensive services when needed and helps bridge gaps between informal support and clinical intervention.

2. KAA utilizes multiple strategies to gather meaningful input from high-risk and underserved populations, ensuring that program development is directly informed by the lived experiences of those served. This process starts at the governance level, as two people with lived experience of Kids Above All's mission sit on the agency's Board of Trustees. Their invaluable input provides unique perspective and helps shape policy and service delivery. The organization also routinely collects direct feedback from participants and families through client questionnaires administered following presentations, consultations, and program participation. These tools are designed to capture participant perspectives on program relevance, accessibility, and impact. Finally, the agency conducts two client satisfaction surveys annually that provide ongoing insight into service quality and areas for improvement. Health assessments further contribute to understanding the behavioral and

emotional needs of participants, allowing KAA to ground its work in both self-reported experiences and broader wellness indicators.

Beyond individual feedback mechanisms, Kids Above All engages community stakeholders and leaders to ensure programs reflect the broader needs and priorities of the communities served. Input gathered through consultations with families, community partners, and service providers helps identify gaps in services and barriers to access, particularly for those least likely to engage in traditional systems of care. This multi-layered approach ensures that program design is not only data-informed but also community-driven. By consistently integrating feedback from participants and trusted community voices, KAA strengthens its ability to develop responsive, culturally relevant services that effectively support underserved populations.

3. Kids Above All maintains productive partnership with other providers and community-based organizations throughout its services areas that expand access and promote continuity of health care for underserved populations. Examples of these are:

#### **The HAP Foundation's Missing Pieces program**

KAA partners with The HAP Foundation's Missing Pieces program to provide mental health care and grief navigation services for individuals and families who have lost a child to traumatic death. Through referrals from the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, healthcare systems, and funeral professionals, Kids Above All and HAP ensure families have the necessary trauma-informed counseling, grief workshops, and bereavement navigation services to help them process their experiences, build resilience, and develop strategies to productively manage their emotions.

#### **Ignite**

Kids Above All has an MOU with Ignite, a community-based organization that works with youth experiencing homelessness in Chicago, to provide mental health support. This partnership increases access to individual, family and group therapy, as well as the recent Community Building Circles initiative for Ignite's clients, ensuring they have the care, resources and tools they need to work through their trauma and become independent, empowered adults.

#### **Simeon Career Academy**

KAA's Counseling Solutions program provides individual and group therapy for students at Simeon Career Academy on Chicago's South Side. The agency's therapists work with youth to build their self-esteem, process trauma, and lead productive, fulfilling lives. Topics for group therapy have included grief and bullying.

4. Throughout its history, Kids Above All has used the community-oriented approach to program development. This method ensures KAA understands the needs of underserved members of the community and identifies specific strategies to help address those needs. It also seeks to involve clients and partners to provide a comprehensive system of support.

Two recent examples of the agency's use of this approach are Kids Above All's expansion of its counseling services to Lake County and Kane County.

In 2019, residents of Lake County, Illinois faced wait times of three to six months for mental health counseling due to high demand and a shortage of qualified providers. As a long-standing community partner of more than 130 years, Kids Above All was aware of this growing gap through its relationship with the Lake County Health Department, as well as through insights from its Chief Clinical Operating Officer and local service networks. In response, KAA made a strategic decision to expand its nearly 60 years of clinical expertise beyond its traditional programs to serve the broader community, particularly in high-need areas such as Waukegan.

Kids Above All began this expansion with a measured approach, launching services with one part-time clinician whose caseload filled quickly. As demand continued to grow, the organization increased capacity by adding additional therapists, eventually building a team capable of serving a full caseload of clients. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency adapted its services by offering virtual counseling based on client input, helping reduce isolation and maintain continuity of care. Following the pandemic, KAA implemented a hybrid model, though demand for in-person counseling has since risen sharply as youth and families continue to experience increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges.

Today, the organization's Lake County counseling program has grown significantly and now serves 230 clients annually with a team of eight full-time clinicians. This expansion has been supported by strong partnerships with local school districts, including Gavin School District 37 and North Chicago School District 187, ensuring that services reach youth and families most in need.

Similarly, Kids Above All used the community-oriented approach to its therapeutic expansion in Kane County in 2024, implementing best practices from Lake County to help children and families in and around Elgin, Illinois. These included flexible service delivery, culturally responsive care, and strong community partnerships, to ensure continuity and effectiveness in the new setting. Rather than launching services in isolation, KAA grounded the expansion in existing community relationships and clear understanding of local needs, which also included lengthy wait times for mental health services.

A key factor in successfully establishing services in Kane County was the integration of internal referral pathways from the agency's early childhood education program, which has operated in the Elgin area since 2013. This program provided both a trusted presence in the community and a natural entry point for identifying families in need of mental health services. By connecting early childhood participants' families to Counseling Solutions, KAA ensured a seamless, community-based continuum of care. This approach reflects a strong commitment to community-driven program development, leveraging existing assets and relationships to expand access and meet emerging behavioral health needs. In its first full year, the program served 17 clients, with two part-time therapists with caseloads of 10-12.

Kids Above All is committed to using program evaluation as a tool for continuous improvement, accountability, and quality service delivery. The agency's counseling programs are monitored internally by KAA's Evaluation Department, with outcomes measured against established goals, benchmarks, and trends. The Director of Evaluation tracks benchmarks monthly, while program staff compile data into key performance indicator spreadsheets at the end of each month. Program leadership reviews these metrics with staff before submitting them for error-checking and analysis.

Evaluation methods include ongoing participant tracking, quarterly peer reviews of randomly selected case records, quarterly client satisfaction surveys, annual performance reports, and regular leadership review of data management reports. Findings are used to identify service gaps, adjust outreach strategies, improve client engagement, and refine program design.

Finally, Kids Above All is committed to expanding access to quality mental health support to children and families throughout Chicagoland. KAA's therapists bill Medicaid and private insurance for services rendered, counseling is offered to all in need—regardless of insurance coverage—through a sliding fee scale for private pay clients. The program will continue to build on its existing infrastructure and billing capacity to ensure its success.

In addition, the agency's fundraising efforts through events and securing support from public and private funders, will aid this work through the development of clinical services for those in the community with private insurance. Throughout its 131-year existence, KAA's clinical services have focused on clients with Medicaid coverage or who pay for services rendered via a sliding fee scale. This new effort is central to KAA's FY26-FY28 strategic plan, which was launched in January of 2026. Kids Above All sees this as a viable avenue for not only program maintenance but revenue generation and growth.

5. In FY2025, 230 youth, families, and adults benefited from Kids Above All's Counseling Solutions program in Lake County. That same year, 17 clients participated in KAA's Kane County therapy services.
6. The total amount budgeted for Kids Above All's therapy services in Lake and Kane counties in FY2025 was \$1,137,773.
7. The agency's Lake County and Kane County counseling programs are 5% of its total agency budget.
8. 60% of the organization's Lake County services are directly reimbursed by third party payers, and 60% of Kane County's services.
9. 25% of Lake County's program budget in FY25 was covered by public and private grants. 60% of Kane County's program budget was covered by similar funding sources in the same year.