

Unemployment, school absenteeism and poor mental health are all linked to a lack of preventive and routine dental care. Families and individuals often neglect dental care if they can't afford it. That's where Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center comes in, taking dental services to Chicago residents through its mobile dental van.

This traveling dentist's office seeks to decrease adverse health and social effects by providing needed dental services to low-income families and homeless populations, as well as at schools and community health centers. For individuals with limited or no dental care options, the van offers free exams, dental hygiene, fillings, oral surgery and prosthetics.

In 2019, Illinois Masonic's program treated 612 patients in the dental van, which resulted in 1,427 total patient visits and totaled \$111,785 in care to individuals without dental benefits. In addition, the Advocate Charitable Foundation contributed \$144,000 to cover costs of non-covered services for Medicaid beneficiaries and supplement payments from individuals with small patient copayments.

The hospital's efforts to improve dental care extend to individuals with special needs. Most dentists lack the skills needed to care for patients with special needs and their families. The hospital addresses this crucial gap in care by providing specialized dental services and training for dentists. In 2020, the program provided care to 1,037 special needs patients through the trainings, also covered by Illinois Masonic.

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