



Health Story A Community of Compassion for Mental Health



Years ago, Estela Diaz, a mother of five, sought therapy as she navigated a family crisis, chronic depression and anxiety. When she went looking for services, she was put on a doctor's waitlist. There, her name sat for five years. **Though she eventually got the services she needed, Estela's harrowing experience fueled her to become a health advocate and community activist with the Brighton Park Neighborhood Council (BPNC).**

"Sometimes, it can be so hard to get up from bed and show my kids a happy face when I'm having my depression crisis," Estela said. "But I found my purpose—to serve the community. And that's why I think I've been healing."

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—Estela Diaz, Health Advocate

As the lead agency of the Brighton Park Neighborhood Network, BPNC works with healthcare providers, community leaders and residents like Estela to create a healthier, safer community. With support from United Way of Metro Chicago, agencies that are part of the Neighborhood Network are able to align strategies and provide a wide range of services, including physical and mental health care, to entire households.

Among its impactful work, the Brighton Park Neighborhood Network hosts health fairs to make services more accessible to individuals and families, keeps a finger on the pulse of the community's health through surveys, refers residents to healthcare providers, and offers counseling for parents and youth. It also trains residents like Estela to become Parent Health Promoters (Promotoras de Salud), connecting neighbors and breaking down the stigma around mental health.

On a given day, you may see Estela and the Promotoras marching block-to-block, talking to families and providing resources. By making services accessible, Estela and her peers hope to build a neighborhood where no one is left to suffer in silence.

"I was on the waitlist for five years, that's why I say I'm the lucky one. Because what about the others?" Estela wondered. "What about the ones who live in the shadows because they are so ashamed to say 'I am dealing with this.' That's why I put so much effort into this [work]—for those people." ■

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