

Complete Street Medicine team now in place to serve encampments

By Toya Richards
Senior Communications Associate

With the new addition of a family nurse practitioner, The Night Ministry Street Medicine team is now fully staffed and better equipped to serve those living in encampments throughout Chicago.



On March 27 Sandra Collins joined outreach worker Jeff Ayoub and case manager Tiffany Green on the team that circulates throughout the city four days a week providing holistic care to those living in makeshift street camps. The Street Medicine program is a pilot project of The Night Ministry designed to reach those not being served through the agency's other programs.

The Health Outreach Bus goes out seven days a week and is strategically placed where services are needed, said David Wywialowski, The Night Ministry's director of Outreach and Health Ministry. "People rely on that consistent schedule."

"But we knew we were not reaching everybody," he said. The Street Medicine program "allows us to reach those we were not connecting with."

Ayoub, the team's first hire last fall, was tasked with identifying sites where people needed help. "I just kept finding more and more and more," he said. "Still to this day there are places that we cannot visit because we don't have time."

Medical care, harm reduction, case management, and simple presence are among the services provided by the team.

What those living in encampments have said is that other human services agencies come by, but never come back, said Green. "No one is providing real referrals and resources."

Mental illness and substance abuse are common conditions among clients, who also are susceptible to physical and sexual assault while living on the street, she said. "A client just got beaten to death in a site we go to. This is a real situation."

Collins said in the short time she's been with the team she has been "shocked at the number of young people" on the streets. And, it seems, many people really want someone to talk to, she said.

"The strategy has been and will continue to be a consistent pace at visiting all the places we go," Ayoub said. "The main piece is establishing that trust factor."